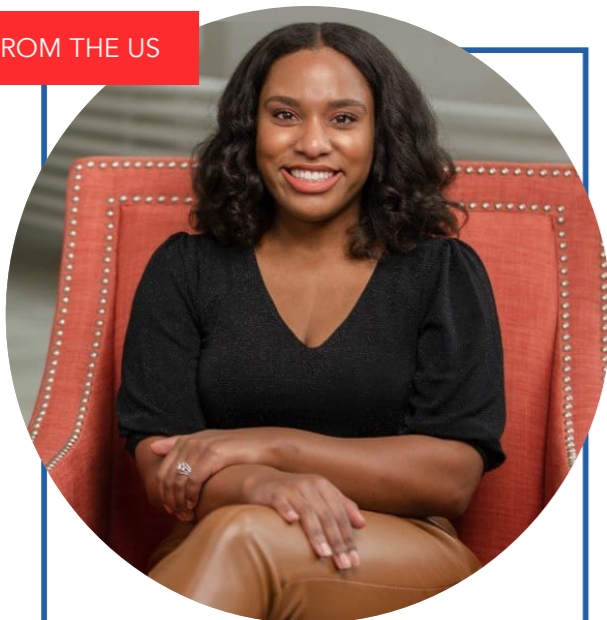


USE GAMES to trigger learning and growth at work

Lauren Fitzpatrick Shanks shares with Alan Hosking insights on how gaming can help multiple generations learn and grow in the workplace.

FROM THE US



PROFILE

Lauren Fitzpatrick Shanks is the CEO of KeepWOL in Phoenix, Arizona, US, a games-centric talent development platform for teams that bridges the gap between learning and doing. The platform's Play, Reflect and Grow process uses multiplayer web-based games, assessments and personalized educational content to deeply understand employees, improve soft skills, build inclusive teams and revitalize corporate culture.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEY HR CHALLENGES RELATED TO TODAY'S GROWING MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE?

The biggest challenge is recognizing and understanding what drives and motivates people and being able to provide solutions that will satisfy the masses. For example, what motivated me as a single woman in my early twenties is not what motivates me as a mother of two in my mid-thirties. But an additional challenge is not stereotyping generations, because there are always exceptions to the rule and as many scenarios as there are people.

Furthermore, employees' expectations of employers are vastly different across generations and that plays back into motivation. These are broad generalizations, but if you're in an older generation, retirement benefits, healthcare and stability may be strong motivators but, for younger generations, top pay, upward mobility and cutting-edge innovation are strong motivators. For the generation right in the middle, flexibility, pay equity and an enjoyable work environment may be strong motivators. The challenge is all the nuances and that may seem small, but when compiled can be the difference between someone staying at a company or leaving.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT STRATEGIES FOR GETTING DIVERSE TEAMS TO WORK TOGETHER MORE PRODUCTIVELY AND HAPPILY. HOW DOES GAMIFICATION HELP BRIDGE TODAY'S MULTIGENERATIONAL

WORKFORCE?

When playing games, we all start on an equal footing. Each of us has an opportunity to win and, as humans, we all have a desire to win. Games and gamification tap into the brain's reward centre and typically require quick thinking, disarming you, although some are more competitive than others. Games are also about the luck of the draw. They allow us to be free while still having an element of control. Randomization, not being able to prepare and the ambiguity of games bring out authenticity within players.

HOW DO GAMES TRIGGER LEARNING AND GROWTH IN THE WORKPLACE AND AMONG THE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS?

Psychology-based games that emphasize storytelling help all generations come together and facilitate people from different backgrounds listening, communicating and empathizing with each other. When playing, commonalities instead of differences are brought to the forefront, making it easier to develop solutions that will accommodate everyone in one way or another.

Learning and growth require reflection. We often don't realize how much we learn when playing until we've reflected. Games help us pinpoint where we can further grow at a specific moment.

WHAT ARE OTHER BENEFITS OF USING GAMIFICATION IN THE WORKPLACE?

There is a difference between gamification and games. Gamification provides measurement and an incentive to try harder. You know when you are doing well or trailing on the leaderboard, but this can be discouraging to those who find competition intimidating. Multiplayer interactive games keep people engaged and allow us to retain information better. There are elements of fun, laughter and joy regardless if you're winning or not and can provide learning opportunities, like strategies on how to win the next time!

HOW DOES AN ACTIVELY ENGAGED WORKFORCE, ESPECIALLY A

MULTIGENERATIONAL ONE, IMPROVE A COMPANY'S BOTTOM LINE?

