

AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
Department of Business Information Systems

**APATHETIC ENGAGEMENT: A SUBSTANTIVE
THEORY OF GAMIFICATION IN NEW ZEALAND
CONTACT CENTRES**

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Abstract

When considering sectors of business and industry frequently constrained by operational inefficiencies, it is widely accepted that the contact centre industry is one of the leading protagonists. Contact centres routinely report the highest staff churn of all sectors, with around one-third of all staff employed in technical support and customer service roles leaving their employment annually. This high level of employee turnover is indicative of an industry propagated by factors that promote high stress and diminishing motivation within the workforce.

In an attempt to reduce the stress of contact centre roles and improve employee engagement some sectors of the industry have introduced the use of game-like elements or 'gamification' into frontline contact centre work. While interest in gamification has surged over the past decade, there remains a lack of in-depth research investigation into its use and influence throughout the New Zealand service work industry. To overcome this void, this study examines the means by which gamification is used throughout the New Zealand contact centre industry and explores its motivational influence towards frontline contact centre agents.

To facilitate the research objective, a constructivist grounded theory approach is used. Data generation was through twenty-four in-depth interviews conducted in eight New Zealand organisations. With participants compiled from a variety of multifunction roles, including customer service, technical support, team leaders, developers and managers. The analysis reveals that the nature of gamification is a fusion between key performance indicator systems and game-like reward initiatives, and highlights the conflicting and contradictory beliefs and behaviours of employees that emerge as a consequence of implementing gamified systems. Moreover, this study identifies the dissipating effectiveness and apathy of agents towards contact centre gamification systems, as they struggle to reconcile the cognitive trade-offs inherent to their adoption, application and use.

Keywords: *Gamification, contact centre, grounded theory, apathetic engagement*

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Dedication

In dedication to the late Antonina Denissova, Barrie Hinton and Marian Wood who are
dearly missed but never forgotten.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: _____

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. The need to study contact centre gamification

Contact centres, sometimes referred to as call centres, play a vital role in many organisations as they facilitate the multi-channelled functions of service work that enable rapid communication and conflict resolution with clients. Through the natural evolution of communication technologies, contact centres no longer focus exclusively on copper-wire telephone services but, instead accommodate an array of tools such as voice over internet, instant messaging, social media and email. This evolution positions contact centres not only as a cost-effective means of business operation (Bain, Watson, Mulvey, Taylor, & Gall, 2002; Calvert, 2001) but one that holds significant strategic value as organisations shift towards brand building and customer relationship generating processes (Adomaitiene & Slatkeviciene, 2008).

However, despite these technological advancements, contact centre environments remain wedged between the opposing goals of providing high quantity service levels and excellent customer care (Wallace, Eagleson, & Waldersee, 2000). Regardless of the communication channel, client and organisation expectations require that satisfactory resolutions occur at the first instance of customer contact. As a result, the industry has prescribed key performance indicators to reflect this desire (Langley, Fjalestad, Fichtner, & Hart, 2006). Consequently, employees are now required to adapt to an ever-increasing array of customer service technologies to complete core functions of their role to keep in adherence with performance indicators, while continuing to operate within a highly structured and time-sensitive environment.

In the pursuit of business efficiency, contact centre stakeholders have been forced to acknowledge that high-intensity environments come with an associated cost towards employee wellbeing (Lutz, 2001). Moreover, this reflects in human resource and contact centre research as concepts of emotional labour and intention to turnover (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Wherein, findings routinely highlight the increased costs of physical and cognitive demands when dealing with high quantities of calls and managing client expectations. In particular, emotional labour is said to be an ever-present mental drain, as

employees routinely need to adapt their attitudes towards customers and adopt positions that conflict with their true feelings.

Within the modern contact centre, these issues are compounded further, as organisations leverage emerging technologies to capture large quantities of employee performance data, to refine strict work processes (Davenport, Barth, & Bean, 2012). While employee monitoring has long played a role within the contact centre industry, it is only recently that the organisational value of digitised performance metrics has become a point of significant interest (Bain & Taylor, 2000). Furthermore, by utilising such performance parameters, contact centres have adopted practices designed specifically to increase efficiency, often resulting in further restricting and automating roles.

The effect of which is that the role of the traditional contact centre employee has foregone a rapid change. In some instances this change has required frontline agents to adapt to new technologies and workflow processes, yet, in others, it is arguable that skill-based facets of roles have been gradually removed (Belt, Richardson, & Webster, 2000). Even in instances where employees learn and take on new skill sets, the core demands of their job remains the same, with the only perceivable difference to many being that new services are frequently added responsibilities over and above pre-existing obligations.

The consequence of such changes in job demands is that employees often view their relationship with organisations as being undervalued. Existing literature attributes these views towards the creation of low committal transactional relationships which, eventually result in the attrition of employee welfare, and increased staff churn for the benefit of profit margins (Bain & Taylor, 2000; Bain et al., 2002). Following the inevitable loss of staff, organisations, who anticipate employee life cycles resolve staff shortages by recruiting new fresh and enthusiastic employees, cognisant that routinised work processes enable fast induction training periods.

Accompanying the high loss of human capital that contact centres routinely see is an associated financial burden. Organisations recognise and mainly accept that with the need for replacing each employee they effectively forego several months' worth of wages in lost productivity (Holman, 2002). Contact centre organisations, therefore have begun to look for alternative solutions and ways to create workplace environments which are conducive to

increased staff engagement. In the hope that engaged employees minimise staff churn by providing for greater tenure.

The practice of gamification represents one new avenue of interest that contact centre organisations have begun adopting to overcome these motivational problems. Gamification is viewed broadly as the use of “game design elements in non-game contexts”(Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011). Game design elements being the mechanical components, patterns or heuristics found in traditional game structures, such as rules, points and scores, while non-game contexts are environments such as the traditional workplace. Gamification is a relatively recent phenomenon of interest for academics and industry but, does not necessarily denote an entirely new practice. Rather, most agree that gamification as a discipline is the culmination of emerging digital technologies, their pervasiveness in the workforce and an evolving understanding of the motivators of human behaviour (Walz & Deterding, 2015).

Despite significant interest from the contact centre industry and academics surrounding the concept of gamification, little literature exists that has empirically investigated the use of gamification techniques among service workers. Several studies have suggested that contact centres represent an environment suitable for the application of gamification techniques, as a potential mechanism to resolve motivational shortcomings (Kumar, 2013; Maan, 2013). However, despite a seemingly high level of interest from academics and industry, few have endeavoured to investigate the deployment of gamification techniques within the contact centre industry. Moreover, the motivational influences of deployed initiatives and any resultant success in creating more engaging and desirable work environments have received little consideration (Robson, Plangger, Kietzmann, McCarthy, & Leyland, 2016).

1.2. Research Objectives

This study aims to explore, examine and understand the use of gamification in New Zealand contact centres. Its focus is on the emerging applications of gamification techniques within front-line contact centre work, which, can take on a variety of digital and analogue forms (Deterding et al., 2011). Moreover, this study seeks to expand and enhance our understanding of modern IT-intensive service work, within an environment widely recognised for high churn, low motivation and limited job autonomy. The purpose of this study is to explain the behaviours and perceptions of front-line staff exposed to emerging gamification processes.

Through the explicit examination of front-line staff behaviours, this study bridges a gap within the existing literature surrounding the practical application of gamification initiatives and their use throughout the New Zealand contact centre industry. This gap is significant as, despite contact centres outwards appearance of suitability for gamification deployment, little consideration has been given towards the implications such systems may bring in real-world scenarios. Therefore, it is a foremost goal of this study to examine not only how gamification applications are used within the New Zealand contact centre industry but, also how their use intersects with existing aspects of employee roles, such as monitoring systems and performance metrics which, are considered as key contributors to the transactional nature of contact centre work (Bain & Taylor, 2000).

By way of achieving its objective, this study was undertaken using a qualitative interpretive grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and the lens of a constructivist paradigm (Charmaz, 2006). As a methodology, grounded theory differs from other research approaches, which rely on firmly defined hypotheses or research questions, as it requires that researchers adopt and iterate broad research objectives through ongoing analysis and conceptualisation. Beyond the initial phase of a study, the guiding research questions, therefore, are the natural result of the data generation process itself (Birks & Mills, 2011). In following this approach, the research commenced with broadly defined research questions, namely:

- **RQ1:** How is gamification used within New Zealand Contact Centres?

- **RQ2:** What are the motivational influences of gamification in New Zealand contact centres?
- **RQ3:** How do frontline contact centre employees perceive gamification?

