



WHITEPAPER

Play with Purpose:

Exploring the Impact of Serious Games on Learning and Training

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This research comprehensively explores how serious games revolutionize corporate training and business by improving employee engagement, fostering skill development, and promoting innovative problem-solving strategies.



Table of content

FOREWORD	04
1. INTRODUCTION TO SERIOUS GAMES	05
1.1. Serious Games Market Overview.....	06
1.2. How Companies Use Serious Games in Their Practice.....	08
2. SERIOUS GAMES IN CORPORATE TRAINING & SIMULATIONS	10
2.1. How Well Do Serious Games Meet Corporate Training Objectives?	11
2.2. Success and Shortcomings of Implementing Serious Games in Business Simulations	12
3. IMPACT OF SERIOUS GAMES ON KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION AND RETENTION	13
3.1. Roles of Serious Games in Enhancing Learning Retention.....	14
3.2. Business Outcomes and ROI: Effect of Serious Games on Employee Knowledge Levels.....	15
4. A STEP-BY-STEP PLAN TO BOOST EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SERIOUS GAMES	16
5. GAME OVER OR LEVEL UP? THE FUTURE TRAJECTORY OF SERIOUS GAMES IN CORPORATE TRAINING	18
ABOUT PROGRAM-ACE	19
REFERENCES	20



Foreword

As the modern corporate landscape evolves, so must our methods to engage, educate, and empower our employees. The traditional boundaries of professional development and training are being pushed by innovative strategies, chief among them the integration of serious games. This whitepaper delves into this exciting intersection of learning and gameplay, comprehensively analyzing how this tool is changing the face of corporate training and business operations.

The value of serious games goes beyond mere entertainment. It has been proven to foster knowledge acquisition and retention, enhance employee engagement, as well as meet training goals in ways that traditional methods may need to be revised. These educational games leverage the principles of human psychology, motivation, and interaction, creating experiences that are immersive, engaging, and inherently rewarding.

Whether it's a virtual treasure hunt, a digital escape room, or a company-wide championship, these games are resonating with employees at an unprecedented level, inasmuch as they bring elements of fun, competition, collaboration, and self-improvement to the workplace. Our goal in this whitepaper is to shed light on this transformative trend, highlighting the compelling research and real-world examples that demonstrate the efficacy and potential of serious games in the business world.



1. Introduction to Serious Games

Serious games refer to a distinctive form of digital media that effectively combines educational content with the engaging nature of games. These purpose-oriented games aim to educate, develop skills, and stimulate critical thinking while maintaining fun as well as competition.



At their core, serious games are interactive digital platforms designed primarily to tackle challenges and enhance cognitive abilities rather than purely providing amusement [1].

While sharing the same digital canvas as their recreational counterparts, these games offer distinct learning and skill development advantages to users.

Serious games serve as innovative tools for users to comprehend particular subjects, bolstering their grasp of complex skills and competencies. In essence, they extend beyond entertainment, leveraging the power of gameplay to foster enriched learning experiences and foster long-lasting proficiency.

Unique to serious games is their ability to seamlessly integrate learning objectives within a game-based environment, promoting knowledge retention, skill acquisition, and the development of certain attitudes or behaviors. Unlike traditional games designed purely for entertainment, serious games serve a more lavish, often educational or strategic purpose.



1.1. Serious Games Market Overview

The serious games market has become a vibrant economic landscape, with the global market size reaching \$9.1bn in 2022 [2]. The momentum is not showing any signs of slowing down. According to the IMARC Group, this market is projected to hit a value of \$31.8bn by 2028. This promising growth trajectory, characterized by an impressive Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 21.6% between 2023 and 2028, is attributable to several key factors, all of which highlight the role of serious games in learning and knowledge retention [2].

Serious Games Market Size



The increasing demand for serious games in the corporate world stands out among these growth drivers. Enterprises globally are turning to these digital tools to promote user engagement and foster efficient learning environments. The rising incorporation of virtual reality (VR) technologies in serious games significantly enhances the gaming experience, creating an immersive, realistic environment for training and development.

Moreover, the focus on serious games reflects the growing emphasis on creating healthy work environments. Companies enhance employee productivity by providing comprehensive training experiences, thereby driving market growth. The educational sector is also embracing serious games. Teachers increasingly use these tools to avoid conventional teaching methods, encouraging experimentation and active learning.

