

# Winning the Talent Game: HR Gamification Experience for Generation Z

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## Abstract

The human resource in any organization has heavy responsibility of talent management starting from the stage of recruitment to employee retention. Most of the HR theories of recruitment are Gen X and Gen Y specific – mostly talking of recruitment tests, personality tests, test of reasoning and the personal interviews. The traditional ways of employee engagement have been still practiced in most of the government and public sector organizations. But Gen Z is a different breed of youth, agile and active on the digital online spaces. It is natural that in the last few years progressive companies have been applying 'gaming concepts' in hiring of Gen Z candidates. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) is one of the top four sought after companies in the fields of commerce, accounting and auditing. The objective of the research is to explore the website engagement of Gen Z cohorts and the candidate engagement in talent acquisition through an experimental case evaluation of the HR of PwC Hungary. Multipoly, the recruitment tool of PwC is a big hit and occupies a niche for its own in the career page of PwC. Candidate engagement analysis on PwC website shows that the job seekers use less than 10 minutes in PwC site earlier. With Multipoly each candidate spent at least 90 minutes. The tool of the gamification for talent management used by PwC is being modeled by HR managers across industry to emulate in their own companies.

**Keywords:** Strategic Hiring, Gamification, Gen Z, Website Engagement, Candidate Engagement

## Introduction

The Gen Z cohort process information at faster speeds, but their attention spans are shorter and *their brains have evolved to process more information at faster speeds, and are cognitively more nimble to handle bigger mental challenges* (Julian Smith, 2014).

We have the concepts of Baby Boomers (born around 1946 and 1964), Gen X (1964 to 1976), Gen Y (1977 to 1994), and Gen Z (1995 till now). Relatively the distinction of the people on different generation setting is based on the major events and advancement of technologies they are exposed to. For example, Gen Z children will be growing up with a highly sophisticated media and computer environment and will be more Internet savvy and expert than any previous generational cohorts. They are the children born with cell phone on hands and Apps in the mind. If Gen X could utilize 50% of the mobile features, these kids have enough expertise to utilize above 90% mobile features. The technologies like Kindle reader and PlayStation games are the platforms for new learning. Games are the pedagogy for learning new things. In a way, cell phone is another limb without which they are physically and mentally challenged people in the ICT age (Information and Communication Technology age). The HR has to change according to the tunes of the time. Gen Z is to be attracted and captured in Gen Z way only. The effect of Gamification on student enthusiasm and academic performance is an area that has been tested (Hanus & Fox, 2015) at the university level where the effectiveness of a gamified curriculum introducing a leaderboard and badges were used for student engagement

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showing a better outcome. Country cultures in general makes the fundamental attribution error of associating game to “fun” and work to “serious” matters. However, this stereotype is presently changing where game is progressively a major platform for learning in work and business contexts. Think4Energy (2018).

## Objectives

- To understand how gamification leads to website engagement of Gen Z cohorts.
- To understand how gamification leads to candidate engagement in talent acquisition.

## Methodology

This is an exploratory research which explores the website engagement of Gen Z cohorts and the candidate engagement in talent acquisition through an experimental case evaluation of the HR of PwC Hungary. The content is exploratory in nature and the source of the data is secondary data. The learning dynamics of Generation Z is a concern for HR worldwide as their engagement with the HR gets easily disconnected due the traditional hiring practices and lack of fun engagement with the candidate. This practice was observed by the HR team of PwC Hungary wherein they designed a gaming methodology – Multipoly, an online game administered across the globe for the Net savvy candidates aspiring for challenging jobs for the progressive companies. Multiply test the website engagement and knowledge and skill levels of this particular generational cohort which improves significantly through gamification.

Gamification is the application of game mechanics and game design techniques in various areas of problem solving that aren't game related. Gamification is the use of game thinking and game mechanics in non-game contexts to engage users in solving problems and increase their contributions. A popular definition of gamification says it is “the use of game mechanics and experience design to digitally engage and motivate people to achieve their goals” (Burke, Brain 2014).