In pursuit of these objectives, data came from twenty-four participants who worked across eight New Zealand contact centres based in the cities of Auckland and Christchurch. The data was gathered over a six-month period.

1.3. Thesis Structure

The following section outlines the eight chapters of this study, summarising each briefly below.

Chapter One – *Introduction* presents the purpose of this study and briefly discusses the gaps in the literature related to gamification, contact centres and the motivation of employees working within this sector. The context of the research is defined, and the exploratory objectives presented.

Chapter Two – *Pre-understanding* is a discussion surrounding the inherent beliefs and experiences associated with concepts of gamification and contact centre environments that the researcher brings with him to this research project. These views and experiences are inseparable from the investigation as this study derives from the position of a constructivist paradigm. Therefore for transparency, relevant views facets of the researcher's pre-understanding are outlined.

Chapter Three – *Literature Review* offers a critical review of existing literature surrounding contact centres, emotional labour and burnout, gamification definitions, applications of gamification and theories of employee motivation.

Chapter Four – *Research Methodology* presents the philosophical beliefs of the researcher and details how and why the elected methodology was chosen to address the research objectives. Moreover, it includes a discussion outlining the researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs, assumptions and resultant paradigm selection. Different research designs are examined for their appropriateness in attaining the research objectives. The chapter concludes by justifying the choice of grounded theory for data generation and theoretical development.

Chapter Five – *Data Generation* discusses the processes and techniques used to generate data and conduct the analysis. This chapter highlights relevant aspects of the grounded theory procedure including but not limited to coding, constant comparative analysis and theoretical memoing. Also, the chapter details how the study achieves rigour and validity, and discussion addresses sampling techniques within grounded theory studies in conjunction with relevant ethical considerations.

Chapter Six – *Findings*, commences with a discussion concerning the inherent subjectivity of concepts of gamification and subsequently presents the emergent findings of gamification practices within New Zealand contact centre environments. The chapter presents findings in a form that accords with the inductive grounded theory process adopted for this study.

Chapter Seven – *Discussion* builds upon the findings presented in Chapter Six, by presenting the underlying themes of the emergent substantive theory and associated interrelationships. The primary findings of this study are discussed and summarised with respect to the substantive grounded theory within the New Zealand contact centre environments. Next, the substantive theory is discussed within the context of the existing literature.

Chapter Eight – *Conclusion* The study concludes by discussing the theoretical and practical contributions this research makes and any known limitations. It also considers possible further research efforts that this study may lead to, by offering possible avenues of future study.

Chapter 2. Pre-Understanding

2.1. Introduction

The process of selecting a research topic is one that ordinarily commences with a researcher reflecting upon their area of expertise or personal interest. Fuelling these initial deliberations are any combination of political beliefs, experiences or insights that may belong to a researcher. While ordinarily it is accepted that such factors provide the catalyst for considering a topic, the degree of continuing importance and influence they retain to or have upon, the researcher will often be contingent on the philosophical underpinnings of the individual. Within interpretive research, it arguable that such factors permeate deeply into all facets of the research process and therefore, must be acknowledged and accounted for throughout a study. Moreover, this fact is particularly salient when considering the potential of such factors to unintentionally influence the ongoing interpretation of data and the introduction of bias to the research findings. Notwithstanding this, and perhaps more importantly, as interpretive researchers are uniquely positioned to leverage their intimate understanding of a research subject to gain new insight into social phenomena, they bring potential benefits to a study by acknowledging and drawing upon pre-existing experience and knowledge.

For this reason, the following chapter discusses the origins of the researchers pre-understanding and illustrates the strategy relied upon to manage its influence.

2.2. Accommodating Pre-Understanding

Grounded theorists agree that researchers bring with them an inherent assortment of experiences and expertise, all of which hold the potential to shape and influence the direction of a study (Birks & Mills, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The extent and degree of a researcher's influences depend on numerous factors, including but not limited to the chosen strand of grounded theory, and the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher. Few would question the necessity and obligation for all researchers to acknowledge how established beliefs risk influencing their research findings.

Gummesson defines this amalgamation of experiences as our inherent 'pre-understanding' (Gummesson, 2000, p. 57). Pre-understanding is the combination of the first and secondary knowledge, insights, and experiences a researcher acquires before the commencement of a research programme. He contrasts this with the researcher's 'understanding' consisting of knowledge acquired during the research process itself. Gummesson further states that the term pre-understanding "implies a certain attitude and commitment on the part of researchers/consultants" (Gummesson, 2000, p. 60) which "involves their personal experience as an essential element in the process of collecting and analysing information". Seldén (2005, p. 123) elaborate on this position, likening pre-understanding to "initial capital" where beliefs and experiences leading to the point of research commencement have accumulated and, carry the potential to influence the outcomes of a study. He argues that not only must we accept that we cannot remain detached from these experiences and that by proceeding to do so could "bring about a more biased understanding of data than conscious reflections over one's own comprehension could"(Seldén, 2005, p. 123).

Thus, it is fair to posit that a researcher's analysis and subsequent interpretation of data is inherently filtered through his or her background, social standing and experience in such a way that he or she may not be conscious of its occurrence (Heath & Cowley, 2004). These reflex actions remain largely inseparable from our daily existence; however, by elevating our awareness of them, it is possible to reconcile and mitigate their influence on any given study (Nystrom & Dahlberg, 2001).

This process of reconciliation draws on an understanding of raised transparency within the qualitative research process. Stenbacka (2001) suggests that those conducting qualitative studies should reflect upon the processes of pre-understanding and access, to ensure the researcher's ability to sufficiently observe the relevant aspects of reality in which the phenomenon occurs. These observations are the direct result of the interplay between the researcher's pre-understanding and their ability to identify and interpret a phenomenon's meaning.

Gummesson (2000) recognises the need for a researcher to gain sufficient access to elicit such meaning. He discusses two distinct types of access, physical and mental, and their associated obstacles. He contends that physical access is that which enables a researcher to conduct the

study in the desired location, with the necessary people, while maintaining access for the appropriate study duration. Mental access consists of issues about “how to understand what is happening in the setting, how to get people to describe it, how to observe it, or how to experience it through the researcher's involvement” (Gummesson, 2000, p. 32).

A series of questions emerge from this understanding: how does a researcher best achieve the requisite degree of transparency, and ensure the integrity of his/her findings. Birks and Mills (2015) offer insight into how qualitative researchers, specifically those utilising grounded theory, can overcome the influence of pre-understanding within their research. They contest that grounded theorists should extend the use of data capturing processes, such as the recording of thoughts or observations in notes known as theoretical memos, to encompass an examination of the researchers pre-understanding before entering the field or existing literature.

Similarly, Nystrom and Dahlberg (2001) posit that researchers should embark upon a process of constant reflection, through a technique label as mental ‘bridling’. Bridling is a method of meticulously re-examining thoughts or ideations at frequent intervals. This process enables the researcher to self-examine how their existing beliefs intrude upon the study and subsequently mitigate impulsive or ill-conceived theoretical developments. By doing so, the researcher can facilitate the necessary degree of reflexivity, which enables the researcher to avoid sub-conscious biases (Birks & Mills, 2015).

This study has followed both approaches to mitigate the negative influence a researcher’s inherent pre-understanding can produce. This process commenced with the researcher asking simple questions of himself, such as, what do I believe about gamification? What do I believe about contact centres? How did I arrive at these beliefs? The process of theoretical memoing facilitates this ongoing contemplative iteration. Below is an articulation of how the researcher answered these questions and acts as a summary of the fundamental aspects of his pre-commencement reflection. The purpose of these observations was to account for areas of the researcher’s pre-understanding which he believes had the potential to influence the topic of study at the time of its commencement. However, these initial reflections are only one component of the process required to mitigate the ongoing nature of biases. To facilitate clarity, the following section is written from a first-person perspective.

2.3. Reflection on Pre-Understanding & Researcher Motivation

My path to becoming a doctoral researcher was one of serendipitous opportunity and not what some may assume to have been the active pursuit of an academic career. Somewhat as late as 2014, my intentions lay with returning to the world of entrepreneurship, where I had succeeded in acquiring the necessary funding for the development of traditional game software and game-based hardware. Therefore, my focus at the time was largely on the practical application of game-related problem-solving techniques, and not on their theoretical understandings. I had up until that time also spent a significant amount of time contemplating ways to overcome the many and frequent financial obstacles associated with being an entrepreneur while balancing the potential for failure and considering possible alternate career paths. Within this period of reflection came an examination of my experiences working within the New Zealand contact centre industry and, ultimately a sense of frustration at some of the practice's staff, including myself, were the recipients of.