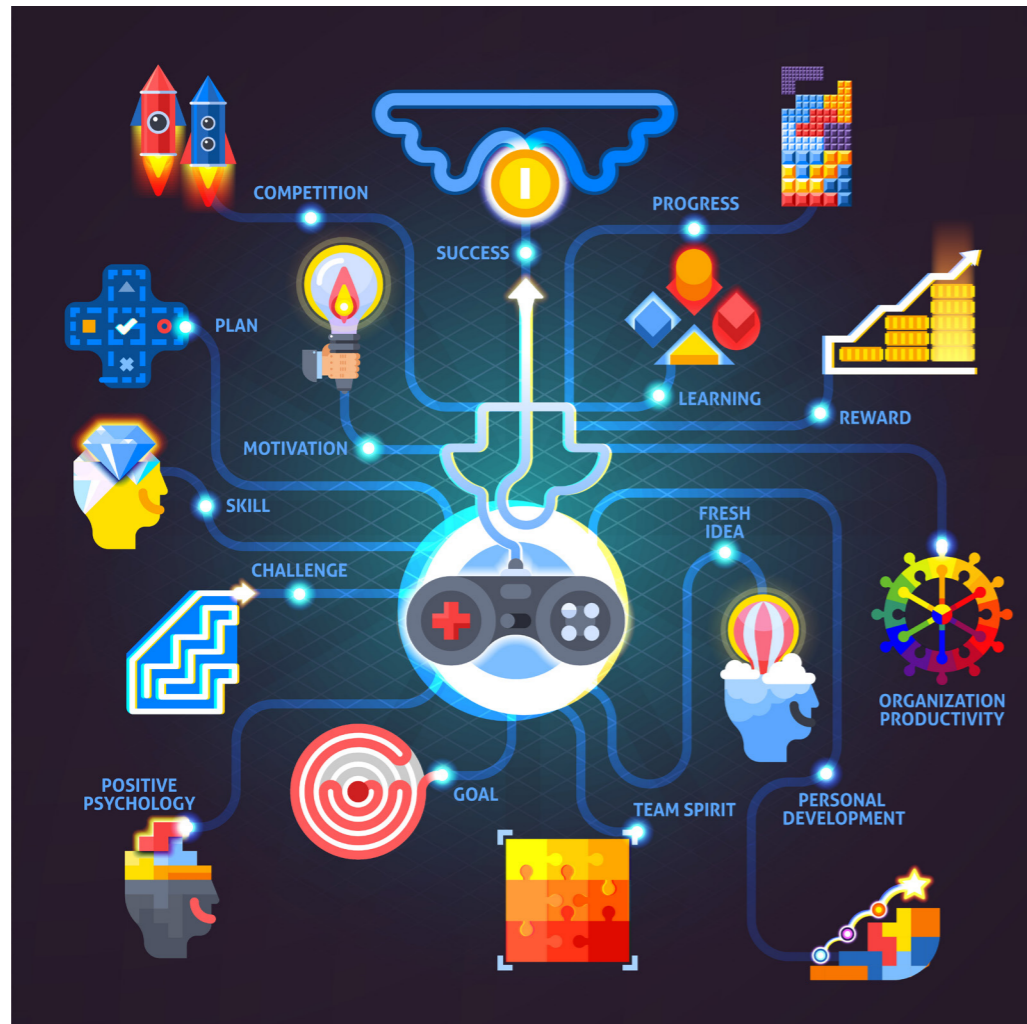
Having an engaged workforce is a morale injection. Engagement plays into team dynamics and innovation, directly impacting job satisfaction, which is what retains employees and lowers turnover, saving companies lots of money. And it's essential to have multiple generations working together. Great solutions to significant problems occur when we have multigenerational teams. We elevate our ability to provide products and services that appeal to the masses. When all generations feel seen, heard and respected by each other, that's when creativity and productivity thrive.

HOW WOULD AN HR MANAGER IMPLEMENT GAMIFICATION/ GAMES INTO A COMPANY'S HR STRATEGY? WHERE DO THEY BEGIN?

Start with a platform that has a gamification methodology. It's also beneficial to select a team-based platform. This removes ownership from HR alone and puts accountability into each employees' hands. Attach the solution to a known initiative and introduce it as an actionable interactive experience. Make sure that gamification is treated as a tool of motivation that brings joy and not something that will be used to determine performance review ratings and pay. The goal should be to obtain insights through a technique that disarms employees, not something that pits them against one another.

WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE SAID THEY DIDN'T LIKE GAMES? HOW WOULD AN HR MANAGER APPROACH THIS PROBLEM AND HOW COULD THEY MOST EFFECTIVELY GET THE EMPLOYEE'S BUY IN?

Change is hard, and we must recognize that. Not everything beneficial is something we all like. Take me, for example. I wouldn't say I like exercising. It is the worst, and when I do it, I don't have the feeling of, "I'm glad I did that." However, my body and health are positively impacted, and I can see that from my medical labs.



With games, it's the same thing. Some people love them, and some people don't. What's needed to get employees' buy-in is data and results that show this will benefit them. Show them data on what changes they can expect, what problems will be solved, and how games are better than other alternatives. It may be beneficial to ask them what's something they do that they don't enjoy but positively impacts them. Sometimes all we need is for someone to draw a correlation.

GAMES OFTEN HAVE A COMPETITIVE ASPECT. DOES GAMIFICATION IN THE WORKPLACE FUEL ONE'S COMPETITIVE SPIRIT? IF SO, IS THIS A GOOD THING? IF NOT, HOW CAN THIS BE AVOIDED?

It all depends on how gamification is incorporated and the objective. If the gamification is meant to rack and stack employees against each other and incentivize

them to do whatever it takes to be number one, that doesn't breed positivity.

However, games that emphasize storytelling don't focus on right and wrong but instead on depth. Depth is where insights lie. Competitive games that award points based on how open, honest and vulnerable you're being are helping people self-reflect, recognize where development is needed, improve their interpersonal skills, and maximize their cultural intelligence in the workplace.

WITH MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS, HOW DO YOU KNOW A GAME WILL RESONATE WITH ALL THE DIFFERENT AGE BRACKETS?

This all depends on how the games are configured. Each game should provide ambiguous open-ended questions that allow participants to determine the direction of their answers. The games should then be optimized to be agnostic to age or background, allowing everyone's perspective to matter. ■



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