

PERSPECTIVE

Will Gamification be the Game Changer in Insurance Distribution?



Brenda is a new home owner in California. She researches online on the types of insurance covers available in the market and decides on a broad form insurance for her new home. She then contacts her insurer to close on the policy. However, in response to her request, she gets an email suggesting she play a 15-minute game. Intrigued, Brenda launches the game in which she is assigned an identity and gets virtual coins with which she buys

a virtual house in California and a few household items.

Brenda is then visited by a virtual agent, who informs her about regular and special insurance plans, but she still selects a broad form. Later in the game, the insurance protects against damages caused by a brick thrown by a neighbor's child at the window and a weak tree branch that fell on the roof. However, when an

earthquake strikes, the damages are not just to the property, but also to some of her expensive possessions, such as an antique clock and a dining table. The insurance option that she selected does not cover damage to these items. This hits a little too close to home for Brenda. She then contacts her insurance agent and avails of the broad form insurance and a special insurance – coverage for earthquakes.



Understanding gamification

What we saw here was an instance of how an insurer used gamification – a relatively new marketing tool – to interact with customers without an agent, yet provide all the information needed, and help customers get first-hand experience of how different insurance plans can protect them. But what is gamification?

According to the Oxford Dictionary, gamification is 'the application of typical elements of game playing (e.g., point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity, typically as an online marketing technique to encourage engagement with a product or service. Gamification is exciting because it promises to make the hard stuff in life fun.'

Many industries are realizing that gamification is not a passing fad, but a valuable trend that is here to stay. Of the many industries adopting gamification, education, research (healthcare and life sciences) and enterprises (for training and orientation) are among the top. Foldit – an online game created by the Center for Game Science at the University of Washington, in collaboration with their Biochemistry Department – showcased the potential of gamification in solving real-world problems. The motivation behind it was a 15-year-long research that had failed to uncover the crystal structure of M-PMV – a virus causing AIDS.

Foldit was created with an intent to share this protein structure with the public, in the hope that someone will decipher it eventually. Soon after the game was released, 240,000 people signed up, and within 10 days, the structure had been decoded.

A 15-year trial ended in 10 days with the help of a gamified solution.



// *Gamification is predicted to witness a market growth of about US\$1,707 billion in 2015, and US\$5,500 billion by 2018¹ across industries. According to a study by M2 Research, by 2016, the amount of money spent on gamification (direct spend) will go up to US\$2.8 billion. //*



What is the role of gamification in the insurance value chain?

Just as in research, gamification has great application value in the insurance industry, too. Gamification can be leveraged across

the insurance value chain – from insurance policy distribution to post-sales service and for all stakeholders involved across

the value chain such as risk carriers, intermediaries, and most importantly, customers.

// *One of the leading insurers in the US is using a gamification tool that enables the company to efficiently manage all of its 63 contact centers across the globe. This is an important tool that impacts a large section of the insurance value chain as it enables efficient management of these contact centers, which handle close to a 100 million calls to customers per year. Another instance of gamification having an impact on an important segment of the insurance value chain is seen in the case of the*

gamified social innovation solution of another insurance organization in the US. This gamified tool was created with the intent to provide employees a platform where they can share their ideas with the leadership. This solution served as the idea-bed where changes in systems and cost savings were realized. One such idea, not only transformed an existing system into a more efficient one, but also resulted in savings of nearly US\$18 million a year, in adjuster's time. //

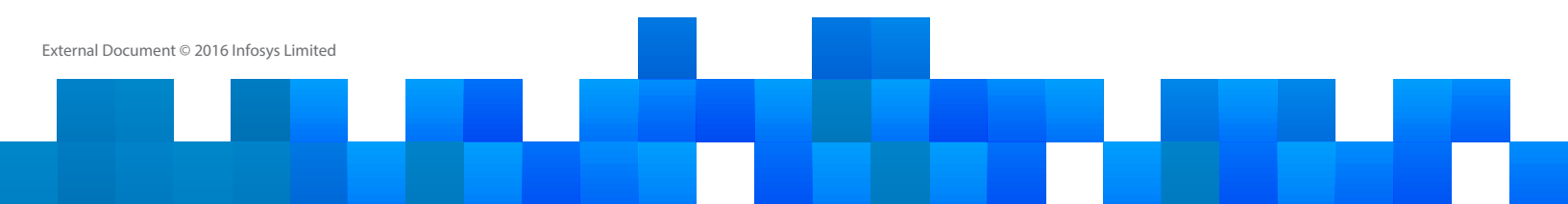
For example, let's see how gamification can contribute towards higher sales conversion and improve an insurer's sales productivity and revenue.