Of significance were frustrations associated with digital reward systems and the emergence of tools and techniques tasked with perpetuating employee motivation. At the time, I lamented just how ineffective supposedly motivational mechanisms were in engaging staff to achieve goals and objectives, and I contemplated potential improvements. Arguably, this confined my experience to early iterations of these techniques; nonetheless, their disruptive nature was one that continued to elicit a stream of conversation between my immediate friends and family. Many of whom were still actively working in the contact centre environment. I believe that these discussions, and the desire to remain connected to a phenomenon I was familiar with ultimately provided the genesis, and impetus for selecting the topic for this study.

2.3.1. Contextual Exposure: New Zealand Contact Centre Industry

Before the commencement of this study, I had spent several years working within the New Zealand contact centre industry. I began in customer-service based roles, but later moved into more senior positions. This was my first introduction into how large organisations deploy a policy that exemplified metric based quotas, and how key performance indicators (KPIs) could be leveraged and manipulated to influence the perceptions of managers and staff.

In a practical sense, these policies mandated that the information system (IS) that managed the contact centre take each customer call, categorise it and distribute them to the most appropriate and available customer service representative. From this point, agents receive a target time to reach a satisfactory resolution and, were penalised through monthly performance reviews if unable to achieve goals. It became apparent early on within my time in the contact centre industry that these performance indicators often fell short of their intended goals, or ignored the human elements of conducting the essential tasks. For example, once a call was completed, staff were required to notarise the conversation and become immediately available to receive another inbound call. The configuration of KPIs frequently fail to consider the innate boredom this Sisyphean activity had the potential to produce. Not every call was one that provided mental stimulation or challenge. Moreover, invariably instances arose wherein customer representatives would spend an inordinate number of hours repeating the same scripted introductions or verbal sales contracts before encountering any degree of significant variation. At times to alleviate boredom, staff rely upon on additional systems, which contained game elements and were early iterations of gamification. These systems would run alongside the existing KPI structures while relying on quantitative metrics to communicate to an agent their performance metrics. Such initiatives were secondary and viewed as management's aspirational attempts to improve engagement and motivation.

While working in the contact centre industry, I spent a considerable proportion of my time in a range of senior technical support roles. These positions focused predominantly on addressing complex technical problems alongside network operations centre staff and saw me providing a level of escalated support for newcomers to the company. Primarily, my role existed on a spectrum, in which on one end I was tasked with assisting in basic tasks, while at the other I acted as the final point of escalation for technical queries. It is within these roles that I developed a broader understanding of call centre operations, and how the deployed information systems are utilised by senior management to influence employee behaviour. Unquestionably, my involvement in these roles acted as an antecedent to my pre-understanding of formal gamification systems in the substantive context of contact centres.

2.3.2. A Gamified Entrepreneur

My business endeavours have been a contributing factor towards the formulation of much of my pre-understanding of gamification. Most notably, between 2010 and 2012, I developed and co-authored a website dedicated to traditional game media, and discussions around game-like mechanics. The website saw a reasonable amount of success reaching approximately 25,000 unique visitors per month. The primary focus of this site was written commentary related to industry success stories and emerging techniques, while also being critical of consumer and organisational practices that were often perceived by some to be beneficial to society. The site operated alongside my employment within the contact centre industry, thus on many occasions, acted as a testing ground for my brand of gamification mechanics. These mechanics were designed specifically to drive traffic through unique page views and to maintain the motivation of authors while generating a constant stream of time-sensitive content. It was through these initiatives that I would attempt to address some of the flaws I believed existed within my own employer's attempts at gamification. Ultimately, this experience provides me with a unique perspective and an enhanced capacity for theoretical sensitivity. It is only through reflection that I came to understand the importance of this endeavour and fully comprehend how the factors that shaped my pre-understanding.

I believe that my perspective of gamification initiatives comes from the amalgamation of three types of experiences with these systems. Firstly, as a developer, secondly as a manager and finally as a user. From the perspective of a developer, the primary concerns would revolve around the practical implementation of gamification initiatives, and encompassed elements such as costs, development time and my level of technical competency. During this phase, I would frequently encounter the practical limitations of implementing unique and novel ideas, which would, in turn, cause the scope of the project to contract. My concerns often lay foremost with reaching milestones outlined at the beginning of the project, and limiting project 'creep' to reach deadlines. From a managerial perspective, several obstacles needed consideration, firstly how to best calculate the influence that gamification initiatives had on traffic to the website and user's perceptions. Secondly, the financial and opportunity costs associated with their continued deployment. Finally, their ability to meet business objectives. Inevitably my own experiences as a user with gamification systems, formulated while working in the contact centre industry, influenced each of these perspectives. I also maintained a

degree of cynicism towards particular types of gamification techniques which I believed were insufficient to achieve related goals.

2.3.3. Formation of My Pre-Understanding

I acknowledge that these experiences were fundamental in the development of my pre-understanding. However, I remain conscious that they form only part of my total awareness (Seldén, 2005), because I was aware that pre-understanding is also heavily influenced by other factors, such as those experiences and residual knowledge that I would be unable to articulate. Within the literature, the recognised term for this branch of understanding is ‘tacit knowledge’ (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2008). Tacit knowledge is knowledge tied to the senses, which remains unarticulated and exists through implicit rules of thumb (Nonaka & Von Krogh, 2009). It is in contrast to explicit knowledge, which is accessible through consciousness and transferred through sentences, drawings or other explicit means. By its very nature, tacit knowledge is difficult to articulate, and in some instances, the researcher may remain entirely unaware of its existence (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2008). It is, therefore, only accessible in a conscious capacity if the task at hand is one which exists close to an explicit state. Otherwise details about individual skills “are inaccessible through consciousness” (Nonaka & Von Krogh, 2009, p. 636). To illustrate this, along with the paradox that tacit knowledge can present, Polanyi outlines the following scenario (Polanyi & Sen, 2009, p. 4);

“If I know how to ride a bicycle or keep afloat when swimming, I may not have the slightest idea of how I do this or even an entirely wrong or grossly imperfect idea of it, and yet I go cycling or swimming merrily. Nor can it be said that I know how to bicycle or swim and yet do not how to coordinate the complex pattern of muscular acts when I do my cycling or swimming. I both know how to carry out these performances as a whole and also know how to carry out the elementary acts which constitute them, though I cannot tell what these acts are. This is due to the fact that I am only subsidiarily aware of these things, and our awareness of a thing may not suffice to make it identifiable.”

Tacit knowledge, therefore, infuses itself into almost every action we take, even though we remain largely ignorant of its acquisition (Tsoukas, 2003).

It was with this in mind that I reflected on how the accumulation of tacit knowledge borne from many years of working in the call centre industry, within various strands of traditional game development and consumption, has shaped my pre-understanding. The unconscious nature of tacit knowledge limited my ability to articulate the specific scenarios in which it has played a role. Those facets most apparent within the context of this study are the instances where I could rely on a combination of expert experience and intuition to pursue questions or avenues of interest within the data collection process. I believe that my familiarity with subsections of popular gaming culture, facilitated through my experience generating community driven pop-culture web content, has provided a degree of tacit understanding on how to approach the topic of game-like mechanics in environments that are otherwise formal. Illustrative of such understanding are interviews where participants are reluctant to discuss games or game-like initiatives in a straightforward manner, for fear of being perceived as unprofessional or associated with the negative residual stigma traditional gaming once had (Guy, Ratzki-Leewing, & Gwadry-Sridhar, 2011). My tacit knowledge assisted by providing a level of intuition on how to navigate their reluctance, and provide for a more palatable framing of questions which participants could relate to comfortably. This process of reframing emerged through mutual understandings of minute details and through the adoption of language that was appropriate for the level of familiarity with the game related content.

2.3.4. Pre-Understanding Memos

Following the suggestions of Dahlberg and Dahlberg (2003), this study incorporated the process of reflective 'bridling', from commencement through to conclusion. While the 'bridling' process relied predominantly on mental contemplations at each point of the grounded theory decision-making process, it was further supplemented by the grounded theory tool of theoretical memos, discussed further in Chapter 5. These theoretical memos were utilised to track and subsequently mitigate potential biases or ill-conceived theoretical developments, which may have emerged because of the researchers inherent 'pre-understanding'. These biases could arise in the form of preconceptions around preferences of call centre agents, their levels of knowledge surrounding the subject of gamification or areas of theoretical significance that the study should prioritise investigating.

Below are some of the theoretical memos from the pre-commencement phase of the study, a period in which the researcher believes that his pre-understanding was at its most influential. The production of these memos was before the data collection phase of the study. They are presented here in their original form, albeit for the correction of minor grammatical errors.

