

Putting Effectiveness into Experiential Learning



"This sounds great, but how do we know it is effective at embedding learnings into practical day to day work for our staff? How can we measure it?"

It's an age old question we hear from our clients.

80%

of all learning through traditional methods is lost - unless revisited multiple times

Source: Hermann Ebbinghaus "Forgetting Curve"

Conversations that we have with CEOs, Directors of Learning & Development and Organizational Development across all industries, sectors and countries **nearly always conclude that there are multiple benefits from embedding business simulations into programmes of learning and development.** But how do we make sure what we do is **truly effective**?

The important questions that arise from discussions invariably include the following;

"How can we ensure that the training will surface and address the organizational challenges we've identified?"

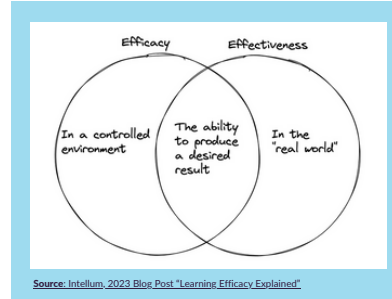
"How can we measure the effectiveness of the training?"

"How will we know that the learnings are embedded into workplace environments?"

And these are all entirely valid questions.

If we focus on positive feedback from participants as sole aim, and woolly, intangible benefits, was it worth the time and financial investment for the client?

It has been proven that bringing groups together solves complexity faster and increases the cognitive load that can be handled at any one time. Running organizations is not easy. But it's imperative to understand what the many, varying objectives of the training are, and **how the learning will be applied, embedded and measured** in the working world effectively after a simulation gameplay has ended.



Efficacy vs Effectiveness

These are often confused but are actually quite different, albeit with blurred lines of commonality.

When you're investing in anything as a business—whether it's hiring staff or creating a learning or CPD program from scratch—you need to have confidence the investment is paying off. For education initiatives in particular, most program owners tend to focus on learning outcomes as a measure of success without considering the business outcomes the program was built to achieve. But to evidence real ROI, both must be considered equally.

Efficacy indicates whether your content is teaching what it's supposed to teach, effectiveness shows you how well that learning is working and being applied on the ground so to speak in the real world.

The measurements of effectiveness are therefore integral to what we do.

How can this look in the world of experiential learning?

'Business simulations' is such a broad category that encompasses the application of game technologies in the workplace and/or education setting. There are so many reasons why a client may want to use them. Is it...

- **Simply for fun?** A team-building exercise that's a bit different?
- To be **embedded as a core part of a learning, talent development or CPD program** for (any level of) staff training?
- **Part of a curriculum for learners** in a further or higher education setting, or for apprentices?
- A **competition scenario** with staff or students competing?
- An **exhibition scenario** with groups of people who have never met before?
- **For groups of military personnel** who are finishing their service and entering a corporate world with limited knowledge of how a business operates?

All of the above, and indeed many many other scenarios are presented to us, all with varying needs and desired outcomes to tailor our training to, effectively.

This underscores the **huge importance we attach to our process**, starting with a needs analysis, through a gameplay phase then into real-world mapping based on our maturity indexes and observations.

What does a maturity index look like for our business simulations?

All of our 'off-the-shelf' simulations can be tailored extensively by facilitation based on a solid needs analysis session with a client. **But what are we/they looking to get out of it in terms of the 'effectiveness' piece?** This is where the maturity index plays a key role.

All of our simulations have a unique maturity index that underpins them (with some commonalities and clear distinctions for each simulation type), with 5 different levels of capability that can be reached by the end of any gameplay. For example, the capabilities might be...

- 1) Communication
- 2) Collaboration
- 3) Inclusivity
- 4) Values
- 5) Feedback
- 6) Performance

There are many more, but we're not willing to give away all our secrets!

We then chart individuals and teams through the levels of capability and score them based on our observations (& theirs) as the simulation progresses. The below diagram and narrative (Page 2) helps to put this into perspective more clearly.



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What does a maturity index look like for our business simulations? (*continued...*).