Notably, the market's expansion is also fueled by substantial investments from governing agencies and private firms in the healthcare, defense, and education sectors. These investors recognize the value of serious games, especially their benefits, such as improved decision-making, enhanced self-monitoring, and superior problem-recognition skills.

Furthermore, the rejuvenation of serious games and their proven return on investment (ROI) are boosting the market's growth. With such attributes, serious games are becoming compelling for stakeholders across sectors.



The journey of the serious games market from a niche segment to a significant contributor in the training and development sphere has been remarkable. As we move forward, the market's burgeoning size, driven by technological innovations as well as a changing corporate and educational paradigm, offers rich opportunities for further exploration and growth.

Serious games designed for platforms like smartphones, PCs, and consoles are widely adopted for training, simulation, marketing, and human resource management across diverse industries, including education, healthcare, defense, and retail. Despite the disruptions caused by the Russia-Ukraine war and ensuing economic sanctions, the global serious games market displayed resilient growth, surging from \$8.31bn in 2022 to over \$10bn in 2023 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22.5%. The market is projected to reach more than \$22bn in 2027, expanding at a CAGR of 22.0%, another resource claims [3].

The advent of technologies like cloud computing, virtual reality, and metaverse has reshaped the serious games market, with major players introducing innovative solutions. An illustrative example is Amazon's launch of AWS Cloud Quest in 2022, a role-playing game designed to simplify learning cloud computing techniques. Acquisitions have also played a role in market consolidation and product diversification, as observed in Wicket Gaming AB's acquisition of Wegesrand Group in 2021 [3].

The adoption of VR in training and development activities is a significant trend expected to fuel the market's growth. Virtual reality provides a safe and interactive learning environment, allowing users to practice new skills, learn from mistakes, and progress professionally. These applications, along with the market's increasing accessibility, contribute to the optimistic forecast for the serious games industry. Major players include BreakAway Ltd., Designing Digitally Inc., Triseum LLC, Revelian, and Promotion Software GmbH, among others.



1.2. How Companies Use Serious Games in Their Practice

Serious games are more than just digitized fun; they have become instrumental tools in various corporate practices. Be it enhancing productivity, facilitating employee learning, or boosting engagement levels, serious games are finding their way into corporate routines. The reasons for this integration are manifold.

Incorporation of social experiences.

Sharing and discussing experiences collectively has been proven to enhance learning. Social occasions, if integrated within serious games, can aid in building an engaging community of learners. Companies like Google have leveraged this approach for their training programs. While not using gaming directly, Google created a social media buzz around their #iamremarkable workshops [4], showing the power of shared experiences.

Serious games for emotional intelligence.

Serious games have the unique ability to improve not only practical skills but also emotional intelligence and empathy. Games like Chaos Theory's In Their Shoes [8] and The Great Fire [9] offer a glimpse into diverse lived experiences and provide a platform to test decision-making skills in low-risk environments. Many corporate workplaces are beginning to integrate such games for training in communication, empathy, and interpersonal relations.

Utilization of extended reality (XR).

The incorporation of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality, collectively known as extended reality, has emerged as a revolutionary trend in serious games. XR enables realistic and immersive learning experiences, which has been found to increase learning effectiveness by up to 76%, according to a joint study by Stanford University and Technical University Denmark [5]. Companies at the forefront of this technology, such as the University School of Medicine Atlanta for surgeon training [6] and Walmart for retail training, use it as a pivotal tool for workplace instruction [7].

“Therefore, the application of serious games in the corporate sector is rapidly evolving. As more companies recognize their potential, serious games are increasingly being used to cultivate a competent, adaptable, and engaged workforce.”



Based on a survey completed by 551 individuals, it was found that 25% of the respondents utilize gamification in their learning process, while 20% incorporate serious games. Moreover, the whitepaper distinguishes between gamification and serious games, shedding light on their predominant three applications. Nearly half (49%) of the surveyed population uses these tools for regularly training all staff members. A significant portion (42%) implements them during the introduction and assimilation phase of new employees. Additionally, one-third (34%) utilize them in programs designed to cultivate high-potential employees [10].