2.3.4.1. Motivations and Purpose

I am inclined to continue building upon my existing knowledge and experience around gamification techniques. It is apparent, however, that this acts as both an aid, and a potential hindrance for any resulting outcome. I have what I consider to be a lifetime's worth of experiences with modern game mechanics, as both a video game enthusiast and to a lesser extent developer. I frequently consume video game related media, news and attend local events, which will also likely persist throughout the duration of the study. These behaviours form a major part of my daily habitual process and to some extent form how I view my own sense of self. Mindful of this I realise my own biases towards certain subjects, techniques, mechanics and industry practices revolving around gamification. I have had experiences with those that I believe to be detrimental and have conducted my own attempts at remedies for them. The traditional game industry continues to move in a direction that could in many respects be exploitative, and, there are several instances in my previous research which indicate these practices have bled over into gamification techniques.

The proposed purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate the perceptions of employees within environments like that in which I use to work. I intend to interview staff at the various levels of contact centres, who have been subject to gamification initiatives. This study will subsequently examine how these techniques have been utilised and further, expand the understanding we have around employee perceptions.

2.3.4.2. Gamification Techniques

Many gamification techniques have utilised player taxonomy's (Bartle player types) to understand how users' behaviour affects their motivation towards tasks. The goal of this understanding is to tailor user experiences, to leverage this motivation to achieve

business objectives. While much consideration has been given to the potential benefits of such initiatives, less focus has been placed on their potential consequences. Thus, there exist very few empirical studies which focus on the perspectives of employees facing gamification initiatives, and how this influences their day to day roles. Of concern to me are the emerging initiatives within the contact centre industry such as virtual currencies, points, virtual badges and competitive leaderboards. While these are all initiatives I have had some experience with it is likely that as this study progresses more techniques from the traditional game industry will make the transition to enterprise gamification strategies and, as such there is a need to examine how these initiatives are being received by employees.

2.3.4.3. Contact Centre Industry

Contact centres act as an entry point for many enthusiasts wishing to start a career in the IT industry. This is true from my own experiences, but, also for many of those I encountered while working within several roles. There appears to exist, however, a culture of ‘churn’ within the contact centre industry that often cuts this plan short. While there seemed to be no shortage of employees to fill the vacancies of those on the way out, numerous experiential based problems would often appear in their absence.

2.3.4.4. Contact Centre Management

Management processes within the contact centre industry appear to be largely based on performance metrics or “KPIs” (Key performance indicators). These indicators are used as the basis of performance reviews and, in some cases provide real-time feedback for how agents are performing on any given day. In many respects KPI’s share a degree of commonality with gamification systems, especially those that are tied closely to rewards and reward like systems. This raises several questions;

- *To what degree are KPI’s and gamification utilised together?*
- *Do the KPI’s achieve their objectives?*
- *How do staff feel about their effectiveness?*
- *What influence do KPI’s have on Managements performance?*

- *Do Management or Staff have intuitive insight into how these systems could be improved?*

Gamification & Employment Law

Gamification and New Zealand Employment law is an area of research which has been paid little attention. In part, this is due to the absence of formal gamification methodologies but also because of its emerging nature. My previous endeavours into this area of research would suggest that several areas of interest could be considered when examining the perceptions of employee's subject to gamification systems. Firstly, attention could be given to how these systems influence the bargaining power of the employees. Secondly, the extent to which users within gamified systems have access to their personally identifiable information could also be examined. Finally, how users perceive the use of this data and, other data, such as gamified social media experiences. It is likely that little case law or statutory regulations exist or, will exist by the conclusion of the study. However, it is hoped that by considering these issues those able to make informed decisions around these techniques will benefit from their contemplation.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter began by discussing the extent to which a researcher's experiences and expertise can influence the inductive research process, and identifies how existing literature has accounted for these factors. The discourse then addressed aspects determined by the researcher, which he believes holds the potential to influence the outcome of the study.

The discussion included a brief outline of the author's professional background, alongside the relevant parts of his exposure to concepts of gamification and, existing research he has conducted on the subject. The chapter also focused on the specific methods utilised throughout the study to account for the researcher's pre-understanding, facilitated by techniques such as theoretical memos and mental bridling.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

3.1. Introduction - Literature Review in Grounded Theory Studies

While many methodologies necessitate in-depth examinations of existing literature before the commencement of a study, grounded theory studies place little reliance on this practice. This position has come about due to the inductive nature of grounded theory and its dependence on the development of a core variable, which is explicitly grounded in the observed data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Equally, this position is one founded in the roots of the methodology as proposed by Glaser and Strauss, who argue that the optimal strategy of inquiry is to ignore existing literature before entering a substantive context (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Of the two founding authors, Glaser is more profuse in his argument, stating that extensive literature reviews violate the basic premise of grounded theory in that concepts should emerge from the data, not an extant theory (Glaser & Holton, 2004). This position has subsequently seen support from many of the early proponents of grounded theory (Hickey, 1997; Stern, Allen, & Moxley, 1982; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

However, this approach has not gone uncontested within the academic community and does not give grounded theory researchers an intrinsic license to ignore existing work in a field. In fact, Strauss and Corbin (1994) conclude that researchers are under a strict obligation to engage with existing literature. Proponents of grounded theory now argue that the central question surrounding grounded theory method (GTM) literature reviews is not one of if but when a researcher should conduct a one (Charmaz, 2006).

This discussion exists for several reasons. Firstly, from a practical perspective, PhD candidates are routinely expected to produce a comprehensive literature review before the commencement of a study. More often than not this is at the behest of the university, for progression or enrolment, alongside the requirements of receiving ethics approval. Secondly, conducting a preliminary examination of the literature does not limit the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher, but can aid the process (Urquhart, 2012). Finally, researchers may find it difficult to bind their proposed study within an unexplored substantive context if they remain entirely unaware of existing literature in the proposed field (Dunne, 2011).

For this study and informed by the discussions surrounding the contention of literature reviews in grounded theory, a 'general yet not extensive' review of the literature was conducted (Smith & Biley, 1997). This approach was taken to guarantee that the researcher was sufficiently informed around relevant gamification and contact centre concepts prior to entering the context of inquiry. By conducting a 'general yet not extensive' review, the researcher was able to certify that the study was sufficiently bound to relevant academic findings and industry practices while, also ensuring that the chosen methods and organisations could provide appropriate insight into the research objectives. Equally, the researcher was also able to ensure that subjective concepts such as 'games' and 'play', were sufficiently understood prior to the investigation of organisations purporting to use gamification. This is of significance as from the outset, this study aimed to examine the use of gamification from the perspective of employees, many of which held differing views around what constitutes a game and by extension is 'gamification'. The examination of these views required a versatile knowledge set capable of interpreting subjective concepts from various angles, a task significantly aided by prior examination of the literature.

Furthermore, to account for the researcher's 'pre-understanding' (Birks & Mills, 2015), a theoretical 'middle ground' approach of mitigation was undertaken (Dunne, 2011). Dunne (2011) posits that to aid in the process, researchers should expand the grounded theory procedure of 'memoing'.

The discussion addresses the practice of memoing in more detail in Chapter 5.3.3 but, for clarity, the topic is discussed briefly within the pre-commencement literature review. The purpose of memoing is to outline the ideas and literature a researcher is exposed to while recording how they influence the accumulating knowledge and direction of the study. A sentiment that is not far from Glaser's purist position, wherein he concedes that "grounded theory treats the literature as another source of data to be integrated into constant comparative analysis" (Glaser & Holton, 2004, p. 9).

During this study, the researcher was cognisant of his obligation to remain aware of potential biases that could be introduced by reviewing existing theory before the emergence of initial categories or basic conceptual developments (Glaser & Holton, 2004, p. 58). Equally, the researcher implicitly understood that there was a risk of ascribing resources to needlessly

understanding factors, which may ultimately not contribute to the emergent theory. With this in mind, a modern, yet practical approach was adopted throughout this study wherein the researcher maintained “an open mind is not an empty head” (Dey, 2003, p. 237).

Therefore, the following sections commence an examination of literature pertinent to the subject of inquiry, specifically the contact centre industry, its work conditions and game-based solutions to motivation at work. Following this, the study considers the emerging instances of ‘gamification’, its many applications, criticisms and popular theories driving current implementations. While these sections do examine relevant findings and discussions from within industry and academia, following with the tenets of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006) their purpose within this study is primarily to act as a theoretical sensitising device (Glaser, 1978) capable of informing the researchers own understand around salient concepts to be considered.

