Chapter 13
Digitized Public Administration:
Using Gamification to Introduce Innovation

Stefan Piasecki
FHöV NRW, Germany

ABSTRACT

Digitization affects all areas of modern societies. It influences education, industrial production, workplaces, and of course, leisure activities. Its impact can be witnessed in communication, workflow organization, and many other fields. International companies have been the forerunners of digitization efforts, but recently, public administration in Germany has caught up on the development. Being bound to laws and political guidance, public administrations are less flexible to adapt to new changes than privately held companies. Public administration is engaged in a constant fight for the best employees since payment is often lower for comparable work in private economy. Still, citizens expect a level of service and engagement they have learned to know from privately owned businesses. Public administration needs to motivate its employees just like companies have to. To do this, different strategies have been suggested. This chapter attempts to highlight common challenges and possible benefits of using gamification techniques in enhancing motivation in public administration.

INTRODUCTION

Gamification and nudging techniques are designed to engage, tie in, and connect staff with a desired goal. Gamification is the enrichment of everyday processes with motivational aids, be it bonus points, gratifications or competitions and even entertaining elements. Nudging is a form of soft paternalism and guiding of behavior while "preserving liberty" provided by "choice architects" (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 5) attempting to gently steer participants of a process into the direction that is desired by providing a variety of choices people can choose from. However, all choices would be chosen by and also beneficial to the one who acted as the architect of choices. In this article a gamified rollout of a new software in a department of the public administration will be illustrated. The basic premise is a common problem:

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staff in public administrations is often older of age and feels more saturated than comparable cohorts in privately owned companies. In such an environment, changing systems and introducing innovations is often met with skepticism.

For several years, the working world has no longer been dominated solely by issues such as employee participation or collective bargaining. Terms such as Industry 4.0, big data, automation and networking are changing the contents and fields of activity of almost all modern work areas - this applies to highly developed industrial distribution processes as well as to everyday activities in gastronomy. The "Internet of Things" (IoT) connects people with machines, virtual with real locations and all of these and more with network technologies in order to integrate them into digital processes via open interfaces – things become *social* functionalities (from "res agens" to "res socialis") (Atzori, Iera, & Morabito, 2014, p. 99).

Artificial intelligence (AI) and avatar systems like "social bots" (Meske, Amojo, 2018) also help to reduce thresholds in order to foster human interaction by acting "as a significant accelerator of social interaction across hierarchical levels and department structures" (Meske, Amojo, 2018, p. 5) and to raise acceptance and access amongst non-technical professions. The "digital workplace" not only increases efficiency but also allows more flexible forms of work through ubiquity and mobility.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are expected to make the organization more efficient. Collaborative work relies on exchanges and flat hierarchies to help to receive an overview on requirements of different departments as early as possible and, moreover, to integrate customer needs, which are often revealed first to only a few departments with direct customer contact. Self-reliance of the staff is required in many modern administrations in order to confront demands from various sources - but this means that it must be supported by the management. Misunderstandings and bad planning, which can lead to considerable costs and delays, in particular in the introduction of ICT, can be prevented or minimized if the planning and implementation of such systems is collaborative and involves those who will later use or work with these systems because "they are familiar with the work and the context which the software system should support" and are deemed to benefit from it ("UPI – User Participation and Involvement") (Abelein & Paech, 2015, p. 29).

The "digitization" of public administration is a process that has been taking place for almost 40 years. Unlike in the past, however, there is no longer a strict separation between working and leisure time or tools at work and technology used at home. Life today is networked. Open systems such as social media and the constant availability of all information, the simultaneous use of information from a variety of sources as well as the constant accessibility have narrowed boundaries and wide spread technical know-how. While technical innovations of the past have often been tasks of specialized departments and later had to be mediated to the employees through training, companies of the Industry 4.0 era can often presume an already existing basic technical and procedural knowledge among the employees. In return, employees even in public administrations communicate with colleagues and supervisors and request feedback through many channels of communication around the clock. In addition, all activities are monitored and recorded in real time by an unprecedented growth of ubiquitous spatially aware technologies that facilitate not only 24/7 employee accessibility, but also continuous visibility of employees' tasks through workflow tracking technologies.

Productivity and efficiency are subject to complete control. Shirish et al. discuss the "spatial intrusion" into the personal sphere of employees through accessibility and control (Shirish, Chandra, & Srivastava, 2017, p. 5802).