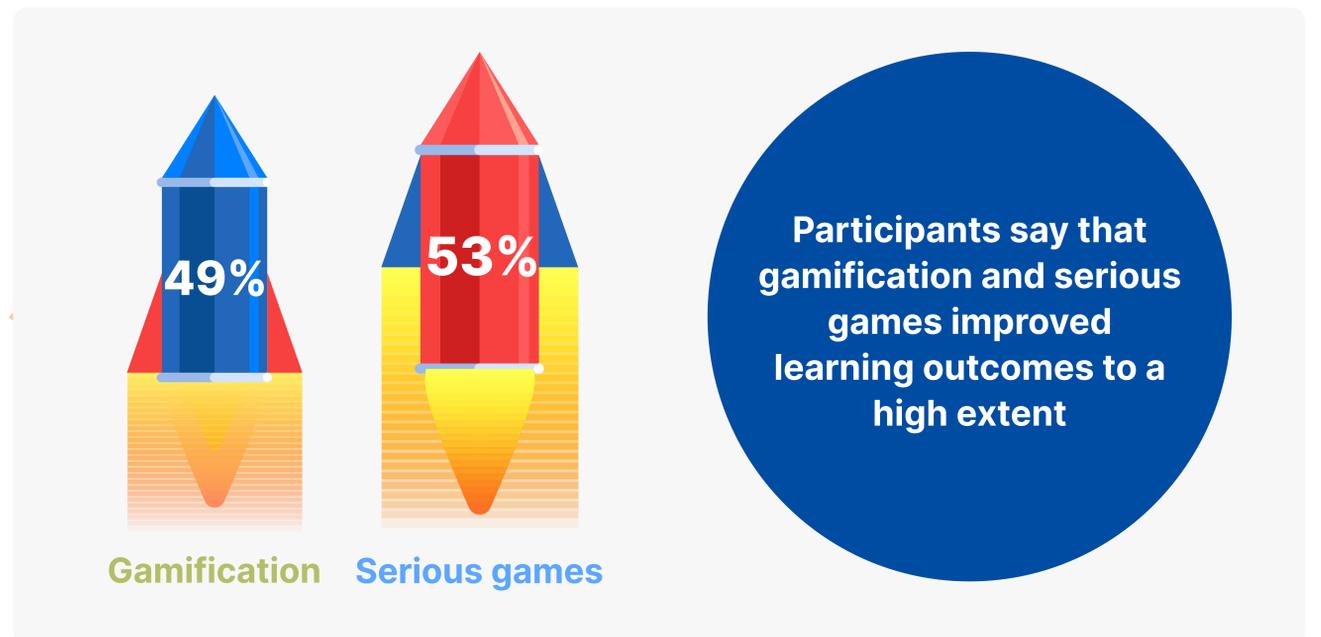
Furthermore, this research propels a discussion on the potential of gamification and serious games to bolster role-play activities. These may be instrumental in leadership and management training, customer service improvement, sales development, and enhancing general soft skills. The intent is to underscore how these playful learning techniques can significantly elevate the overall effectiveness of corporate training.

551

people completed the survey

25%
use Gamification in learning

20%
use Serious games in learning



Top implementations of Gamification and Serious games in learning



2. Serious Games in Corporate Training & Simulations

Serious games, with their unique blend of entertainment and education, have begun to shape the landscape of corporate training and simulations significantly. Their interactive nature, inherent appeal, and the immersive experiences they offer provide an excellent platform for learning and growth. The following points highlight the key advantages of implementing serious games in corporate training programs.