Each player will be playing in a simulation role within a department, typically the following, with variants for certain simulations or bespoke client versions.

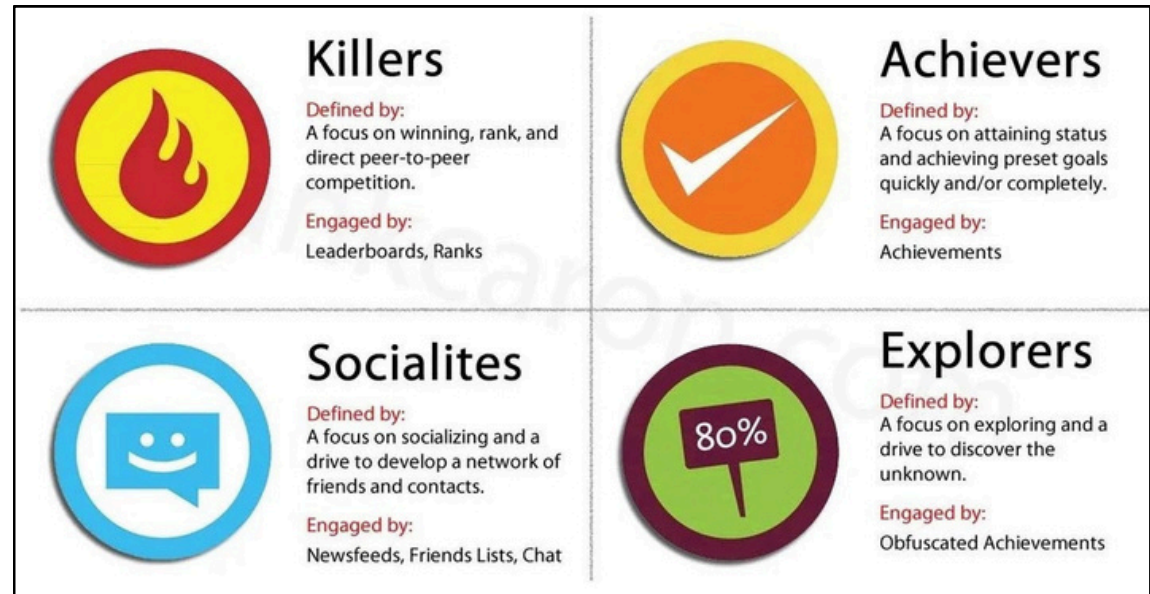
Marketing
Sales
CEO
Delivery/Production
Finance

They will all be making individual and collective decisions, with competing priorities and a plethora of individual approaches. The optimum scenario of course is that they move through levels 1-5 on this maturity index as quickly as possible, but there are so many factors that go into how successfully this can be achieved, and it may also vary by department or individual decision-making.

- online gameplay or in-classroom
- some participants in a room together with some dialing in individually
- user types/gamer personas (*see diagram to the right, and [more info here](#)*)
- how well people already know each other from their working worlds or student cohorts

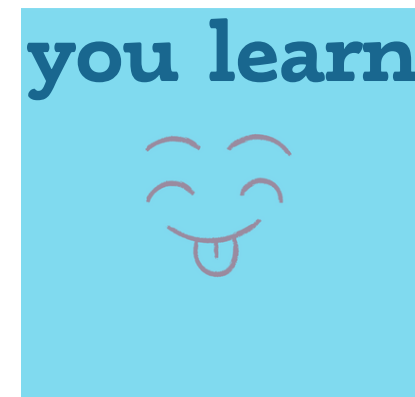
All of these factors and many more directly influence the way in which this maturity index develops in practice. As facilitators we can attribute scores, and encourage participants to score themselves at the end of any simulation, which is valuable to feed into the post-simulation real-world mapping exercise to maximize effectiveness.

The example below looks at 'Communication' as a capability, and the 5 levels through which a participant and/or team may expect to evolve in terms of their maturity as they work together to solve complex problems in the simulation gameplay, with valuable periods of reflection and strategic decision-making between levels of play based on David Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle.