3.2. Contact Centres or Call Centres

Historical studies have defined the call centre environment broadly as

A dedicated operation in which computer utilising employees receive inbound – or make outbound – telephone calls, with those calls processed and controlled either by an Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) or predictive dialling system. (Taylor & Bain, 1999, p. 102)

and;

A work environment in which the main business is mediated by computer and telephone-based technologies that enable the efficient distribution of incoming calls (or allocation of outgoing calls) to available staff, and permit customer-employee interaction to occur simultaneously with use of display screen equipment and the instant access to, and inputting of, information. (Holman, Wall, Clegg, Sparrow, & Howard, 2003, pp. 111-112)

However, the conception of these definitions came from a time when public switched telephone networks (PSTN) were the dominant technology, which undoubtedly influenced the design and operationalisation of organisational roles. In many modern call centres

though, these systems have been integrated with services such as voice over internet protocol (VoIP). The term call centre was seen as being exclusively served through voice-based technologies, and other technological advancements. For this reason, the term 'call centre' has naturally evolved to more readily reflect a varied array of activities now conducted in many call centre environments. These activities range from emails, online queries, text chats, faxes, social media and the like; a role that once predominantly relied upon employees conversant with a single channel of direct communication with customers now sees the same staff requiring a significantly greater skill set. Today, 90% of modern call centres actively manage email services, and 43% deal with emerging technologies such as social media or web-based peer to peer systems (Dimension Data, 2015). For this reason, the term 'contact centre' has been adopted as an industry standard to reflect the broad range of operations and services these companies now produce (Burgess & Connell, 2004).

Despite this adaptation, the phrase "call centre" is still common in the industry and public lexicon and is used interchangeably with "contact centre". The use of either term today almost always indicates a multi-channel contact centre, not the voice-only service offering. Notwithstanding this, within the academic literature, there appears to be a consensus as to what constitutes a contact centre, which is usually determined by three key factors. Foremost, organisations will integrate tools and technologies to interact with consumers through inbound and outbound calls (Kinnie, Hutchinson, & Purcell, 2000). Next, organisations will incorporate appropriate information technologies to allow employees to interface with customers and record information into databases (Healy & Bramble, 2003). Finally, these systems facilitate managerial control over work processes while allowing for performance-based monitoring and the use of automatic call distribution (ACD) technologies (Callaghan & Thompson, 2002; Russell, 2008).

The terms call centre and contact centre are unrestricted by industry. In part, this is due to the nature of in-house contact centre operations, and sub-contracted services considered as being derivative components of existing business sectors and not existing as a standalone industry (Burgess & Connell, 2004). Therefore, any and every type of activity can and does utilise contact centres to deliver multiple communication services. Nonetheless, it is common to refer to contact centres as an industry (Jobs, Burris, & Butler, 2007; Langley et al., 2006) and as such, this study has adopted the terminology of contact centre.

3.3. Overview of Contact Centres

Contact centres exist as a cost-efficient and flexible means for organisations to communicate with consumers. The agility and reactivity afforded by contact centre business models allow them to offer an increasing array of promotional and sales services at increasingly competitive rates (Wallace et al., 2000). Factors such as the decentralisation of office work (Larner, 2001), and advances in information technology and the associated reduction in the cost of data transmission (Bloom, Garicano, Sadun, & Van Reenen, 2014) have encouraged the growth of the contact centre industry. These innovations have facilitated the reduction of costs by enabling companies to operate within wider geographical areas than would ordinarily be possible when relying on traditional physical transactions (Dimension Data, 2015).

Within these environments, employees are also able to leverage corporate intranet systems to disseminate and improve communications to streamline work processes (Adria & Chowdhury, 2004). Intranets connect employees to integrated digital databases and allow for faster access and retrieval of data which engenders efficiency (Adria & Chowdhury, 2004). By incorporating such technologies, contact centres address growing consumer demand for quick problem resolutions and facilitate easier access to private or public services, such as bill payments and emergency services (Burgess, Connell, & Hannif, 2005). Contact centres are thus able to better generate value by enabling businesses to build relationships with their consumers through improved response times and first call resolution (FCR) (Langley et al., 2006).

In 2015, the 'Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report' indicated that organisations were now attaching more focus on creating "emotional triggers" wherein customers are made to feel special, wanted and appreciated (Dimension Data, 2015). This approach is claimed to lead to customers having a deeper emotional connection with a service, and a stronger relationship with a company's brand. An important, but sometimes overlooked consideration is that due to the diverse nature of industry applications, not all contact centres adopt a similar approach, nor do they assume the same roles. Holman, Batt, and Holtgrewe (2007) studied call centres from 17 countries across the globe, comparing the practices of around 2,500 contact centres employing approximately 475,000 workers. They found that the average contact centre operation was eight years old, with 68% having a predominantly local

or regional focus. Two-thirds of which were in-house operations serving an organisation's own customers. Inbound based calls accounted for 78% of all interactions within the contact centre environment, and 49% of contact centres dealt only with customer service-focused roles.

3.3.1. New Zealand Contact Centre Industry

In 1999, the New Zealand Call Centre Attraction Initiative (CCAI) was established to promote the internationalisation of contact centre activity, promising to position New Zealand as the preferred home for US multinational contact centres wishing to serve the Asia-Pacific region (Larner, 2002). The proposition was that by situating contact centres in New Zealand, international organisations would be able to leverage a financial advantage through comparatively lower operating costs, while also benefiting from a local time zone that complimented services in the Asian markets. At the same time, the CCAI promoted an optimistic vision for the industry in New Zealand, with some intimating that the initiative was a viable means of generating economic growth and for positioning New Zealand workers in high-skill roles that were in high demand (Larner, 2001). Such thinking assumed that traditional call centres would move away from predominantly voice-based services, and elect to adopt the multifaceted contact centre approach, which would benefit the labour market in the form of higher-skilled e-commerce and online services roles. Contrary opinions, however, believed that the most likely outcome of offering competitive cost solutions to multinational companies would be that New Zealand based call centres would become homes for cheap unskilled labour, acting merely as overflow queues for off-peak calls (Larner, 2002).

Despite these concerns, the New Zealand contact centre industry has seen substantial growth. In 2002, three hundred and fifty businesses identified as having contact services as their primary focus, and held a combined agent capacity of 11,000 seats (Australian Communications Association, 2002). Seats are the industry metric used to quantify available workstations and accompanying equipment. A seat does not denote an individual employee but instead represents the level of resource capacity of the contact centre business. These resources are used either exclusively by an individual employee or are alternatively communally available for those on rotating work rosters (Dimension Data, 2008). By 2008, the maximum capacity of the contact centre industry was 24,000 seats (Dimension Data,

2008), and by 2010 this had increased to be upwards of 29,000 seats (Fifth Quadrant, 2010). In part, some of this growth may have been attributable to the substantial reliance government services placed on contact centres. Many government agencies utilise contact centres as a primary source of communication with the public. The exponential growth of contact centres in both global and domestic markets has been accompanied by an extensive range of literature examining the various aspects of contact centre environments, alongside the evolving nature of the contact centre worker role.

3.3.2. The Reality of Agent-Based Contact Centre Work

Prima facie, the role of a contact centre worker may seem inherently simplistic. The public perception is often one in which workers narrate scripts to resolve problem resolutions. When no resolution is forthcoming, customers often direct blame towards the apparent or perceived ineptitude of the agent, with little concern for the practical realities of the contact centre agent role.

Bain and Taylor (2000) attribute this to early and conflicting portrayals of contact centre work. They argue that the cultivation of this perception resulted through the dissonance of two public images. On the one hand, a view exists that contact centres are highly optimistic, high-tech work environments which develop cooperation among employees and customers (Bain & Taylor, 2000) to produce skilled knowledge-intensive solutions while providing employees with a flexible work-life balance (Belt et al., 2000). However, on the other hand, contact centres represented 'dark satanic mills', 'sweatshops' and 'customer service factories' (Bain & Taylor, 2000). Much academic literature, in response to these accusations, has attempted to investigate managerial practices, physical health concerns, psychological impacts and other related areas of inquiry in the sector (De Ruyter, Wetzels, & Feinberg, 2001; Holman, 2002; Taylor, Baldry, Bain, & Ellis, 2003).

The reality of contact centre work, however, is that agents are often required to spend extended periods of time interacting with customers while simultaneously entering relevant information into a database. This information processing will often act as the core function of their role. However, it must nonetheless exist harmoniously alongside any troubleshooting processes, sales, customer retention or 'up-selling' efforts that the agent is also tasked to complete (Belt et al., 2000). Furthermore, agents must also be able to follow procedures set

out by their company and maintain professional etiquette, even when faced with highly emotive clients. Such instances often call upon agents to rely on practices such as ‘surface acting’, a state of faked affective displays or ‘deep acting’, where they modify their inner feelings to match outward expressions (Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005).

