

Learning at Play

Games offer a fun, effective and interactive way to engage adult learners • BY BRANDON HALL



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Your kids aren't the only ones who enjoy playing computer games. Game-based learning is an effective and interactive way to engage adult learners. Here are five examples that can help guide game-based learning initiatives:

To supplement environmental compliance coordinators' knowledge, the **U.S. Marine Corps** uses a game-based training program called Mission Impact. The training places the learner in a mock battalion to improve the learner's environmental performance. The player's mission: Keep the overall average compliance at 80 percent or better. This simulation encourages users to consult the e-learning modules for guidance and hints, just as ECCs are encouraged to attend meetings at their base for information and training. Results showed high levels of engagement, including repeat play extending beyond the requirements of the training program.

Financial planning can be a dry subject for many people. **USAA**, a financial planning/insurance/banking provider, uses game-based training to jazz up the subject matter while improving financial acumen among mid-level executives. USAA developed Behind the Numbers, a simulation program that is organized into financial quarters. For each quarter, executives work in teams to make decisions in four key areas: sales and marketing, operations, research and development, and finance. One participant stated that "the simulation was the best part of the course and the best way for the teams to work together. This is the part of the course that provided the most long-term learning for me."

Sistema Shyam TeleServices Ltd. (SSTL) wanted a unique way to orient new hires and establish itself in the Indian telecom industry. In the company's Orientation Adventure game, each trainee's avatar completes missions using actual SSTL information, acquiring knowledge about the organization by following instructions and clues that direct him or her to find and collect information from company resources embedded in the program. According to SSTL "the combination of fantasy, curiosity, challenge, control and recognition made this game a very powerful learning tool."

To teach the principles of motor insurance, **ICICI**

Lombard General Insurance Company Limited, in Mumbai, India, successfully bet on Kingdom Konquest, a game-based simulation that positions the learner as a leader who has to win contests of increasing complexity to gain maximum scoring. Each contest brings out one or more critical dimensions of learning to operate profitably in a fiercely competitive industry. The objective is the basic goal of any business: to maximize sales and minimize costs. Students race against time to achieve the right mix of motor segments and choose the right mix of sales targets for each motor segment. The game allows managers to learn key concepts in a fun, nonthreatening way and teaches them to successfully achieve a sales target within a fixed duration with a profitable portfolio mix. According to one ICICI business manager, "We are really excited to use game-based learning as a training tool." Learners said that Kingdom Konquest "resembles very closely most of the practical scenarios in motor insurance," and that "it would be a great learning experience for junior-level managers to improve their underwriting skills." Another learner said, "The game is very interactive and keeps one engaged and thinking continuously about the best mix of power/casualty."

The Xbox Customer Care Framework (CCF) Assessment simulator assesses **Microsoft Xbox** support agents using realistic scenarios and software simulations. According to Microsoft, "Simulating the real-life circumstances helped in generating the stress and anxiety of customer calls, especially for new recruits for whom this becomes the 'first-call' experience, without compromising the sanctity of customer relations and customer support systems." The game-like environment allows agents to "practice, falter, learn and measure their abilities." Overall, Microsoft said "this solution exceeded the definition of effectiveness beyond our expectations."

Game-based learning initiatives teach employees skills crucial to their day-to-day work and to their overall careers. These courses are also inventive and visually appealing, creating buzz and making for great presentations to upper management. When your development plans and budget allow, give game-based training a try. **CLO**