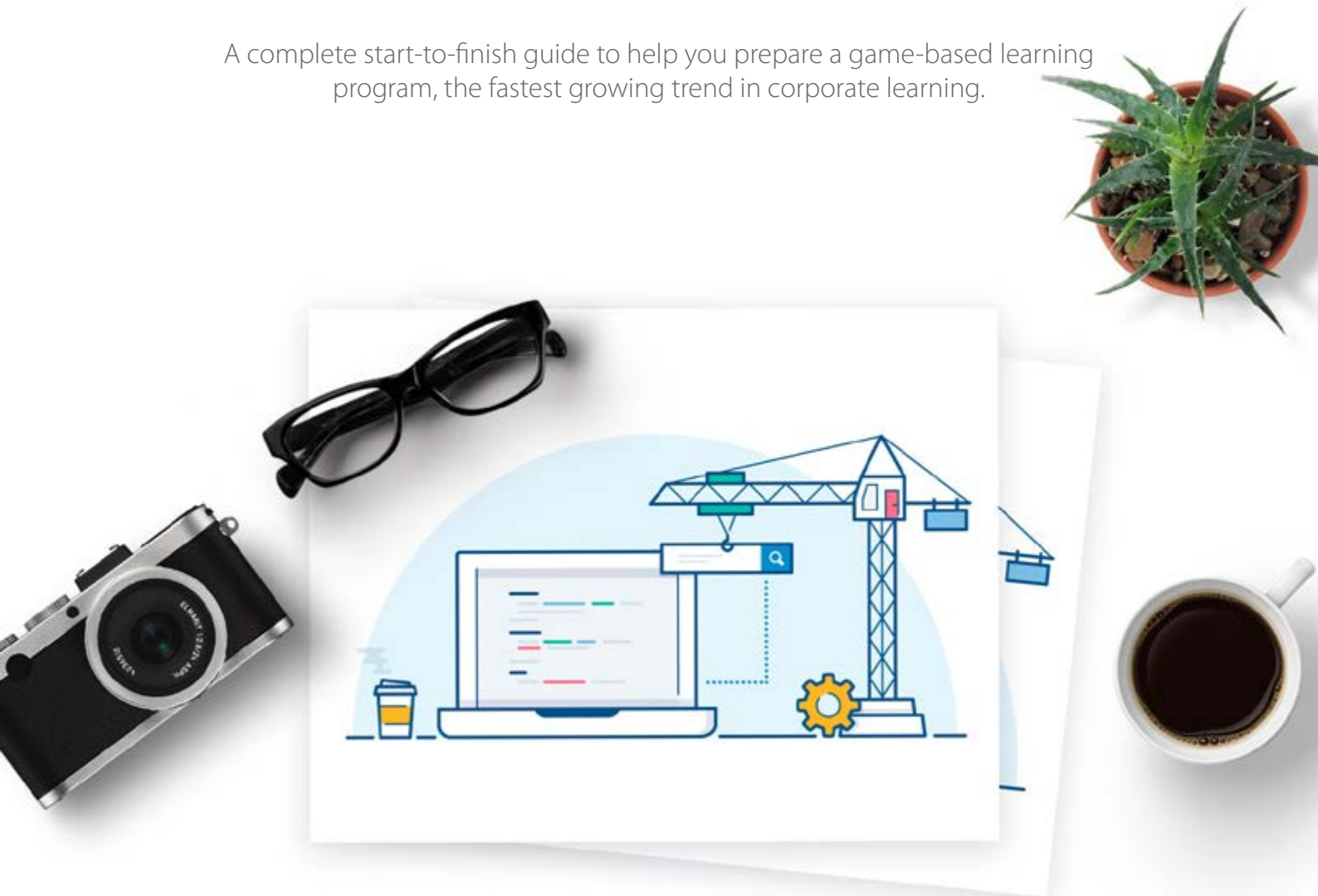




# How to successfully implement a game-based learning program in your company

A complete start-to-finish guide to help you prepare a game-based learning program, the fastest growing trend in corporate learning.



This guide is based on:

- ten-plus years of experience developing *game-based learning* solutions
- for more than 1,000 corporate customers
- in over 50 countries

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# Introduction



*Be sure to print the checklist at the end of the document so you don't forget anything.*

*Game-based learning is not a magic potion that works at the push of a button.*



It has been demonstrated that game-based learning is one of the best ways to increase employee engagement and cement learning more effectively and for longer.

Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated that the use of game-based learning and simulators fosters experiential learning (learning by doing), increases student motivation and reduces training costs<sup>1</sup>.

