

GET IN THE GAME: GAMIFICATION IN HEALTHCARE

In today's digital economy, playing games is taking on an entirely new meaning. For some, it's the latest way to create positive, memorable, and valuable interactions with customers.

Gamification disrupts traditional methods of customer engagement to make interactions positive, entertaining, and profitable. How? By providing motivation and driving desired behavior through incentivizing customer activities and transactions.

Many industries have incorporated gamification into customer engagement over the years, from loyalty programs to quizzes, interactive video games, and augmented and virtual reality experiences.

Financial applications turn savings into games where the “player” can **convert game rewards into cash savings**. Retailers use marketing quizzes and point systems to **reward customers with prizes** and gain important personalization insights. Media uses gamification as a way to make content **interactive and engaging**.

However, one of the industries that stands to benefit the most is noticeably absent: healthcare.

The opportunity to gamify healthcare is virtually limitless. Give patients incentives to adhere to treatment plans. Reward the chronically ill for healthy lifestyle choices, tracking improvements. Drive advances in epidemiology and overall population health and wellness.

Gamification—if healthcare companies embrace it—stands to literally change the game.



Let's get motivated

Regardless of efforts made by payers, providers, insurance agencies, and others, the patient ultimately has full autonomy over his care plan and how well he follows that course of care—if he chooses to follow it at all. Care plans are always reliant on the patient: refilling prescriptions, attending doctor appointments, getting regular exercise, conforming to diet restrictions, and more.

When a patient takes his medicine, he reduces his risk of recurrence and increases his chance of recovery. When he follows his outpatient treatment guide or performs physical therapy exercises on his own at home, he is more likely to recover fully. All of these activities benefit the patient while realizing lower costs for providers.

So how can healthcare companies motivate patients to be active participants in their care plans?

Motivation is a core tenet of gamification. After all, it was designed to encourage the right behaviors from the user or consumer. In healthcare, gamification should be used to motivate patients to invest in their own care, producing results for both themselves and their providers. Gamification therefore serves as the incentive: delivering motivation in a way that is seamless with the patient's daily life, easy to adopt—and, dare we say, fun.

While there are many tools currently available to monitor and encourage health, fitness, chronic disease, rehabilitation, and more, games power these tools with the promise of a reward. That reward can take many forms: entertainment, monetary incentive, or pure competition. And in doing so, it increases the likelihood of improving individual health outcomes, gaining a better analysis of individual patients, augmenting personalization efforts, and lowering costs for healthcare businesses.

What does gamification look like in action?

On your mark, get set, go!

Healthcare leaders need to integrate better technologies to drive patient adherence and lower costs. Gamification is an intuitive way to drive both simultaneously, and the success of this approach is already on the books.

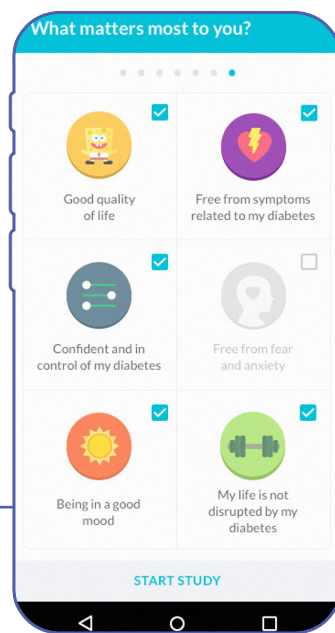
Gamification is wildly successful within the segment of health and fitness. It makes sense: most sports are fundamentally games themselves and provide competitive motivation for health and fitness.

Tracking activities through IoT devices becomes an easy way to reward behavior, and a variety of different businesses have been providing these apps for years. Smart watches equipped with Apple's suite of fitness apps, and the now infamous concept of "closing your rings," FitBit's 10,000 steps, MyFitnessPal's diet and activity tracker, and more provide a means for users to track movements as well as incentive to do more.

Setting goals and tracking improvement is a key factor in the success of all of these programs and their users' outcomes.

Tracking data doesn't need to be limited to movement either—for example, weight on a scale or a heartrate that is lowered over time are easily measured metrics to gauge progress. It is when these metrics are paired with the right incentive (emotional, monetary reward, etc.) that we see motivation, and ultimately behavior change.

Gamified tracking can also be applied to chronic illnesses like diabetes. SoftServe partnered with Outcomes Based Healthcare to develop **Sense360**, an application that helped patients with diabetes by monitoring phone use to detect changes in the condition.



But while it's easy to incentivize some with competition and beating personal goals, many need more motivation. Motivation can be a roadblock on the way to better health for those who don't exercise, are less motivated, or chronically ill, and even in rehabilitation.