It originally began as a tactical approach to solve serious engagement crises within businesses, but there's a tremendous amount of potential here for more than gaining interest, which can be used to impact real-world problems

in business, education, health, environment, government, social areas, and more. Gamification, to some extent, is a strategic ploy and is beneficial for both the hirers and the hired. Well-designed games boost employee engagement, build critical thinking skills by requiring candidates to plan and strategize, and clarify abstract concepts that may be hard to grasp from reading alone. From company perspective it helps in better quality hire, speed of hire and cost of hire. By and large, gamification is used to measure the personality and cognitive abilities of applicants. Gamification captures the spirit of games, the key characteristics such as entertainment, drama, transparency, enterprise, struggle, co-operation, addiction and relates these to a variety of real-world developments within an establishment from selection to learning & development. Future of Work (2015). Companies are increasingly adopting talent assessments that allow them to measure psychological indicators in the context of a game that does not necessarily appear to be work-related to the applicant.

## Engagement Gap

The Gallup research, 2015 revealed interesting aspects of Millennial (Gen Z) employees' engagement. “71% of Millennials are either not engaged or actively disengaged at work in USA”. Although the economy is improving, workers in this generation may not be getting the jobs they had hoped for coming out of college. Gallup's employee engagement data reveal that millennials are particularly less likely than other generations to say they “have the opportunity to do what they do best” at work. “This finding suggests that millennials may not be working in jobs that allow them to use their talents and strengths, thus creating disengagement” Employee Engagement (2015). The Gallup survey also revealed that those organizations excel in their employee engagement strategies have realized substantial increases in engagement levels as a result. Millennials or Gen Z are reportedly make up 75% of the global workforce by 2025. Can we afford to ignore them? Organization Change theory believes that there are some individuals who are champions and they push an organization past its comfort zone into new territory.

Multipoly brings in a talent pool of young candidates with extra ordinary competencies carrying realistic anticipations of the work with a better understanding of the organization's business, values and work culture.

During the course of the virtual reality exercise, the hiring manager too acquires insight into the candidate and their functioning panache, just as they would, more than a description from the assessment centre.

## **Multipoly, the Recruitment Game Changer**

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) is the one of the top chartered accountant firms of the world. In Hungary's unit, the Recruitment Manager, Ms Noemi Biro was planning to hire some hundred Tax Associates for its operations in Hungary. It is a challenging task for her and the team as a whole even though she has the right people on board. With the fast paced technology most jobs are searched on the Net and there are chances right and best candidate being slipped out at the click of a mouse.

Ms Noemi Biro was considering some innovative options in hiring the right candidates. The Chartered Accountants are creamy layer of bright candidates with multiple job options and hiring best out of them is not a mean task. How to ensure the selected candidate stay in company's books for long is a huge challenge. Job aspirants were quick enough to spend a couple of minutes with the HR and can be placed in the system. How about ensuring their continuance? Is the talent hunt ends at the placement process? Certainly not. Losing a talented candidate is not the *raison d'être* of enrolment process is done. An engaged candidate pool will ensure long term success for any company.

One day Ms Biro has seen few employees actively playing online games and applying the logic to critical problems at workplace. She felt that day was a game changer for her team.

The thought of Multipoly flashed the brain and yes, she picked it up. 'Multipoly' is the method of bringing in real work situations of PwC to fore through Facebook and encourages the students, graduates and job aspirants to actively react and interact with the system. PwC, in reality, is in the net provides in which the aspirants can learn the nuances of exploring the tasks, meeting the mentors, and expose themselves to different departments. The virtual workplace simulation game provides impetus to genuine candidates to decide whether their strengths were strong enough to be in tune with real work situations.

The mismatch between the prospective career and the professional acumen can be cut in the budding stage and one can decide whether the job that is being pursued is worthy to be pursued. She has made up her mind to campaign this tool to attract and recruit fresh graduates to join PwC.

Noemi was going through the Job Description before meeting the candidates.