As a result, game-based learning is experiencing annual growth of 18.9% and is set to top revenues of 7 billion dollars by 2021.<sup>2</sup>

However, implementing a game-based learning program in your company is no simple task. Game-based learning is not a magic potion that works at the push of a button; it entails a lengthy provider selection process, a well-planned launch campaign, ongoing monitoring during implementation and assessment of the results.

<sup>1</sup> Sitzmann, T. (2011) A meta-analytic examination of the instructional effectiveness of computer-based simulation games. *Personnel Psychology*. Volume 64. Issue 2. Summer 2011. Pages 489–528.

<sup>2</sup> Adkins, S. (2016) The 2016-2021 Global Game-based Learning Market. Ambient Insight.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF GAME-BASED LEARNING



• *General learning*



• *Knowledge retention*



• *Learning by doing*



• *Employee motivation*



• *Social interaction with peers*



• *Student self-confidence*



• *Completion rates*



• *Less costs*

In this guide, we are going to help you develop an overarching strategy to ensure that your game-based learning program is a success. If you heed the following advice, you will not only be able to improve your course engagement and completion rates, you will also be able to use the statistics compiled to get to know your employees better, implement other learning programs and enhance the visibility of the training department.

Are you ready?

3, 2, 1...go!

# Choose the game-based learning solution you need

Now that you have decided to implement a game-based learning program, it's time to make an important decision: What provider to choose? What type of video game? What game will best meet your company's needs?

To make the right choice and provide useful and effective training, we recommend you follow these tips:

**1. Get involved in the training.** Game-based learning, like any other teaching method (classroom training, e-learning, etc.), is merely a channel through which knowledge is transmitted or a skill practiced. Do not expect a miracle or have false expectations. As with any other training program, you will have to make an effort to identify the challenges for your workforce, motivate employees and monitor the learning experience.<sup>1</sup>

**2. Find the most suitable serious game for you.** Before launching a game-based learning program, it is essential that you are clear on what you want your employees to learn. There are video games to teach soft skills, such as leadership and negotiation, games specifically designed to teach practical skills (such as how to perform a surgical procedure or land a plane) and games for memorizing products and internal company processes. It's a mistake to think that game-based learning is a one-size-fits-all solution. Therefore, identify your requirements and choose the serious game that will

*Identify your company's  
requirements and choose  
the serious game that will  
best meet those needs.*

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<sup>1</sup> Kapp, K. (2012) The Gamification of Learning and Instruction: Game-based Methods and Strategies for Training and Education. Pfeiffer.



best meet those needs.

**3. Use it as part of your overall training plan.** Experience has demonstrated that the most successful game-based learning programs are the ones that are combined with other initiatives within the company (classroom training, e-learning courses, practical training, etc.). By including game-based learning as part of a broader and more comprehensive initiative, you will increase its effectiveness several-fold and reinforce the development of knowledge and skills that are important to your company.

**4. Conduct a pilot test.** Before launching a game-based learning program, be sure to test the game from start to finish. If you don't know the product, it will be difficult to tell whether it meets your staff's needs. In addition, you should ask your game-based learning provider to conduct a pilot test so you can be sure of the quality and suitability of the serious game. Try it out on between 20 to 40 employees (from different backgrounds and departments) and assess their feedback. If the pilot test is a success, stick with that provider.

*The most successful game-based learning programs are the ones that are combined with the company's overall training initiatives.*

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*The more familiar you are with the video game, the easier it will be to implement the training program and answer employees' queries.*

**5. Available to all employees: Will it be integrated with your LMS?** Your employees will probably want the flexibility to be able to play the game on their computer, tablet or mobile phone. It is also essential that you find out whether the product can be integrated with your Learning Management System (LMS). Do not forget to tell your provider what platforms you



need (Would your employees prefer to use their smartphones? Is the LMS regularly used in the company?) and ensure that the game-based learning program will run smoothly on the system.

**6. Multi-Language.** One of the great advantages of e-learning (and, indeed, game-based learning) is that it can be implemented quickly and easily anywhere in the world. If your workforce is spread across several countries or regions, make sure your vendor can provide the product in all the languages you need.

**7. Communication materials.** To motivate employees to play the game, it is important that your provider can supply materials that you can use before, during and after the training. By materials we mean trailers, leaflets, emails and/or videos. If a serious game has all of these, you significantly increase the chances that the game-based learning program will be a success.

**8. Technical support.** Because of the plethora of platforms and browsers your employees are likely to use, it is important that your vendor can provide a good quality technical support and customer care service. The better the service, the better the learning experience will be and the easier it will be for students to acquire knowledge and practice skills.

