

Chapter 96

Rhetoric of Play: Utilizing the Gamer Factor in Selecting and Training Employees

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the psychology of the gamer is important not just in studying video game players but also for understanding behaviors and characteristics of individuals who are non-players of video games. Currently, there is a gap in literature concerning the utilization of the gamer in selecting and training potential and current employees in organizational settings. The benefits of utilizing the gamer factor in selecting and training potential employees are: 1) identifying a qualified candidate who is a good fit to the organizational needs and 2) achieving and maintaining competitive advantage over competitors. Organizations are encouraged to utilize the Enneagram of Personality and Emotional Intelligence measures to identify gamers' other characteristics (O) and utilize the Tavistock method to assess gamers' factors. The Tavistock approach has been utilized in various formats including the Apprentice.

INTRODUCTION

Although player motivation is one of the main concerns of computer gaming, research so far has been able to identify only a limited set of motives, which are not founded on formal theories of human motivation. Human motivation is relevant in games because video games provide an extraordinary kind of intimacy with machines in interactive and rule-governed micro-worlds, where players enter into a virtual environment of infinite possibilities, experiencing altered states of consciousness and becoming absorbed

in what is happening onscreen (Turkle, 1984). These virtual environments, which are complex, emergent systems of uncertainty, information and conflict, are governed by the concept of play that refers to a range of activities accompanied by a state of pleasure and enjoyment. Sutton-Smith's (1997) seven rhetorics of play - progress, fate, power, identity, the imaginary, the self, and the frivolous - define the specific forms and uses of play embedded in our everyday lives.

A computer game can embody more than one rhetoric, but play as a form of conflict and contest (power), a means of expressing an identity and

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belonging to a group (identity), as imagination and creativity (the imaginary), and a means of relaxation and escape (the self), are the most common forms experienced in computer games. Regardless of the embedded play rhetoric, one of the primary concerns of industrial and organizational practitioners is the utilization of the gamer as a factor in selecting employees, and training employees in an organizational setting. Understanding the psychology of the gamer is important not just in studying video game players but also for understanding behaviors and characteristics of non-player characters (NPCs). As an industrial and organizational practitioner and researcher, it appears that currently there is still a gap in the literature concerning both the understanding of these psychological factors and the utilization of psychological factors of the gamer in selecting and training potential and current employees in organizational settings.

This gap in the literature is due to three reasons. First, in the field of psychology, the American Psychological Association (APA) has 56 divisions¹, but none of these addresses this topic and area of study. Second, this topic and area of study is not in the area of business (management or human resources), because both the research (academic) and the practice (practitioners) of business is not clinically-based. Third, more often than not, industrial and organizational (I/O) practitioners [for the business arena (also known as industrial and organizational psychologists for the non-business arena)] are the group of individuals who will, more likely than not, study and utilize this area in assessment. However, it does not mean that it is a common practice for I/O practitioners to adopt this methodology and I/O researchers to select this route of research.

Customarily, I/O practitioners are only able to make suggestions and recommendations to firms regarding best practices and most reliable implementations, but it does not mean that firms will accept or even utilize feedback from I/O practitioners. I/O psychologists on the other hand,

frequently conduct (academic) research on topics and issues that are not only relevant, but the most current, in relation to concerns of society. This is often reflected in doctoral research topics, academic research and publications, and tenure for faculty. On the other hand, there are video game and gaming magazines, newsgroups, blogs, and conventions, but not academic video gaming journals or gaming journals per se whose audiences are academic researchers or professional business practitioners. Due to these limitations and barriers, it often results in a lack of current research, as well as updated research data with regards to this topic and area of study in relation to selecting and training employees.

THE GAMER IN VIDEO GAMES

Concern about possible negative effects of violent video games has been accompanied by an increase in research, as is evident from meta-analyses identifying dozens of existing research reports, published over a period of more than twenty years, investigating the relationship between video games and aggression (Anderson, 2004; Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Bartholow & Anderson, 2002; Ivory & Kalyanaraman, 2007; Sherry, 2001). Some scholars claim that enough evidence exists to conclusively link violent video games to real-life aggression (Bushman & Anderson, 2002), but others maintain that there is not sufficient evidence to either support or to oppose this claim to establish a causal link between violent video game play and player aggression (Griffiths, 1999; Scott, 1995; Williams & Skoric, 2005). As such, one major issue frustrating reconciliation of the clouded body of research on violent video game play is the vast advancement in video game technology that has occurred over the years. Researchers agree that video games are advancing and changing rapidly² (Calvert & Tan, 1994; Sherry, 2001; Tamborini, Eastin, Skalski, Lachlan, Fediuk, & Brady, 2004) and that new games provide increasingly realistic

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