Customers perceive insurance to be a complex product that involves a tedious process of purchase. They consider it a product 'to be sold' and 'not to be bought'. To overcome such issues, most insurers, especially those in the advanced markets, have been following a business model that leverages insurance agents. Traditionally,

agents play a pivotal role in educating customers on insurance. They also perform need analysis for customers before pitching the right product.

According to a report by Talkdesk, the top two reasons customers talk to agents are: quick resolution of problems, and personal interaction based on existing

records. However, digitalization has enabled customers to play a bigger role in selecting the right product themselves and gamification plays a key role in customer engagement and empowerment. In the digital world, the insurance sales process includes preliminary information search and quote generation, and sales closure.



- **Preliminary information search and quote generation**

While gathering information online – either on multiple insurers’ websites or on aggregators’ websites – is a key pre-purchase step, not many customers do this due to their lack of awareness about insurance and its complex products. Gamification can help customers overcome such challenges and make information gathering about insurance products very interesting.

- **Creating awareness through education**

Insurers can develop and deploy games that provide customers information about the different types of insurance plans available. This way, prospective customers can get all the information they need, to make reasonably informed decisions. For instance, insurers can leverage gamification to inform customers about how to drive safe, make sensible investments, etc.

When educating through gamification, insurers can move away from a single reward system to a game-based benefit system that gives customers the opportunity to earn rewards in stages – on completing levels in the game. Today, usage-based insurance is a growing trend, as it allows companies to understand which customers’ behaviors are riskier than others, and offer policy pricing based on this. It is beneficial for customers,

as it helps them get the right pricing and even avail of discounts for taking safe or right decisions.

A major US insurance organization offered select customers the opportunity to experience the hazards of risky behavior such as texting while behind the wheel, with virtual driving. They were able to understand firsthand what could happen if they put themselves and others in harm’s way. A subsequent survey they conducted indicated that 87% found the activity fun and effective, and 67% stated that they would never text and drive again.

Besides giving people firsthand experience about risky behaviors, such games can be used to offer usage-based insurance. In the case of auto insurance, insurers need to determine which drivers are safer or riskier than others. How can they do this? With gamification, they can offer simulated environments in various conditions, in which people can drive. Insurers can then assess and analyze this data. Based on the insights thus gathered, insurers can create risk profiles and give their customers behavior- or usage-based pricing.

- **Simplifying complex insurance products**

Insurers can bring in the elements of games to educate customers about their insurance products and benefits. The rewards should be