*It is important that your vendor can provide a good quality technical support and customer care service.*



9. **Time and money.** Obviously, the serious game you choose must be within your budget and the time available to complete the training. How long does it take to complete each game? Does it need to be customized? If so, what will this cost and how long will it take? While some game-based learning programs can be completed in just a few hours, others take days, weeks and even months to complete, so bear this in mind when choosing a provider.

10. **Do you need to customize the video games?** More and more providers offer the possibility of customizing their products. Assess whether you need to work on transversal skills or if, to the contrary, you need to customize the content to the specific features of your business. The second option may be interesting if you want to strengthen your brand equity and adapt the games to your company's internal processes. However, bear in mind that you will need time, money and knowledge to do this properly.

# How to prepare the perfect launch

The way you present and launch the game-based learning program to your staff will be vital for its success, especially if it is in a format that is new to the company. A good launch event (that explains why it is important to take the course and aligning it with the interests of your organization) will help you achieve the best possible results.

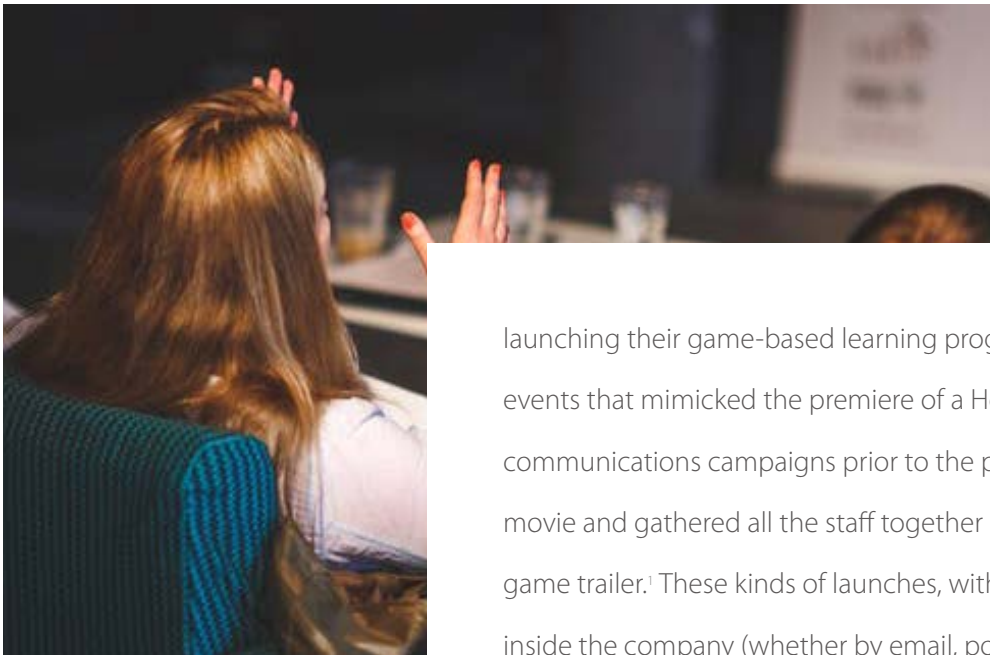
These 8 tips will help get you off to a good start:

1. **Focus on learning.** When they hear the word “video game”, many people only think of fun and entertainment. Therefore, it is important to explain to your employees that the main goal of the training, as always, is to learn. Stress the educational value of the training and its usefulness for their personal and professional life.

2. **Explain how the video game works.** The format will be new for many of your employees, so it is important to explain how to access the video game, what they are going to learn, how they will be assessed and how long it will take to complete the game. Providing an explanation in advance will help them to understand how it works and increase course participation and completion rates

3. **Launch a communications campaign.** Novelty always sparks interest, so use it to pique your employees’ curiosity and get them motivated. When

*It is important to explain to your employees that the main goal of the training, as always, is to learn.*



*When launching their game-based learning programs, some companies held events that mimicked the premiere of a Hollywood movie to create a buzz.*

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*Experience has shown that the best results are achieved when the game-based learning program is compulsory.*

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*Before launching the video game, you have to be clear about what you want the employees to learn and how you are going to measure the results after the training.*

launching their game-based learning programs, some companies held events that mimicked the premiere of a Hollywood movie: they created communications campaigns prior to the premier, emailed tickets to the movie and gathered all the staff together in a room to show them the video game trailer.<sup>1</sup> These kinds of launches, with communications campaigns inside the company (whether by email, posters hung in the office, WhatsApp, SMS, etc.) created a buzz and got employees 'into' the video game even before it began.