3.3.3. Skilled, Semi-Skilled and De-Skilled Contact Centre Work

Some view contact centre roles as existing within a new ‘information economy’ (Belt et al., 2000), in which workers benefit from a general ‘upskilling’ around the adaptation of new technologies. Not all agree, however, that upskilling is innate to the new information economy, with others arguing that as a consequence of automation agents have few opportunities (Russell, 2008). In part, the lack of opportunities is attributable to the nature of routine, highly repetitive work tasks (Warhurst & Thompson, 1998). Korczynski (2002) mentions that ultimately, the role of the contact centre worker is to manage the delicate balance of function efficiency and resolution quality. Nonetheless, the level of skill required for a modern day contact centre employee is a topic that has seen sparse investigation (Russell, 2008). The limited studies that have endeavoured to investigate this problem tend to confine the concepts primarily to two strands, semi-skilled work and de-skilled (Russell, 2008). Russell (2008, p. 199) argues semi-skilled work is that which requires competency above the level of a “blue-collar operator positions from the factory era”. He further contends that what differentiates semi-skilled work within contact centre environments is the high degree of accuracy and emotional control required to perform given tasks; he accepts though that it would be wrong to view this type of work in the same light as roles which require years of training. In contrast, de-skilled roles are those where maintenance of the ‘skill’ of the employee is less important (Glenn & Feldberg, 1977), in favour of practices that simplify or replace the requirements of the skilled worker. Within a contact centre, these roles are most apparent in outbound contexts, where the nature of the employee’s role is almost entirely reliant on scripted interactions as opposed to building relationships through empathy. De-skilled roles are often perceived negatively as being either ‘dead-end’ or industrialised (Belt et al., 2000).

This belief or perception that those people working at the 'coal face' within contact centres are subject to de-skilling has drawn some to conclude that the industry has embraced the management methodologies of Taylorism (Bain et al., 2002).

3.3.4. Developments in Contact Centre Work

Taylorism, developed by mechanical engineer Frederick Taylor in the 1890s, was a practice that focused on economic efficiency in the labour process (Taylor, 1911). Taylor's approach revolutionised the application of labour through the use of scientific methods available at the time and subsequently informed the notion that there was an objectively 'best' way to perform any given work task, a process labelled as the "one right way" (Kanigel, 2005).

The benefits of Taylorism are purported to be a reduction in training times brought about by simplifying functions, the complete separation of work execution and planning, and increased standardisation of work outputs (Taylor, 1911). Taylorism is, therefore, akin to the process of de-skilled work, with numerous similarities, namely: the limitations it places on task variance and the increased monitoring and management control practices (Taylor et al., 2003). Taylor and Bain (1999) submit that within the context of contact centres, Taylorisation is more progressive than in traditional industries and is achieved mainly through the mandatory use of scripts, on-screen templates, regulated responses and pervasive monitoring systems. It is, therefore, reasonable to suggest that contact centres are indicative of the next evolution "in the Taylorisation of white-collar work" (Taylor & Bain, 1999, p. 115).

The belief that contact centre work is reflective of Taylorisation is not ubiquitous. Opponents state that unlike traditional factory work, modern contact centres require employees to adapt to an increasing array of communication channels, enabling greater interaction with customers (Russell, 2008), a position which is in stark contrast to the perceived limitations of traditional call centre work. Further, the expanded responsibility added to roles is demonstrable by an industry reliance on multi-purpose agents who have a broad range of expertise. The role of a versatile contact centre agent can frequently require the employee to take 'ownership' of a call or complaint until they identify a resolution. Even agents who do not inherently have the ability, or perhaps training, to multi-purpose may, when challenged by a complex query, find themselves acting outside the boundaries of their traditional role (Koole & Mandelbaum, 2002). Callaghan and Thompson (2001) argue that while this process

can introduce delays to call queues or significant disparities in how many total calls agents can take, the overall business process is unaffected as an agent's role is, for the most part, not dependent on others in the organisation. An approach such as this contrasts diametrically with the industrial sector, wherein a delay on a sequential production line could have a significant impact on a company's ability to manufacture their products.

Regardless of the scenario, agents are nonetheless subject to tight restrictions on how and when they can deviate from their heavily prescribed roles (Aksin, Armony, & Mehrotra, 2007). For instance, any call distributed through an automated call delivery system (ACD) that remains unanswered may negatively affect an agent's monthly performance quota. Equally, entering into "idle" mode, a state where the agent is acknowledging they are not ready to receive the next call, may also negatively impact their perceived performance (Ferne & Metcalf, 1998); even if the agent is completing residual work from a previous call. It is for this reason that Bain et al. (2002, p. 173) argue that ultimately contact centre work "needs to be viewed not as an ephemeral deviation from, or corruption of, the general course of development of white-collar employment, but rather as a significant step in its evolution".

3.4. Emotional Labour, Burnout & Turnover in Contact Centres

The contact centre industry is one that people routinely enter with an expectation that their tenure in the industry will be short-lived (Pal & Buzzanell, 2008). The reputation is such that the general populace perceives churn to be higher than in other sectors. Similarly, organisations operating call centres anticipate yearly churn and budget accordingly. Undoubtedly, numerous factors contribute to the high rate of employee turnover. Also, it is reasonable to suggest that one of these factors is the erosion of agent resilience (Bain & Taylor, 2000), which often results from excessive work demands, restrictive management practices and the need to frequently resolve issues presented by upset, irate or otherwise emotionally compromised customers.

The concept of emotional labour and associated costs are a crucial area of research for understanding employee well-being within the service industries (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1979, 1983). Defined broadly as "the labour involved in dealing with other peoples' feelings" (James, 1989, p. 15), emotional labour is the constant process of emotional regulation and the recognition of its corresponding cognitive cost. There are two aspects of

this concept (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002): job-focused emotional labour, and employee-focused emotional labour. Job-focused emotional labour or “emotional work” (Zapf, Vogt, Seifert, Mertini, & Isic, 1999, p. 371) is the perceived amount of emotional commitment demanded in varying work contexts. Roles with high job-focused emotional labour components are sometimes referred to as people work (Hochschild, 1983), and seen in areas that require intense levels of interaction with customers. Such instances of job-focused emotional labour are observable in contact centre organisations that mandate training policies and performance metrics that ensure employees ‘smile down the phone’, at every customer interaction. Conversely, employee-focused emotional labour is the mechanism through which employees manage their emotional states to meet these demands.

The importance of these cognitive states derives from their propensity to contribute to feelings of emotional fatigue. This fatigue is brought on by emotional work in which employees are required to utilise various mental acting techniques to adhere to company policy. Hochschild defines these techniques as two separate actions: ‘surface acting’ and ‘deep acting’. Surface acting is the process of modifying and controlling emotional expressions through a mental state of projection (Hochschild, 1983). This limits the feelings associated with the displayed emotion and is said to be akin to “faking” or “painting on” affective displays (Hochschild, 1979, p. 558). This technique is thought to facilitate a state like that of cognitive dissonance, where real feelings contradict those expressed, resulting in the depletion the mental repository (Grandey et al., 2005). On the contrary, deep acting is a process whereby an employee’s feelings are adjusted to match their expression (Grandey et al., 2005; Hochschild, 1983) and comes about by an individual drawing on previous events or memories to reproduce feelings. A process which is aided by the empathetic progression of considering “as if” scenarios (Hochschild, 1983, p. 42). Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) posit that employee-focused emotional labour, and by extension techniques such as surface and deep acting, in due course play a role in contributing to what is known as burnout syndrome.

Burnout was first investigated as a phenomenon in the 1970s by American psychiatrist Herbert Freudenberger. Freudenberger (1974, 1977) observed that the working conditions of health services and early childhood care workers at times contribute to a gradual loss of motivation and employee commitment. He described this concept as the accumulated effects of overworking, leading to excessive demands on energy, strength and resources

(Freudenberger, 1974). Following this discovery, the term burnout was widely adopted to accommodate numerous contexts, each of which attributed slight variations on the definition, which ultimately became superfluous (Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993). However, in modern literature, this definition has witnessed considerable revision and refinement. The most commonly relied upon rendition being offered by Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001). Maslach et al. (2001, p. 397) classify burnout syndrome as “a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy”.