For those companies unsure where to start gamification efforts, a first foray can be a modification of an existing loyalty program. In this "game," patients are rewarded with discounts for following medication regimens, fulfilling certain activities, attending certain gyms, ordering healthy meals, and more. This format requires several components: partnership on the part of the healthcare business, regulatory compliance from the partner and the patient, and a reliable way of tracking activities, such as via IoT devices and GPS.

The game in this scenario can be a few different things: awarding those who track rewards the most often, unlocking better monetary offers that map to more difficult activities, or creating beacons at different partner locations to register check-ins during a scavenger hunt, for example.

Health insurer AIA Australia offers members the app AIA Vitality to cash in on a variety of rewards for healthy lifestyle choices. Activity-tracking IoT devices sync to AIA's app and members track their fitness progress, redeeming rewards when goals are met. Rewards include discounts for partnered gym memberships and cash vouchers that can be spent at partnered stores. For those motivated more by helping others, members also have the option to donate rewards to charities. With the latest iteration of the Vitality app, **AIA Australia experienced a 40% increase** in core engagement over the past two years.

Leveling up in Healthcare

For those who already employ gamification, or those who want to operate at the cutting edge, consider the next level: immersive experiences.

Immersive experiences are creating a lot of excitement in the healthcare industry. Augmented and virtual reality (AR and VR) components integrate fitness games into real life. By eliminating game controllers and screens, everyday movements seamlessly transform into an immersive game that keeps patients active.

Take the popular AR game of 2017, Pokémon Go. Players use smartphones to explore their surroundings in order to collect different Pokémon and accomplish different challenges. **One study found** that the game increased the number of those who walked more than 10,000 steps each day from 15% to 28%. **Another study** showed that playing raised moderate to vigorous physical activity by about 50 minutes per week and reduced sedentary behavior by 30 minutes a day. Imagine integrating this concept into a healthcare app to lower costs and boost patient activity.

Outside the realm of fitness, AR and VR are already being applied to patients going through rehabilitation and recovery, using motivating scenarios to stretch abilities. Patients within this segment include those with disabilities, those relearning motor functions, recovering from surgery, or simply undertaking preventative maintenance. Patients immerse themselves in different realities that make exercises engaging and different, allowing them to keep their minds on accomplishing the task at hand.

AR and VR increase activity for these patients, creating scenarios that compel them to complete their courses of care.

In a recent study, stroke patients who underwent virtual reality rehab had improved arm and hand movements compared to conventional rehab after four weeks of therapy. In the months following the study, doctors found that virtual reality patients continued to have better mobility than the non-virtual reality patients.

Push the play button

The benefits of gamification in healthcare are myriad—so why aren't more healthcare companies gamifying?



One reason is execution. Execution is key—patients won't respond to games that are poorly delivered or deployed, that don't effectively engage, or that rely on legacy technology.

Successful gamification is all about experience design. Get into the mind of the patient and unlock motivation factors that will drive behaviors and provide a user experience to deliver them, accomplishing business goals.

The game is the vehicle for solving patient needs. When considering gamification in healthcare, we recommend the following questions:

- **What problem will this solve?** – Regimen compliance, fitness goals, maintaining wellness, meeting rehabilitation goals, adjusting to a lifestyle change
- **Who are my patients?** – Are they looking for health and fitness, monitoring chronic illness, improving rehabilitation experiences
- **What behavior is being driven?** – Exercise, activity, diet, monitoring body data, appointment attendance
- **What is the motivation?** – Monetary, discount, competition, journey

From there, there are innumerable possibilities for building the perfect game, engaging patients, and providing better outcomes.

Games drive positive outcomes

Gamification holds particular promise for the world of healthcare. From capitalizing on health and fitness applications that are already in place, to leveraging AR and VR technology for immersive experiences, games have the power to drive positive outcomes.

Gamification disrupts traditional methods of customer engagement to make interactions positive, entertaining, and profitable. And by creating a motivation for patients to invest in their own health, healthcare businesses are able to lower costs, increase engagement, and improve population health.

How are you interacting with your patients? **Talk to SoftServe** to get started today.

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SoftServe is a digital authority that advises and provides at the cutting-edge of technology. We reveal, transform, accelerate, and optimize the way enterprises and software companies do business. With expertise across healthcare, retail, media, financial services, software, and more, we implement end-to-end solutions to deliver the innovation, quality, and speed that our clients' users expect.

SoftServe delivers open innovation—from generating compelling new ideas, to developing and implementing transformational products and services.

Our work and client experience is built on a foundation of empathetic, human-focused experience design that ensures continuity from concept to release.

We empower enterprises and software companies to (re)identify differentiation, accelerate solution development, and vigorously compete in today's digital economy. No matter where you are in your journey.

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