**4. Use groups.** One of the "easiest" ways to increase interest in serious games is to create groups. Divide your employees into groups (by department, country, interests, professional profiles, etc.) and make them compete against one another in the game. This mix between the online and offline world will allow them to see how their co-workers are doing and will turn the game into a social and competitive activity that will enhance their engagement.

**5. Be flexible, but set a time limit.** One of the advantages of game-based learning is that employees can do the training when and where they like. However, don't be too relaxed: set a time limit to encourage them to register for the game and finish it as quickly as possible. If not, it's quite possible that some employees will never find the time to complete the training.

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<sup>1</sup> You will find examples of some of these launch initiatives at: "A training company with more than 1,000 corporate clients". Gamelearn. <https://www.game-learn.com/clients/>

*Remember:*



*Focus on learning*



*Explain how the video game works*



*Launch a communications campaign*



*Use groups*



*Set a time limit*



*Reward the effort*



*Start measuring*

6. **Reward the effort.** The launch is the perfect occasion to talk about prizes and recognition. It is important that employees know that their efforts are going to be rewarded. Depending on the type of video game and number of employees, you might consider giving a prize to the winner, to the three finalists (gold, silver, bronze) or the person who finishes first. The bigger the incentive, the greater the motivation will be to play (and learn!).

7. **Be clear on your goals and start measuring.** Before launching the video game, you have to be clear about what you want your employees to learn and how you are going to measure the results after the training. Don't forget this, or you will most likely regret it when it is too late. Identify the metrics you want to analyze and have the figures ready before you launch the game-based learning program (this way you'll be able to compare them with the actual results after the game).

## During the game-based learning program...

The perfect launch paves the way for a successful training program.

However, this is just the beginning. During the hours, days or weeks that employees will spend playing the game, you have to keep motivating and encouraging them to complete the training.

Here are some activities you might consider:

1. **Continue your communication strategy.** To keep your employees motivated to complete the game, continue sending messages by email, telephone, SMS, WhatsApp or any other communication tool. The content could be a daily summary of the player's points, extra lives to use right at that moment, a summary of the lessons learned that week or any other element that enhances the game-based learning experience. All this will enrich and cement the learning content and improve completion rates.

2. **Supervise any technical issues.** If you followed our advice and chose a provider with an excellent track record in customer service, then you have probably completed this task. Nevertheless, help any students that encounter technical problems with the game; make sure that everyone can access the game and demand an explanation of your provider if something goes wrong.





3. **Use rankings and classifications.** Healthy competition is one of the biggest incentives to get students to work at progressing from one level to the next and completing the game. This is why classifications and rankings of people who know each other in the offline world are a powerful motivational tool. Every week you could send a summary of the ranking at that point to players, or even have a notice board in the office in order to encourage them to pass each other out.

4. **Monitor your students.** One of the advantages of game-based learning (at least with quality products) is that it allows you to monitor what your students do during the training. You will know what screen they are on, how long they spend on it and where they are having the most difficulties. Take advantage of this information to identify hard-to-grasp concepts (and reinforce the learning in person) and help students who are having difficulty completing the game.

5. **Use social media.** If you can combine the game-based learning experience with the social media world (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.), then you have hit on the perfect recipe for success. Whether in public or private groups, with references to the company or to players, if you can get students to share their achievements on the social media, you will continue to enrich the experience for your employees and give them an incentive to complete the training.

*The more students engage and interact with the content, the more they will learn.*



6. **Adapt your video game.** If you decided to customize the product, you can make improvements to the game based on players' experience. Use the figures provided by the platform to identify errors and improve content that students are having problems with.

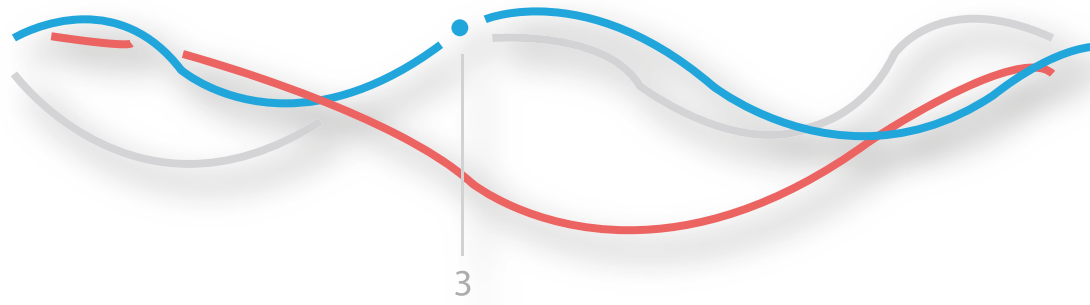
*Classifications and rankings are a powerful motivational tool.*



