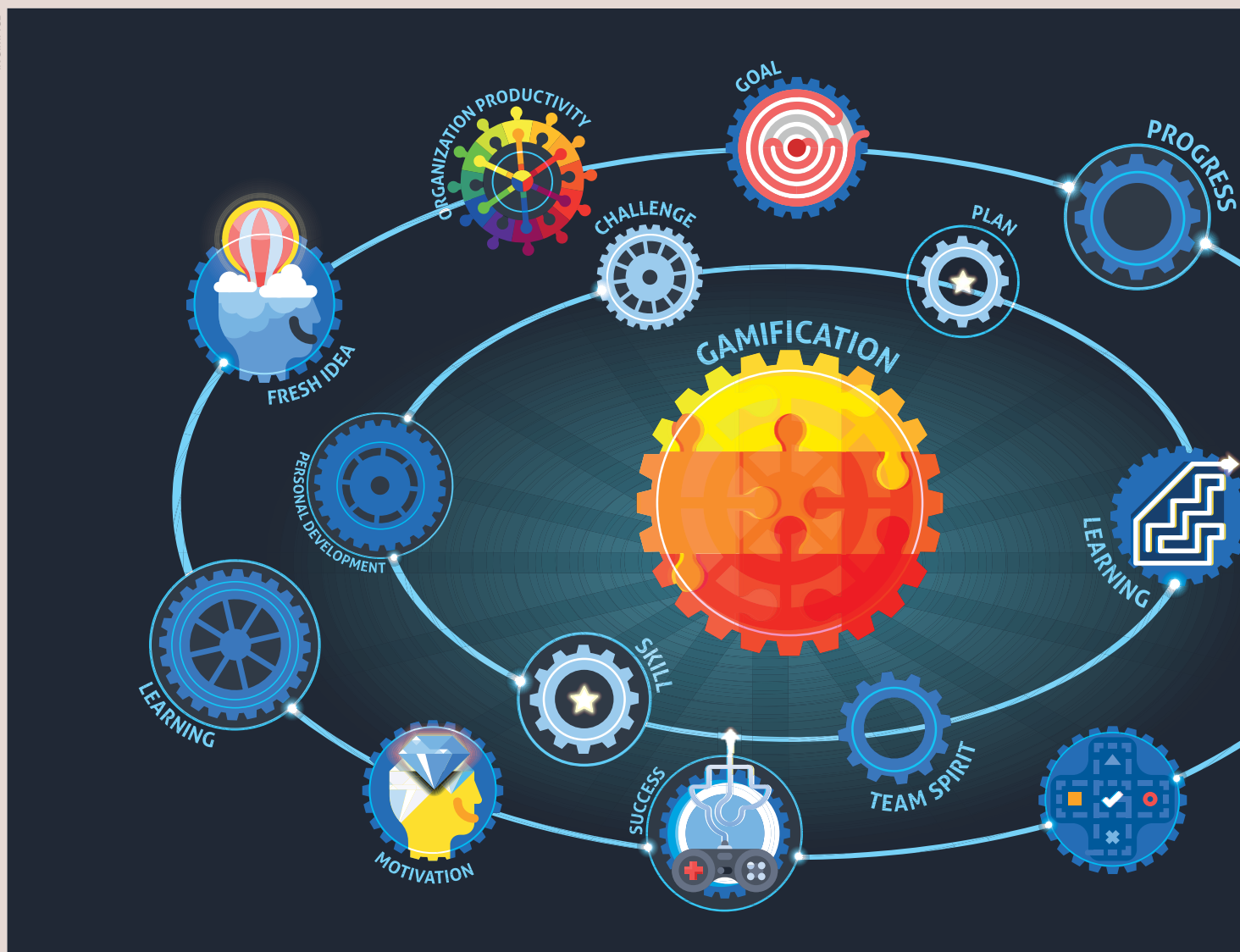


“HealthyWage champions and financially rewards the results of one’s fitness and nutrition efforts, relative to healthy weight loss and management

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GAMIFICATION HEALTH GAINS

Health buffs are increasingly levelling up their self-care with gamification apps – **Merilee Kern**



As technology and healthcare become increasingly intertwined, so does the advent and acceptance of innovative behavioural health intervention – not the least of which is wellness gamification.

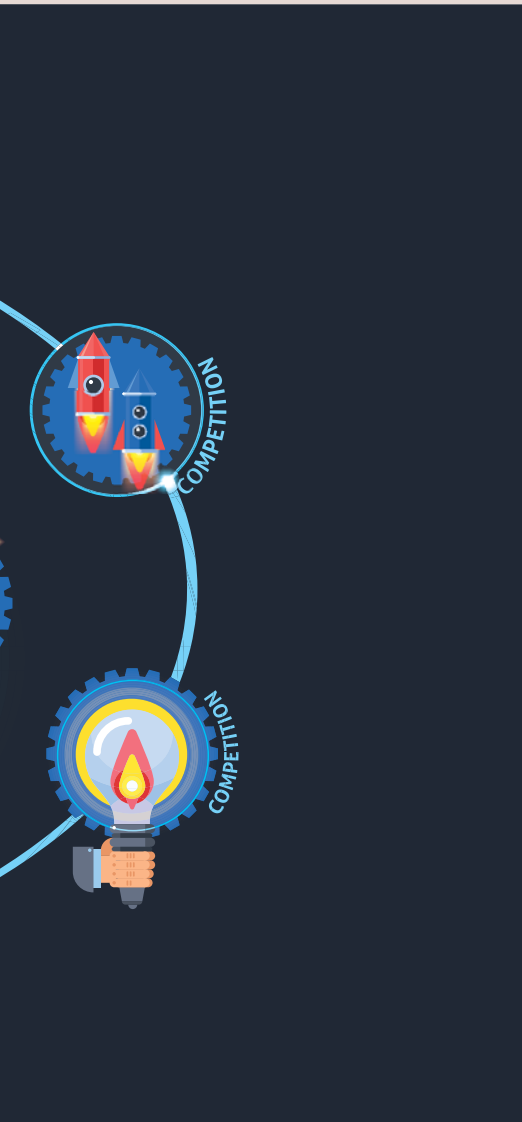
This is a paradigm defined as “the application of a ‘game system’ in a non-game context” with “frequently incorporated components including points, leadership, levels and achievements.”