Exhaustion represents the emotional state in which employees feel “spent” (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, p. 17), and is claimed to be the central component and most visible indicator of burnout syndrome. So much so, that when people describe burnout, they are commonly referring only to the state of emotional exhaustion (Maslach et al., 2001). Cynicism, sometimes called depersonalisation (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Maslach et al., 2001) is a state where workers begin to distance themselves from others and rely on heuristics instead of recognising unique traits, to make cognitively draining situations more manageable. Inefficacy is the resulting sense of diminished personal accomplishment because of an eroded sense of effectiveness or proficiency.

Within the service work literature, both emotional labour and the burnout syndrome are seen as inherent to the unique organisational structures and job requirements of contact centre work. While initially this association was drawn from a preponderance of images of contact centre work depicting ‘electronic sweatshops’ (Garson, 1988) or ‘prison panopticons’ (Ferne & Metcalf, 1998), newer attitudes allude to a more subdued approach that distinguishes these industry characteristics as having materialised because of highly structured environments that predominantly focus on cost efficiency and managerial control (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014). Deery, Iverson, and Walsh (2002) point to this in their investigation of five Australian call centres, finding that both the content and context of the work were important factors of job stress. They discovered that because of management prioritising quantity over quality and restricting the emotional responses available to employees, workers were more prone to emotional exhaustion and burnout syndrome. In the same way, Rod and Ashill (2013), found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation impacted inbound and outbound customer service agents in a large New Zealand based

banking call centre. Zapf and Holz (2006) have also suggested that while emotional dissonance can act as a stressor that contributes to burnout syndrome, emotional work can, in some instances, also have a positive impact on employee's sense of personal accomplishment, through positive interactions with customers and deep acting.

3.4.1. The Role of Monitoring and Big Data on Employee Well-Being

The nature and pervasiveness of surveillance solutions in organisations play an important and influential role in the long-term well-being of an employee. Performance monitoring, defined as “the observation, examination or recording of employee work-related behaviours” (Stanton, 2000, p. 87), has long been championed in the contact centre industry. Predominantly as a means of improving work output, reducing costs and ensuring overall customer satisfaction (Alder, 1998; Chalykoff & Kochan, 1989; Holman, Chissick, & Totterdell, 2002). Performance monitoring is intrinsically threatening to workers as there is a large information asymmetry between the employer and the employee, which, has the potential to impact future remuneration or negatively influence social relationships in the workplace (Alder, 1998).

While employee monitoring has long been a standard practice in the contact centre industry, modern approaches have seen a drastic increase in the intensity and quantity of data collected. Organisations are now able to collect anywhere from 35% to 50% more data per year (Beath, Becerra-Fernandez, Ross, & Short, 2012). This shift has been referred to by academics and industry as the Big Data movement (Paharia, 2013).

Big data (BD) is a broad term that attempts to capture the increasingly wide variety of sources from which organisations can accumulate information. Including information about customers, employees and business partners but also any area in which data is generated and can be captured by modern information systems (Kaisler, Armour, Espinosa, & Money, 2013; Manyika et al., 2011). Within the literature, several approaches have been taken to define BD, with many drawing distinctions around unstructured and structured data formats. For this study, however, a general understanding of BD will be sufficient to recognise its potential impact on the contact centre industry. As such, BD is considered as a general term for structured, semi-structured and unstructured data of large sizes (Davenport et al., 2012; Kaisler et al., 2013; Manyika et al., 2011).

For consumer-focused initiatives, the benefits of BD are clear. Organisations can leverage this new resource to create innovative methods of engaging with customers in targeted marketing, advertising or email campaigns (Paharia, 2013). BD can also be relied upon to conduct behaviour analysis, pricing optimisations and micro-segmentation of markets. Within the employment space, however, the advantages are slightly less obvious but, not any less prevalent. Organisations can leverage BD to provide real-time feedback on employee performance, quantitatively assess employee skill, individually personalise information systems and conduct an array of predictive behavioural analysis (Paharia, 2013, p. 61). All of these practices entail unprecedented levels of observing and controlling what, where, when and how employees conduct their roles.

Smith, Carayon, Sanders, Lim, and LeGrande (1992) argue that the mere act of being monitored can increase an employee's emotional labour, resulting in higher degrees of depression, boredom, fatigue and anxiety. Numerous field studies support these findings, while also demonstrating greater levels of dissatisfaction among monitored employees (Aiello & Kolb, 1995). Conversely, in some instances, performance monitoring has been highlighted as having a positive impact on job satisfaction, by offering more immediate feedback on employee performance (Chalykoff & Kochan, 1989). However, for its success, it is important to consider how to deliver feedback, the intensity of monitoring, and its transparency among other employees (Carayon, 1994). In many cases, feedback from performance surveillance systems is of greater importance to employees than personal growth, as meeting key performance indicators (KPIs) or monthly sales targets can afford financial rewards, and other tangible services and benefits (Herzberg, 1966; Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983; Mottaz, 1988). It is, therefore, important for managers to understand which rewards provide the most motivation to employees, and how exactly to balance them with organisational objectives in any given context (Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994).

3.4.2. The Influence of Motivation Misalignments in Contact Centres

Some research on the contact centre industry has also highlighted a range of problems originating from a misalignment between employee values, organisational objects, and work directives (Wallace et al., 2000). The issues in question are attributed by some to a mix between the fundamental trade-off of 'quantity and quality' for the individual contact agent

(De Ruyter et al., 2001), and the selection, implementation, and use of management technology to facilitate the concentration and monitoring of staff (Mehrotra, 1997).

Wallace et al. (2000) state that the quantity vs quality trade-off is a fundamental aspect of contact centre operation, in which employee roles focus on providing efficient and standardised performance, while at the same time being tasked to retain high-quality customer satisfaction. Wallace et al. (2000), argue that within these roles employees enter into a “transactional” relationship with an organisation, tasked with resolving high call volumes comprised of repetitive and straightforward resolution processes. In these environments, management place reliance on quantifiable indicators for performance appraisal (Wallace et al., 2000) and provide ‘canned’ solutions such as scripts or flowcharts for agents to follow which limit the autonomy an agent has even when faced with customer problems. Companies are thought to benefit from these practices as it enables them to provide accurate and timely feedback on employee performance through the use of performance monitoring technologies (Grant & Higgins, 1991). However, the adverse effects of these practices on employee stress and job satisfaction are often overlooked.

In part, this negligence is due to the obligations of managers to pursue low-cost operations through high productivity, and a prevailing attitude that churning through burnt-out staff as soon as possible will ultimately increase revenue (Lewig & Dollard, 2003). As a result, new employees, recruited in batches, are routinely favoured over existing staff to provide fresh, enthusiastic, motivated customer service at a low cost (Wallace et al., 2000). Volume-focused companies often take this approach, cognisant that they may be obligated to effectively forego three to four months wages annually in lost productivity for each new employee recruited (Holman, 2002). Deery and Kinnie (2002, p. 4) argue that this mentality ultimately contributes to a growing perception that call centre jobs are ‘dead-end’ and are characterised by “low status, poor pay and few career prospects”.

The problematic nature of these transactional roles is much deeper than just negative perceptions and becomes most apparent when observing the misalignment of organisational objectives and the motivational requirements of the individual call agent (Wallace et al., 2000). This misalignment in many cases may present itself from the outset of the employment relationship, as companies actively seek employees with high intrinsic motivation to provide

quality service, but ultimately go on to overwhelm them with high call quantity and limited autonomy. The dissonance created by these objectives emerges as staff struggle to resolve dynamic complaint calls when constrained by pre-scripted resolutions. Bandura (1997) argues that fostering these states of dissonance and relying on surface acting can lower an employee's sense of self-worth, leading to increased stress, and in extreme cases symptoms of depression. Lewig and Dollard (2003, p. 368) support this view stating, "(e)motional dissonance may ultimately lead to lowered self-esteem, cynicism and alienation from work". Many of these findings intersect with existing research on employee stress, burnout and intention to turnover. Notably, actions which inhibit a sense of empowerment have been found to influence employee stress directly and diminish motivation (De Ruyter et al., 2001), and instances with low autonomy can induce work related states of jealousy and envy (Vecchio, 2000). Chiles and Zorn (1995) define empowerment in the employment relationship as consisting of two fundamental aspects: competence and authority. Competence is an employee's belief in his/her ability to perform tasks proficiently, while authority is the degree of autonomy he/she has when completing a task.