*Take advantage of the information provided by the platform to identify hard-to-grasp concepts and help students progress in the game.*



After  
"game over"



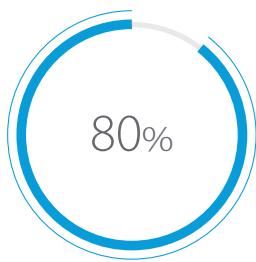
The end of a game-based learning program in your company could be the start of something much more important. Take advantage of the features offered by game-based learning to analyze the learning process, draw conclusions and make medium- to long-term decisions. This last part is vital to the success of your training.

Among other things, after "game over" don't forget to:

**1. Conduct surveys.** Although the platform provides data, don't hesitate to carry out all the surveys you need. You can do this as soon as the students finish the game or a few weeks later (to see the medium-term impact), but be sure to ask employees for their opinion. Once again, don't focus only on the format, but ask them about the program's educational value and what they learned during the training.

**2. Measure the results.** If, when planning the training, you were clear about what you wanted the students to learn and the desired impact on the company, now is the time to check whether this was achieved. Remeasure the indicators you selected before conducting the training and compare them with the data obtained after the experience. You can also measure the differences between departments that participated in the game-based learning program and those that didn't. The figures will allow you to assess the results of the training, as well as demonstrate its effectiveness to your superiors.

*Measure the indicators before and after the training to assess the real impact it had on the company.*



*If 80% of players had problems completing a level, it is clear that this knowledge needs to be reinforced with another type of training.*



*Organize an awards ceremony to reward the best performers.*

**3. Identify new challenges and find solutions.** Apart from the figures, it's also important to be able to draw conclusions from the lessons that proved challenging for your employees, as well as the ones where they obtained the highest scores. If 80% of players had problems completing a level (for example, where they talk about product return processes), it is clear that this knowledge needs to be reinforced with another type of training.

**4. Reward the winners.** As promised at the launch event, the players with the highest scores in the video game should receive some kind of reward: it could be a small trophy, a family break or a gift voucher for a department store. The idea is to promote healthy competition and provide public recognition for your employees' learning efforts. The awards ceremony could be the perfect excuse for organizing an event to officially close the training program.



5. **Debate about the course content.** Scientific studies have shown that serious games are more effective if a debate is organized between the players after completing the game. The starting questions can be as varied as you like (“What did you learn from this training?”, “How would you apply it to your job?”, “What would you do if you were in this character’s position?”), but they should emphasize its usefulness for their day-to-day lives. Devoting time to analysis and reflection can further amplify the impact of the training.

6. **Plan your next program.** Every stage of the process —from choosing a serious game provider and organizing a launch event through to monitoring the program and analyzing the results — should provide you with the opportunity to draw conclusions and get you thinking about your next training plan. Did the experience produce the desired results? Could the launch be improved in any way? Were you able to measure the key indicators of your game-based learning program? Based on the answers to these and many other questions, consider whether it would be worth repeating the same training course if you could customize the games in a way that would improve its implementation.

# Checklist

Successfully implement a game-based learning program in your company.



## 1. When you choose a game-based learning program, ensure that...

- ☐ It **meets** your needs
- ☐ It fits with your **overall training plan**
- ☐ Conduct a **pilot test**
- ☐ It can be integrated with your **LMS**
- ☐ It is available in **all the languages** you need
- ☐ There is a **technical support and customer care service**
- ☐ It comes with **promotional and marketing materials**
- ☐ It is within your **training budget and time frame**
- ☐ Do you need to **customize it**?



## 2. To launch the program...

- ☐ Focus on **learning**
- ☐ **Explain** how the video game works
- ☐ Launch a **communications campaign**
- ☐ Create **groups**
- ☐ Set a **time limit** for completing the game
- ☐ Set criteria for **awarding prizes**
- ☐ Be very clear on the **impact** you want to achieve on your business **and how** you will measure this



## 3. While your employees are doing the training...

- ☐ Continue your **communication strategy** for the game
- ☐ **Supervise** any technical issues
- ☐ Use **rankings and classifications**
- ☐ **Monitor** your students
- ☐ Use **social media**
- ☐ **Improve or adapt** the video game



## 4. After the training...

- ☐ Conduct a **survey** to collect employee feedback
- ☐ **Measure the results** of the training
- ☐ **Identify any problems** and look for solutions
- ☐ **Reward** the winners
- ☐ **Plan** your next training



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