Position: Tax Analyst.

### **Job Description**

PwC is basically strategic adviser to many financial firms in the areas of data mining, data interpretation, analysis and assisting the managers in taking tactical and strategic decisions. The activities relating to budgeting, cost benefit analysis, need forecasting and staffing needs are other service areas.

The incumbent job seekers, once on roll, work daily with different clientele, managers and partners and assist in enhancing the profitability of their organizations. Sometimes shared service support is also given to the clientele depending on the urgency and needs.

The job role also entails in helping the clients in assessing the worth of assets and liabilities for the potential mergers and acquisitions. The calculation of share values post-merger is also an important task carried out by the Chartered Accountants. The process of navigating through regime of tax calculations, obligations of remitting taxes, filing of income tax returns, remitting sales tax and other tax returns etc. are taken by the expert teams of PwC.

The post is for a fresher and he/she should ideally possesses a degree of CA/ACA/MBA from reputed institutions in the global spectrum with skills in building solid relationships with staff, management and other stakeholders by constant advice and guidance.

### **HR Manager's Hurdle**

Ms Noemi needs to hire the best of 100 Tax Analysts who are fresher and she has to cross check whether the job description is up-to-date with the future requirements of the position. She has decided to try Multipoly platform

this hiring season.

The moment she posted the job description, she got a hit of 18600 applicants surveying the jobs through different online and mobile apps. PwC has been the preferred choice of the financial experts because of the value the company places on employees.

Those employees existing as well as previous employees who review the company on Glassdoor reviews the company as a strong brand which is progressive, dynamic, vivid, creative, high on team spirit, development opportunities, great complex projects, high on global best practices but low on employee retention (Glassdoor is a website where staffs and earlier workers incognito evaluate establishments and their supervisors).

In spite of the positive brand name and strategic positioning, the hiring managers find it challenging to get the right engaged talent on board and train the talent down the pipeline. Nearly job aspirants used not as much as even 10 minutes on the PwC website. She thought incorporating Multipoly game as a recruitment tool may bring in enormous progress over the PwC career page as she knows the psychology of Gen Y and Z.

## Multipoly, Workplace Simulation Game of PwC

Multipoly offers graduates who access their career page and social media sites like Facebook to enquire further on work and life at PricewaterhouseCoopers functioning in Hungary. Players of Multipoly, the workplace simulation game take part in the virtual world of PwC as apprentices. The professional traineeship is distributed into four parts, with diverse goals distinct for the players in each term. The players must join trainings, attend a community, run negotiations with clients, and resolve various stimulating functions.

All through the rounds, the players will partake in fixed work situations, a battery of psychometric exams in a setting that is alike to those practiced in an assessment centre. The simulated infrastructure settings look like the structure of PwC in reality and participants can shift all over the office block to discover additional tasks, bump into their tutor and study. The players can test out diverse roles and find out about numerous sections.

## The Initial Phase of Multipoly Experiment in Hungary

The 'on line game' is purely on the Net by navigating through [www.multipoly.hu](http://www.multipoly.hu) page and starts on an appointed day and ends at the stroke of midnight after 48 days. The process is well delineated. The game is played for the roles of Consultant, Senior Consultants and Managers.

The initial phase of the game starts with registration for the job assignment, login & grade selector in the system, receiving grades depending on performance. This is further backed by navigation acumen into the game and starting the game on a virtual platform.

As many as twelve players will become eligible for participating in the final round, based on their individual results, selected from the first 50 players of the individual top list, in the following order. The top six performers automatically makes into the final round. Six other players would be identified and shortlisted by the PWC experts and the finalists will be announced on the appointed date.

## Reward Program for Participants

Multipoly rewards the youngsters by involving them in the operation of 'Invitation'. Under this, the registered users can invite their friends to the Multipoly game. Extra points will be awarded both to the invitee and invited person. Any player can invite any number of invitees subject to the maximum of twenty but he is entitled to the extra points of five invitees only.