Source: Types of Gamers: Bartle's Taxonomy (Bartle, 1996; Mesch, Kapp, and Blair, 2013)

Sometimes you win,
every time you learn



EXAMPLE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocalising without active listening under pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeting relevant stakeholders and communicating with intended outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established, agreed communication channels across all departments working effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departments working in lockstep with open and transparent dialogue visible and with defined, measurable outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open, calm, considered and consistently optimal communication established verbally and via alternative channels to drive productivity in an agile business

How our business simulations embed effectiveness into learning: 7 stages



26 weeks trade in 26 minutes.

It's fast, intense, exciting, and fun.

Your team is challenged with taking a business from good to great in just a few hours.

Are you ready for the challenge?

View simulations

Here's a step-by-step look at how we embed effectiveness into our simulations:

1. Needs analysis

What does it mean?

Fully understanding the needs of any specific client that underpin the base simulation they choose and the way in which it is facilitated to surface agreed business challenges.

This includes understanding how the client may want to play the simulation. All 3 levels in one day? In person? Remote? Hybrid? Spread out over several weeks? A half day? A competition with multiple teams and facilitators? Aligned to a specific curriculum?

If required, a customized version of the simulation can be developed to meet any specific need.

Benefits

Highly effective simulation design, preparation and delivery in line with client expectations which can be repeated, enhanced and adapted based on different groups and different needs identified.

2. Simulation demonstration with key stakeholders

What does it mean?

Running a 1-2 level simulation gameplay session with 5-15 key stakeholders with time for Q&A to fully understand the experience and how our simulations work over a 3 hour period.

Benefits

Everything we do is focused on learning by doing.

No amount of dialogue or written, descriptive content can accurately replicate that experience beyond pure theory and concept.

The demonstration session allows stakeholders to experience, interrogate, evaluate and analyze how effective the learning could be for their staff or students, and also guides what we may need to do in terms of our facilitation and/or platform customization to directly meet agreed needs.

3. Simulation preparedness

What does it mean?

Ensuring all facilitators have reviewed and correctly understood all of the needs of any client to confidently deliver against any given brief - all of which vary massively even if the same base simulation is played.

Benefits

The client has confidence that their staff or students are entering a safe space to embrace a really unique learning experience which will have clear learning outcomes and associated benefits.

4. Simulation gameplay

What does it mean?

Running a simulation session for groups of 5-15 people per facilitator for up to 3 levels of gameplay, representing up to 18 months of trading.

During gameplay, facilitators (and possibly observers/co-facilitators appointed by the client) make observations based on the maturity index for the simulation.

The final part of the session focuses heavily on the group and individual learnings and how these can be effectively implemented into the working environments immediately following the session, and measured thereafter.

Benefits

Gameplay session surfaces the business challenges identified in the needs analysis phase and the power of the platform and facilitation delivers an effective, optimum experience to all participants.

5. Real-world mapping

What does it mean?

Taking all learnings directly from playing the simulation and mapping to real-world working environments or student learning paths.

Benefits

Anything that has been learned can be directly applied to the benefit of any organisation or educational establishment by enriching the individual's contribution to its productivity, strategic direction and cultural values.

6. Feedback

What does it mean?

Gathering feedback from all participants post any simulation day with 5-6 simple questions to gauge effectiveness of the training and delivery for continuous improvement.

Benefits

The client is able to analyse all feedback and implement any recommendations made to improve delivery and scheduling accordingly for future sessions.

7. Analysis & Reporting

What does it mean?

Based on the simulation output and client requirements we can produce a report detailing the feedback from participants with our own observations. This includes commitment to embedding learnings into everyday working lives. In a competition scenario this may also involve a performance summary based on financial performance, maturity index, Co2 emissions (if using GoGreen.Inc simulation), customer and employee metrics.

Benefits

The client is able to review all feedback and reports to help guide future simulation delivery in close consultation with us as it becomes embedded as a core part of any learning and development program, or curriculum in the education setting.

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