- 1 Enhanced knowledge assimilation.** Serious games reinvent the delivery of complex information. Unlike traditional teaching methods, which may sometimes struggle to convey intricate concepts, serious games present the same data more engagingly and interactively, thereby facilitating better comprehension along with retention.
- 2 Employee satisfaction boost.** Incorporating games into the training process provides a refreshing change for the workforce. This unique, dynamic, and enjoyable approach to learning is likely to be viewed as a positive, stress-free experience, contributing to increased employee satisfaction levels.
- 3 Fostering creative problem-solving abilities.** Games inherently challenge players to achieve specific goals, often without providing explicit instructions. This format encourages creative thinking and problem-solving, as players must rely on their resourcefulness to navigate multiple pathways to success.
- 4 Efficient tracking of progress and behavior.** Serious games provide an efficient means to monitor and track progress. They facilitate data collection on user behavior, offering insights that may not be easily obtainable through traditional assessment methods. The pressure-free environment of games often leads to more honest decision-making from users.
- 5 Promotion of self-confidence.** Serious games can serve as a tool to boost self-esteem and confidence among employees. They offer a nurturing environment where success is acknowledged and celebrated, promoting self-confidence. Companies can benefit significantly from this increase in self-esteem as it often translates into more decisive, success-oriented employees with improved performance indicators.



Ultimately, serious games offer a potent combination of knowledge transfer, skill development, data collection, and motivation. These benefits make them an ideal tool to incorporate into corporate training and simulation scenarios.

2.1. How Well Do Serious Games Meet Corporate Training Objectives?

Serious games have demonstrated high efficacy in achieving corporate training goals in various sectors, due to their engaging, immersive, and interactive learning environments. These tools excel in understandably presenting complex concepts and fostering problem-solving skills. The following are some real-world instances of their application:

IBM

IBM's INNOV8 game.

This tool was used to train IBM's employees and clients in business process management. Participants actively engage in the learning process through gameplay, substantially improving their problem-solving abilities [11].

Deloitte.

Deloitte Leadership Academy program. This innovative program brought gamification into executive training. With leaderboards, badges, and status levels, it encouraged competitive spirit and incentivized users to achieve higher performance. The implementation resulted in a 37% daily return rate increase [12].



McDonald's till training game.

McDonald's leveraged the power of serious games to train new staff on cash register operations. This game-based training approach enhanced training speed and decreased errors at the counter, leading to improved customer satisfaction [13].

SIEMENS

Siemens' Plantville game.

Siemens introduced an immersive game replicating the experience of managing a plant. The game allowed employees to understand complex processes and systems engagingly and interactively [14].

Therefore, serious games have repeatedly shown their potency in meeting corporate training objectives. They not only facilitate improved knowledge acquisition but also enhance employee satisfaction and performance.

2.2. Success and Shortcomings of Implementing Serious Games in Business Simulations

Serious games have been adopted progressively in corporate training and simulations, proving their potential as effective and engaging learning tools. Yet, as with any method, they have both advantages and limitations that must be taken into account. The table below provides an insightful comparison of the successful aspects and potential shortcomings of implementing serious games in corporate settings. It offers a balanced view, backed by research and real-world examples, to help business owners evaluate whether this innovative approach aligns with their organizational objectives and resources.

Successful Outcomes	Shortcomings
<p>Improved knowledge retention. Studies have demonstrated that serious games improve retention rates due to their interactive and engaging nature. For instance, a 2021 study found that interactive 3D serious games improved retention rates in training by up to 3 times compared to traditional methods [15].</p>	<p>Technology learning curve. Not all employees may be tech-savvy and, thus, might face difficulties adapting to game-based learning. This can create initial resistance and slightly slow down the training process.</p>
<p>Enhanced employee engagement. Serious games captivate learners with their immersive environments and interactive gameplay. Research by the BMC Medical Education revealed that employees who trained using serious games were more factually knowledgeable than those who used traditional methods [16].</p>	<p>High development costs. Developing a serious game tailored to specific training needs can be costly. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may find it difficult to bear these initial costs.</p>
<p>Develops soft skills. Games allow for the development of soft skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and teamwork in a low-risk environment. For example, World Climate Simulation, a serious game developed by MIT, has been used successfully to promote understanding and decision-making skills regarding climate change [17].</p>	<p>Difficulty in measuring ROI. While serious games have clear benefits, quantifying these benefits into measurable returns on investment (ROI) can be challenging. Without clear metrics, organizations may find it difficult to justify the initial investment.</p>
<p>Instant feedback and evaluation. Serious games provide immediate feedback, allowing learners to understand their mistakes and improve their skills in real time. For example, the U.S. Navy uses Strike Group Defender to train personnel in recognizing and responding to missile threats, providing instant feedback [18].</p>	<p>Maintenance and updation. As with any technology, serious games require regular updates and maintenance to stay relevant and effective. This can lead to additional costs and resource allocation.</p>

3. Impact of Serious Games on Knowledge Acquisition and Retention

The impact of serious games on knowledge acquisition and retention is a pivotal area of interest for businesses. Comprehensive studies have established the benefits of serious games for corporate training, providing empirical evidence of their positive impact.