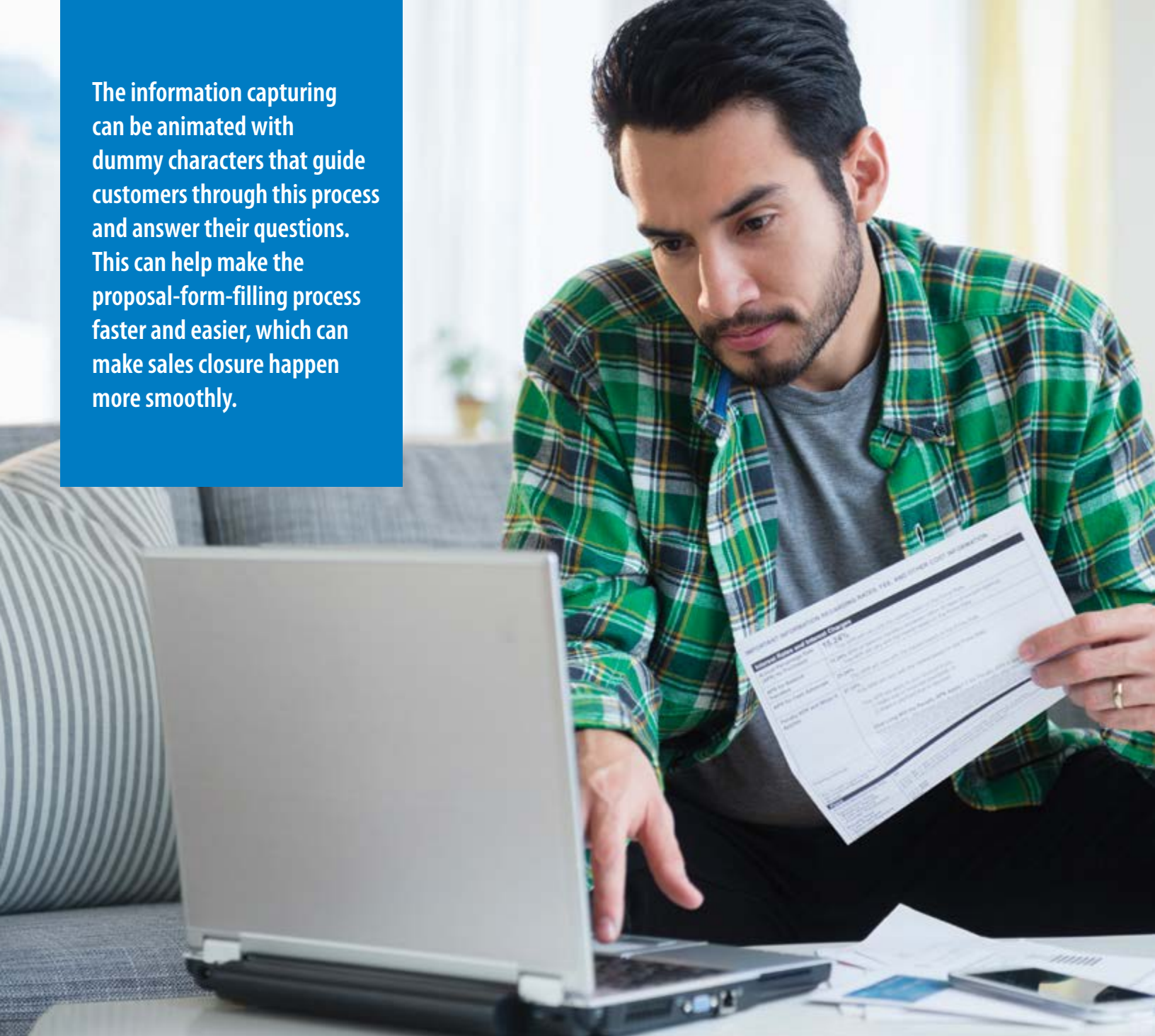
tangible, considerably beneficial, and significantly relevant to the type of customers the insurer caters to. In addition, insurers should offer rewards for crossing specific levels in the game, topping the leader board consistently, and accumulating points. Provided they are within the gambit of regulations, wherever possible, the rewards of gamification can translate to better offers or discount coupons to wellness schemes or gym memberships – with the idea of promoting better customer engagement. Also, insurers can track the customers at the top of the leader board, and cross-sell and upsell based on relevance. They can reward customers with perks for referring others to play the games, to educate more people on their insurance products.

- **Sales closure**

A sale is considered closed when the policy is issued to the customer. For the policy to be issued the traditional way, a customer has to submit a proposal form and necessary supporting documents to the insurer. As this could seem tedious, many customers are not motivated to go through it. Using gamification, this process can be made interesting and compelling for customers. An insurer can divide the information-capturing process into stages with some reward points to earn at the end of each stage.



The information capturing can be animated with dummy characters that guide customers through this process and answer their questions. This can help make the proposal-form-filling process faster and easier, which can make sales closure happen more smoothly.



Likewise, gamification can be creatively used in engaging the customers at every stage of the insurance value chain with touchpoints such as billing, claims, and customer service.

With gamification playing a role in informing, advising, guiding, selling, and rewarding customers, how will it affect insurance distribution?

By supporting or augmenting the role of insurance agents, and helping them deal with the next generation of insurance customers – the millennials.

How do the millennials impact the future of insurance distribution?



The millennials make up nearly 25% of the population in the US, and account for over 90 million people globally. People are being segmented as millennials not just because of the year in which they were born, but also because they show a certain preference in the decisions they make and their views on big life events. For instance, millennials are keen to put off or delay specific life events if they can, like leaving their parents' home. While in 2001, the percentage of those living with parents was 26.7%, by 2010 it had gone up to 29.9%¹.

According to 56% of millennials, they are generally among the first (as an individual or in a group) to try their hand at a new technology. While it is not surprising that millennials are among the early adopters of technology, it is eye-opening when you view that data against the fact that almost 21% of consumer discretionary purchases are made by millennials and that this accounts for more than US\$1 trillion in direct purchase power, and the influence they have on the older generation's purchase decisions. Parature's The Real

Self-Service Economy research shows that 40% of nearly 3,000 consumers would rather opt for self-service than have human contact with companies in the future. This bodes well for insurance companies, as it means that they have the option to deploy tools and technology that encourage this self-reliance, and lessen hand-holding.

What does this mean for insurers and agents?

It is time for insurers to understand that gamification can enable agents to open doors to many experiences that customers need, and most importantly, offer the platform to stay engaged, especially for millennials. With millennials becoming an increasingly big part of the customer base in the coming years, insurers can leverage gamification to augment the role of the insurance agent. While shopping for insurance can be made more interesting, gamification can also help agents address the core needs of customers, create more opportunities for self-service, and increase awareness about insurance by providing information in addition to what the agent provides.



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