

Game-Based Orientation

Gamification is used to truncate a lengthy part of onboarding.

The following story was told by Brian Washburn, former director of learning and development at SightLife; Miranda Greenberg, learning and development specialist at SightLife; and Marci Morford, donor services training and systems analyst at SightLife.

CLIENT

SightLife

OPPORTUNITY

SightLife is an eye bank working to eliminate corneal blindness worldwide by 2040. Its previous orientation program introduced new hires to the organization through a series of bimonthly presentations from each department. Some managers likened this approach to a firehose because it flooded new staff with complex information. Some even stopped sending their staff, weighting the value of starting work without the three-day lecture orientation.

DIAGNOSIS

When managers were asked to provide feedback on the program, some replied that the presentations suffered from inconsistent quality, while others felt the sessions failed to clarify the relationships between departments. SightLife explored alternatives, including introducing new staff to the organization with panel discussions. But then an epiphany struck: Design the entire orientation as an immersive game.

METHODS

After researching game design principles (and drawing inspiration from the film *Jumanji*), the L&D team began redesigning the new employee orientation by dividing the program into two components.

First, players are immersed in each department with a three-minute video overview, followed by a series of challenges modeled after tasks the department performs. Because SightLife is an eye bank, the game is scored with "corneas" that participants get for completing the challenges. A departmental representative ends each session. The format illustrates how each department connects with the others, and how a participant's daily work affects others.

In the second component of the game, players use their winnings to make decisions on how to strategically eliminate corneal blindness worldwide. This component shows each participant how much she matters to the company's mission.

RESULTS

With this shorter, more immersive experience, the company has saved new employees a combined 1,300 hours a year away from their work. All attendees have reported at least a basic understanding of each department across the organization.

The program has received a Net Promoter Score of 78. Qualitative feedback has confirmed its success too. One participant commented, "The most valuable part was to realize the complexity of each team's role and the potential that creative thinking and focused passion can create."

LESSONS LEARNED

The organization deals with complex content, and gamification breaks that information down into fun and approachable experiences. Following this project's success, SightLife learned that it can incorporate parts of it into other training programs across the organization.

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