Improved Knowledge Retention

Serious games also foster better knowledge retention. The Journal of Educational Psychology published a study by Vogel et al., which indicated that students trained using computer-based simulations and games retained information longer than those who used traditional teaching methods [20]. Thus, it's been proven that the interactive nature of serious games helps to reinforce learning materials and improve recall.



Enhanced Knowledge Acquisition

One of the primary benefits of serious games is their ability to facilitate knowledge acquisition. According to a study by Wouters et al. in the Educational Research Review, serious games are more effective than traditional methods of instruction in terms of knowledge acquisition [19]. They enable learning in a dynamic, interactive environment, increasing engagement and thereby improving the learning process.



Increased Motivation and Engagement

Gamification elements like rewards, competition, and progress tracking in serious games can significantly enhance learner motivation and engagement. According to a research paper by Sitzmann in Personnel Psychology, trainees reported higher satisfaction and motivation in game-based learning environments [21].



Real-World Application and Problem-Solving

Serious games often use realistic scenarios that mirror real-world situations in order to provide a hands-on experience for trainees. Research by Garris, Ahlers, & Driskell in the Journal of Applied Psychology suggests that this can help learners understand and apply concepts effectively, enhancing their problem-solving abilities [22].

3.1. Roles of Serious Games in Enhancing Learning Retention

Adopting serious games in corporate training has unveiled a potent approach to boosting learning retention. Their roles in this process span from providing immersive learning experiences to promoting active participation.

- **Reinforcing knowledge through repetition.** Serious games excel in creating a learning environment where repetition feels relaxed and relaxed. This is achieved through cleverly designed challenges that necessitate the application of the same principles multiple times. The more often employees engage with these challenges, the more they reinforce their understanding and memory of the underlying concepts.
- **Providing contextual learning experiences.** One significant role of serious games is presenting learning materials in a contextually relevant and immersive environment. This goes beyond the theoretical approach of traditional methods. By providing simulations of real-world scenarios, serious games allow employees to see their knowledge's practical applications and bolster long-term memory retention.
- **Promoting active learning.** Serious games turn passive learners into active participants. They demand direct involvement from the users, making them take the initiative, make decisions, and experience the consequences. This interactive engagement propels an active learning process, which is more effective in enhancing knowledge retention.
- **Eliciting emotional engagement.** Serious games can provoke an emotional response from the learners, which aids in learning retention. When the learning process is associated with positive emotions, it often leads to better engagement and retention. With their stimulating visuals and compelling narratives, well-designed serious games are apt to evoke such emotional engagement.
- **Encouraging collaborative learning.** Some serious games are designed to promote team collaboration. Doing so fosters a shared learning experience where ideas and knowledge are exchanged. This social aspect of learning significantly enhances retention as learners validate and reinforce their understanding through discussion and cooperation.

Thus, serious games offer a transformative approach to corporate training, emphasizing active and immersive learning experiences that promote enhanced knowledge retention. These digital tools harness the power of contextual learning, repetitive reinforcement, emotional engagement, and collaborative experiences to deliver lasting impacts on learning outcomes. The value of these game-based strategies in corporate learning and development is considerable, leading to more proficient and confident employees and ultimately, driving business success.



3.2. Business Outcomes and ROI: Effect of Serious Games on Employee Knowledge Levels

Investment in serious games and business performance.

One of the most compelling advantages of serious games is their direct impact on an organization's overall performance. The games, designed with specific learning objectives, significantly increase the knowledge levels of employees. For instance, a study by IBM showed a significant increase in sales after implementing a serious game in their training program [23].

Decrease in training costs.

Serious games, once developed, can be used repeatedly, reducing the cost per user over time. This creates a positive ROI, as seen by Cisco, which reported huge savings annually in their sales training after transitioning to serious gaming [24].

Improved employee engagement and retention.