“The most prominent categories of persua-

sive feedback involve goal setting, overcoming challenges, providing feedback on performance, reinforcing positive behaviour, comparing progress and social connectivity,” says a report by the Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University, underscoring research detailing why gamification works.

A Research Dive report adds: “Gamification technologies help people adhere to the path of attaining their goals by tapping into their instincts and strengths. Gamification in healthcare apps serves as a good cop and bad

Merilee Kern (MBA) is an internationally regarded brand strategist and analyst. She is also the creator and host of the Savvy Ventures business TV show that airs on FOX Business TV and Bloomberg TV (she can be contacted at www.TheLuxeList.com and www.SavvyVentures.tv).



cop at the same time, keeping up high enthusiasm as well as loyalty among people.”

And newly published findings from the JAMA Network’s ‘Financial Incentives for Weight Reduction’ clinical trial prove that paying obese people cash for weight loss is highly effective, even doubling fat loss rates.

With the efficacy of healthcare gamification consistently proven, the category has skyrocketed and sustained growth is anticipated in the future.

Another Research Dive report reveals that the global healthcare gamification market is expected to rise at a healthy 11 percent compound annual growth rate (CAGR), garnering a revenue of over US\$ 9,040 million by

2031... up from 3,260 million dollars in 2021.

PRIME PLAYERS A Global Market Insights report is more specific. It states that fitness-oriented games will “increasingly influence the demand for gamification in the market.”

There’s a wide array of noteworthy gamified exercise examples on offer. The Nike Run Club app is billed as providing what’s needed to start, keep and enjoy running more. And Carrot is a free app that rewards you financially... for walking.

By achieving individualised activity goals, users earn virtual currencies that can be used to play games, compete in challenges, bid at auctions and earn rewards. For fun seekers who enjoy engagement, Fitocracy is an app offering online games and social networks, to help users stay motivated and improve their fitness.

While healthcare enterprises and applications have added gamification strategy to their suite of solutions or otherwise appeared on the scene in recent years, some visionaries have been pioneering the diet and fitness gamified space for well over a decade.

A case in point is HealthyWage, which was founded in 2009 with wellness gamification as its entire business model. HealthyWage champions and financially rewards the results of one’s fitness and nutrition efforts, relative to healthy weight loss and management.

The business was the first in the US to offer cash-based diet incentives directly to consumers. Today, this weight loss wagering business offers numerous contests and challenges, for individuals and team dieters – all fueled by cash incentives with social and expert-based support, and goal setting and tracking technologies, as well as other tools and resources.

Since its inception, HealthyWage has reportedly paid nearly half a million women and men more than US\$ 52 million in cash rewards collectively for a combined 1.6 million kilogrammes (3.7 million pounds) shed, and over 523 participants having lost 45 kilogrammes (100 pounds) or more by following the programme.

While driving gamification in the enterprise and corporate wellness space, the business has formally created competitive, cash fuelled diet gamification programmes for more than 90 Fortune 500 companies, hospitals, healthcare and school systems, insurers, municipal governments and other organisations throughout the United States.

In addition, its programme has been run informally in more than 3,000 organisations. **EXPERT ANALYSIS** “Studies continue to show that monetary incentives serve to enhance the effectiveness of – and duly complement – weight loss programmes of any and all sorts... especially when paid out quickly like our various programmes,” says

weight loss gamification pioneer and cofounder of HealthyWage David Roddenberry.

He adds: “Loss aversion is a powerful dynamic and the reality of having skin in the game can propel the results of a gamified weight loss initiative. A key element for the success of a gamification programme is giving participants something to lose if they fail to meet their goals.”

“Losing weight and keeping it off is one of the most difficult types of behaviour to change. Making a game of increasing exercise and making healthier nutrition choices can be a powerful way to provide additional motivation,” asserts board certified sports dietitian Tara Collingwood.

She explains: “People with a competitive streak in them love to have a way to play a game but also get health benefits at the same time. Having a financial investment or incentive adds another layer of motivation. No one likes to lose money or waste money with no return, either financially or with health rewards.”

Registered dietitian and nutrition coach Emily Tills highlights the motivational benefits of gamifying wellness endeavours: “Most individuals can’t find the motivation within themselves to do a certain task, build a habit or try to work out consistently. They don’t find it fun enough or make excuses as to why they are too busy to fit some of these things in.”

“With the gamification of health and nutrition apps, there’s a convenient way to challenge someone – especially when paired against their friends – to build a better habit,” she adds.

LOSERS WIN BIG As Research Dive aptly points out, “acquiring healthy habits is not always an enjoyable journey; but with the help of gamification, the entire process can be a little more fun, stress free, motivating and enjoyable.”

It continues: “Nowadays, gamification is widely used in healthcare to encourage people to stick to their diet, sleep better, exercise regularly or keep up with their mental health wellbeing.”

Implementing lasting and meaningful self-care behavioural changes can prove challenging, if not seemingly impossible, for some.

Gamifying the process – and enhancing fitness and weight loss with elements of fun, competition, having some form of skin in the game and financially rewarding the achievements – have proven to be powerful catalysts.

Gamification is an effective way to level up efforts to lose those unwanted kilogrammes.