During the course of the Multipoly game, the player would be completing the process of at least the following extra point acquisition opportunities: viz, filling in the competency test, uploading CV in the PWC system and filling in online numeric and logical tests.

The awards of extra points offered at different levels as follows:

Completing the formality of competency test filling – 400 to 600 points

Resume updating in the Company system – 200 to 400 points

Numeric test (online) uploading in PWC system – 500 to

700 points

Linked in profile uploading through PWC – 100 to 200 points.

Resume video uploading through PWC – 250 to 350 points

Pre-registration – 100 points

Invitation process points – 240 points

After undergoing all the levels, the participants can take part in raffles which again entail certain points as follows.

The reward program recognize achievements with quick wins such as PwC mugs for Consultant grade, PwC umbrellas for Senior Consultant grade etc. A couple of additional gifts are also kept for different levels. The candidates who stood first in the first game of Multipoly were rewarded with Mac Book Pro, the second person got Apple I phone and the third person got iPad Air2.

## **The Final Phase of Multipoly Experiment in Hungary**

The selected candidates would be receiving an invitation to visit one of the firm's offices. Office interviews are in-depth interviews conducted by the HR team to further screen selected job candidates. Here they report to the Budapest office of the PWC where they would be asked to analyze and solve real case studies, participate in situation games, group presentations and group tasks. The candidate's ability to work in the group dynamics will be assessed in this phase. Senior HR managers and Professional of the PWC will evaluate the performance levels of all candidates and the final winners will be shortlisted.

The PWC experts in HR works in close liaison with the PWC operational heads would be selecting at least six candidates on the basis of professional acumen, achieving the points in the Multipoly game and of course, on the basis of other supporting documents and material uploaded in the PWC system like uploading filling in data related to the competency test, cv uploading through PWC platform and completing the logical, numerical tests, uploading the resume, LinkedIn profile and uploading the video of the CV.

The winners go through a final round of interview with the HR team and the candidates will be successfully on boarded to PwC. At the end of all the process, the aspirants can take up roles such as consultants/senior consultants/or managers or depending on their acumen in business and soft skills, any other relevant assignment.

Case studies on companies that have harnessed gamification during workforce education and training have been reporting increases in employee participation, contributions, responses and improved customer services. The search engine Quixey has saved nearly \$46,000 in recruiting costs. PwC Hungary found a 190% growth in employee candidates, faster learning about the job process, and a 78% increase in candidate interest in the company after using a gamification process in recruitment for a year.

## **Conclusion**

Multipoly, as a recruitment tool, became a big hit and occupied a niche for its own in the career page of PWC. Candidate engagement analysis on PwC Website showed that the job seekers spent less than 10 minutes in PWC site earlier. With Multipoly each candidate spent at least 90 minutes.

Noemi Biro was hiring for the post of 100 headcount of Tax Analysts. She has received 1200 applications and 800 took Multipoly and 320 were qualified for an interview.

After 3 days of strenuous rounds of a multiple hurdle model of selection, Noemi Biro and her talent acquisition team of 10 members has selected 100 candidates. Her team has issued offer letters to all candidates and she has sent a mail request to the training team for their orientation training.

The performance oriented HR teams prove a valuable asset to the organization by bringing the best candidate on board by tuning their processes to the tunes of the time. HR should break the frameworks of rigid theoretical knowledge systems and to source the right team of candidates that provide unique human capital advantage to the organization. PWC being aware of the changing trends of Gen Z in thinking, processing and analyzing the data has adopted an innovative method of attracting and retaining the talent pool across the globe.

Many organizations have begun to embrace gamification, because it presents a number of advantages over more traditional types of assessments. It's interesting to applicants, and it caters to gamer generations. Because of the entertainment value, candidates might be more likely to complete those assessments. Since candidates might view it as a real competition, they may be more likely to put forth a better effort" Assessment (2016). 'In a nutshell there is a necessity of reinventing the HR in the new world of work' for meeting the mutual advantage of the millennials and the organizations (Deloitte Report, 2015).

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