Companies have reported improved employee engagement and lower turnover rates due to the fun and interactive nature of serious games. For instance, Deloitte's leadership training program, which implemented serious games, led to a 46% increase in employee retention [25].

Reduction in onboarding time.

Serious games have proven effective in reducing the time needed for onboarding new employees. For example, McDonald's reported a 50% reduction in onboarding time after implementing a fast food training game [26].

Business Outcome	Example
 Increased sales	IBM reported a boost in sales
 Cost savings	Cisco reported cost savings after implementing a sales training program
 Improved employee retention	Deloitte reported a 50% increase in retention
 Reduced onboarding time	McDonald's achieved a 50% reduction in onboarding time

4. A Step-by-Step Plan to Boost Employee Engagement Through Serious Games

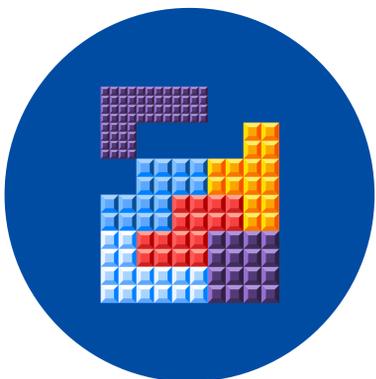
In the ever-evolving corporate landscape, boosting employee engagement is pivotal for ensuring effective knowledge acquisition and higher productivity. One innovative way to do this is by implementing serious games in training programs and simulations. Serious games, designed with a primary purpose beyond entertainment, such as education or skill development, can provide a fun, interactive, and engaging way for employees to learn.

The following is a comprehensive step-by-step plan outlining how businesses can leverage serious games to enhance employee engagement, fostering an environment conducive to continuous learning and growth.



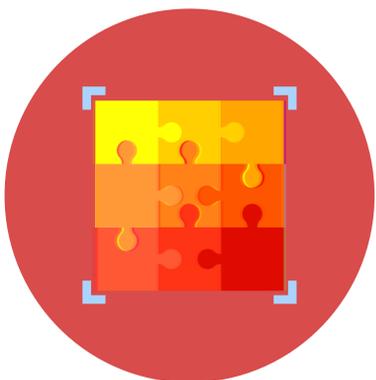
Step 1. Understand your objectives.

Before implementing serious games, you must identify your training objectives. What skills or knowledge do you want your employees to acquire? This step lays the foundation for the entire process.



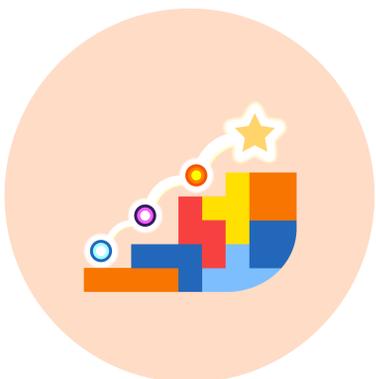
Step 2. Choose the appropriate serious game.

Not all games are suitable for all types of training. For example, a puzzle game might be great for problem-solving skills, but a simulation game would be more suitable for operational training. Make sure to choose a game that aligns with your objectives and address a serious games development studio to help you shape a product that does the job for you.



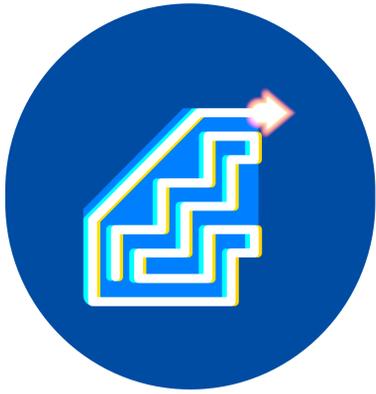
Step 3. Customize the game to your needs.

Serious games can often be tailored to meet your specific training needs. Customization can increase relevance and engagement by incorporating company-specific information, creating unique challenges, or adding branded elements.



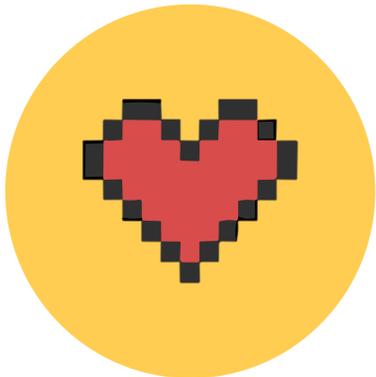
Step 4. Train the trainers.

