

## Serious Games Beyond Training

Written by Wayne Buck, HQ SACT Modelling and Simulation Section  
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One cannot be faulted for assuming that the average age of today's digital gamer is somewhere in the range of 12-18 years of age. In fact, the average age of today's digital gamer is 37.

There is a revolution going on in the innovation domain and this revolution is in the form of serious games. A serious game is one which was developed not just for pure entertainment. In other words, there should also be a lesson being learned when the game is played. [Gartner](#) says that by 2015, more than 50 percent of organisations that manage innovation processes will "Gamify" those processes.

Gamification and other topics were the subject of a NATO gaming workshop held 16-18 April at the University of Genoa in Italy. This workshop was the 11th in a series of investigations to understand better how "Commercial Technologies and Games Can Be Used in NATO." This particular workshop focussed on immersive environments and their impact on experimentation, training, and other domains in NATO. Fifteen presentations exposed attendees to mentoring systems, standards such as SCORM or Shareable Content Object Reference Model (web-based e-learning standard), approaches to dismounted soldier training and many other subjects.

According to Gartner, the goals of gamification are to achieve higher levels of engagement, change behaviors and stimulate innovation. The opportunities for government and businesses are great – from having more engaged customers to crowd sourcing innovation. There are four principal means of driving engagement using gamification:

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- Accelerated feedback cycles. In the real world, feedback loops are slow with long periods between milestones. Gamification increases the velocity of feedback loops to maintain engagement.
- Clear goals and rules of play. In the real world, where goals are fuzzy and rules selectively applied, gamification provides clear goals and well-defined rules of play to ensure players feel empowered to achieve goals.
- A compelling narrative. While real-world activities are rarely compelling, gamification builds a narrative that engages players to participate and achieve the goals of the activity.
- Tasks that are challenging but achievable. While there is no shortage of challenges in the real world, they tend to be large and long-term. Gamification provides many short-term, achievable goals to maintain engagement.

Workshop Chairman Wayne Buck stated that "The reason we hold these workshops is simple, we need to prepare NATO for the eventuality of games invading the workplace. It will happen and when it does it will be fast and furious."

The next workshop will be held 13-15 November 2012 at FFI (Norwegian Defence Research Institute) in Oslo, Norway and will concentrate on the social and cultural aspects of games.