This type of media serves as a departure from traditional training methods. Thus, it's crucial that whoever is leading the training sessions understands how the game works and how to guide employees through it. This may involve training sessions or workshops for trainers.



Step 5. Implement the game.

Once everything is in place, it's time to roll out the game to your employees. Ensure you have a system for tracking progress and providing feedback to enhance the learning experience.



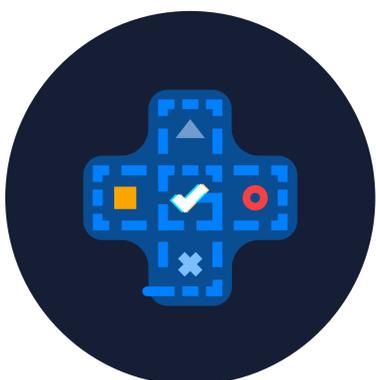
Step 6. Evaluate and iterate.

Like all training initiatives, serious games should be continuously evaluated for effectiveness. This might involve collecting feedback from employees, reviewing progress data, and measuring performance against benchmarks. Use this information to refine the game and the training process.



Step 7. Celebrate success.

Recognizing and rewarding progress is key to maintaining engagement. Whether through public recognition, in-game rewards, or other incentives, celebrating success can motivate employees to continue their learning journey.



Step 8. Integrate learning into daily work.

Finally, ensure that the skills and knowledge gained through the serious game are applied in the workplace. This might involve follow-up tasks, opportunities to practice new skills or integration of game elements into daily work processes.

Implementing serious games for corporate training is a multifaceted process that involves strategic planning, careful selection of game types, customization to meet specific training needs and continuous evaluation. Done correctly, it can lead to significant increases in employee engagement, knowledge retention, and overall training effectiveness. Serious games offer a unique and exciting way to boost employee engagement, cultivating a more knowledgeable, skilled, and enthusiastic workforce.

5. Game Over or Level Up? The Future Trajectory of Serious Games in Corporate Training



As we look ahead to the future of corporate training, it's clear that serious games are far from declaring a "game over." On the contrary, we stand at the precipice of a "level up," as the serious games market is poised to expand exponentially, redefining the training and development landscape on a global scale.

The burgeoning advancements in technology, such as virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing, are set to redefine the dynamics of serious games, making them more immersive, realistic, and accessible. We can expect more companies across a broader range of sectors to harness the potential of these technologies to create more engaging and effective learning experiences for their workforce.

We are also likely to see a surge in personalized, adaptive, serious games. These games will harness data analytics and machine learning to adapt to each learner's proficiency and learning style, providing a tailor-made learning experience that maximizes knowledge acquisition and retention.

Furthermore, the ubiquity of smartphones and the ever-increasing computational power of these devices will make serious games more accessible. This means that employees will be able to engage in learning and skill development anytime, anywhere, breaking free from the constraints of time and location. While the future holds immense potential, it is also fraught with challenges. Issues related to data privacy, the digital divide, and creating universally appealing games that cater to a diverse workforce are hurdles that need to be addressed.

Overall, the future trajectory of serious games in corporate training is brimming with possibilities. As we move forward, businesses that effectively leverage serious games in their training programs stand to gain a competitive edge, boosting not just their employee engagement and knowledge levels but also their productivity, profitability, and overall success. In this rapidly evolving scenario, it is not "game over" for serious games in corporate training, but rather a significant "level up" toward a more dynamic and engaging learning experience.



About Program-Ace

PROGRAM • ACE

Throughout the last 30 years, Program-Ace has been dedicated to pioneering the future of software development, emphasizing XR, Web3, metaverse, and serious game development.

Our seasoned team of professionals dives deeply into the needs of every client, ensuring tailor-made solutions that resonate with industry-specific requirements.

We strive to stay ahead of technological trends through research and innovation, guaranteeing the best in the field.

Our portfolio, dotted with successful projects, stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence.

Partner with Program-Ace and push your serious games to the next level!



If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at rfp@program-ace.com



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