3.4.3. Job Demands-Resource Model

The Job Demand-Resource model (JD-R) has often been used to understand these behaviours. The JD-R model is a heuristic engagement model created by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001) which proposes consolidating positive and negative working conditions into two primary categories, job demands and job resources. These categories are then leveraged to explain occupational stress in an organisation. The JD-R model is said to be one of the most comprehensive and relied upon engagement framework (Hakanen & Roodt, 2010, pp. 85-86). This reliance is likely the result of its versatility and applicability to various occupational settings while still capturing the unique demands and resources of any particular context. The JD-R model is built upon previous behavioural models such as the demands-control model (DCM) by Karasek (1979). DCM differs, however, in that a focus is placed on a single category of job demands (psychological workload) and a single category of job resources (job control) (Hakanen & Roodt, 2010, p. 86), while some argue that the strength of the model comes from its simplicity. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) state that this minimalism limits its explanatory power in complex workplaces.

For this reason, within the JD-R model, the category of job demands represents all aspects of a job or role that induces strain to a given context. These demands can come in the forms of physical, psychological, social or organisational elements, which require ongoing effort or skill at the cost of the workers mental or physical reserves. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) emphasise, however, that while job demands are not inherently harmful, they nonetheless carry the potential to transition into stress-inducing factors if they necessitate maintenance for a period greater than the cognitive or physical resources of the employee. Job resources then are:

Those physical psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that may; (a) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (b) are functional in achieving work goals; and (c) stimulate personal growth, learning and development. (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501)

The JD-R model is ultimately reliant on the assumption that the conditions of job demands and job resources can contribute to two psychological processes: the health impairment process and the positive motivational process. Bakker and Leiter (2010) explain these processes as:

- (1) An energy-sapping, health impairment process in which high job demands exhaust employees' mental and physical resources leading to burnout, and eventually to ill-health; and
- (2) A positive motivational process in which job resources foster engagement and organisational commitment. (p. 87)

The JD-R model was utilised by Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2003) to understand predictors of absenteeism and turnover intention in a Dutch contact centre. The study concluded that in an 'energy-driven' process, factors relating to the job demands categorisation are the primary indicators of health problems in employees. As a result, this influenced the frequency and duration of absenteeism. In the 'motivation-driven' processes, job resources such as social support and performance feedback acted as unique predictors of positive relationships with the organisation and, negative relationship with turnover intentions. The JD-R model was then later applied directly to the New Zealand contact centre

industry by Rod, Thirkell, and Carruthers (2009) in a study that focused explicitly on the experiences of frontline employees. The study evaluated the moderating influences of job resourcefulness on the relationships between role stressors and burnout symptoms, finding that job resourcefulness acts as a buffer for dysfunctional effects of role stressors and burnout.

3.4.4. Promoting Wellbeing and Reduced Turnover

Much of the existing contact centre literature has focused on the adverse effects of contact centre work and the immediate benefits for organisations garnered through effective job design, performance monitoring, HR practices and team leader support (Holman, 2002). In contrast, little comparable literature exists into why employees continue to enter the industry and the factors that contribute to keeping them there. Despite this lack of explicit attention, several notable studies do provide insight into facets of the sector that promote wellbeing and positive outcomes within the industry.

Holman et al. (2003) review three empirical studies conducted in UK banking contact centres, which focused on customer service representatives (CSR) in a variety of inbound, outbound and sales roles. From their examination, they produced a list of job and organisational factors that positively influence employee well-being. These are:

- High control over work methods and procedures and what is said to a customer
- Having a degree of variety
- A performance monitoring system aimed at developing individuals
- A performance monitoring system that is not perceived to be intense
- A supportive team leader
- Supportive HR practices

Similarly, Korczynski (2003) examined service work research that focused on four contact centres in Australia and the USA, concluding that agents will often partake in informal 'coping communities' as a way of dealing with antipathy towards demanding customers. These coping communities offer a degree of congruence with previous studies by Frenkel, Tam, Korczynski, and Shire (1998) in which CSRs demonstrated co-worker relations as a primary contributor to their current job satisfaction. Callaghan and Thompson (2001) go into more detail, illustrating

the behaviours of informal 'teams' which provide employees with a way to share experiences and stories. These shared experiences are not only used as a coping mechanism but, also as a way of simply entertaining each other. Van den Broek, Barnes, and Townsend (2008) indicate that 'teaming up' also facilitates the collective sharing of knowledge, to overcome technological problems with lesser reliance falling upon management for complex problem-solving. Lewig and Dollard (2003) also indicate that employees derive significant satisfaction from providing excellent customer service, followed closely by facilitating positive relationships with their co-workers. The support of colleagues has also been linked to a reduction in the depersonalisation of problematic clients and increasing an employee's sense of personal accomplishment (Leiter, 1991). In some instances, however, co-worker support has the double-edged effect of positively reducing emotional exhaustion and diminished personal accomplishment, but also accentuating depersonalisation (Healy & Bramble, 2003).

More recently, Chambel and Alcover (2011) conducted a cross-sectional study of 363 Portuguese contact centre workers, finding that their perceived status and work conditions influenced the psychological contracts formed between employees, managers and organisations. Importantly, their findings suggest that temporary or 'part-time' workers hold inherently different beliefs around organisational obligations and, instead focus on a more transactional relationship as opposed to relational. Fleming and Sturdy (2011) conducted an empirical investigation in a contact centre environment in which employees are encouraged to 'just be themselves'. The purpose of which was to leverage a greater degree of acceptance for differences in lifestyle and diversity as a distraction against the conventional controls used by management to direct behaviour, which they saw as detrimental to employee well-being and intention to turnover. They argue that in combination with aspects such as 'fun', 'play' and displays of authenticity, contact centre managers can capture "sociality, energy and authentic or non-work personalities" as emotional labour (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011, p. 177).

3.5. Game-Based Solutions to Turnover

It is evident then that many of the issues employees face in the contact centre industry both impinge on staff wellbeing and increase churn. Such matters include greater role demands, role conflicts, pervasive monitoring, limited feedback and motivational misalignments. Academics and the contact centre industry have long known about these problems, and have

introduced an array of management techniques to mitigate their negative influence (Bain & Taylor, 2000; De Ruyter et al., 2001; Wallace et al., 2000). More recently, contact centre companies have considered using information systems-based techniques as a possible panacea. An example of such a information system is a software application designed to replicate and leverage the engagement, influence and popularity of the almost ubiquitous video games.

Over the past twenty years, the annual revenues of the video game industry have grown to exceed \$90 billion (Sinclair, 2015). The popularity of video games has led to some viewing them as behaviourally transformative products (Burke, 2014). That allows participants to actively expose themselves to tasks that for some may be inherently undesirable, yet, within the structure of a game are engaging and intrinsically motivating. Historically, numerous attempts have been made to harness the fundamental principles of traditional games for work-oriented purposes with varying degrees of success (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011). Moreover, recent efforts have focused on applying aspects of digital gaming that have the potential to encourage positive behavioural change within the workplace, under the guise of initiatives called gamification (Werbach & Hunter, 2012).

3.5.1. Gamification

The term “gamification” was coined by British computer programmer Nick Pelling in 2002 (Pelling, 2002). He was considering how game-like mechanics could be integrated into commercial technologies, such as ATM’s, mobile phones and vending machines (Pelling, 2002, para. 2). Pelling then went on to found the first gamification consultancy business, Conundra Ltd, in 2003. However, Conundra failed to elicit any significant customer interest and the business was subsequently dissolved in 2006. The term ‘gamification’ was mostly forgotten until 2008 when referenced it was in a blog post written by Brett Terrill (Bret, 2008).

Terrill viewed gamification as “taking game mechanics and applying them to other web properties to increase engagement” (Bret, 2008, para. 6). Although this definition still holds true, academics and practitioners have since frequently debated its usefulness (Deterding et al., 2011). Therefore, much of the initial academic discussion surrounding gamification views it as a discipline located somewhere between traditional games, serious games and ‘playful design’ (Deterding et al., 2011; Huotari & Hamari, 2012).

Gamification continues to be applied broadly across an expanding array of disciplines, including human-computer interactions (HCI) (Deterding, Sicart, Nacke, O'Hara, & Dixon, 2011), social sciences, computer science (CS) (Ibanez, Di-Serio, & Delgado-Kloos, 2014), behavioural economics, education and health and psychology (Hamari, Koivisto, & Sarsa, 2014; King, Greaves, Exeter, & Darzi, 2013). Despite this rapid proliferation, practitioners, academics and industry leaders have yet to agree on any one definition or best design practice. The natural result is an over-reliance on broadly defined or conflicting viewpoints and, terminology that denotes little more than novel concepts or ideas detached from the traditional video game industry.

As a result, there is significant ambiguity within the existing literature surrounding the terminology used to describe and discuss gamification and, its applicability in business domains. Consequently, there exists an inherent overlap between previously established disciplines such as serious games, simulations, and edutainment. In many instances, this overlap serves only to confound and obfuscate the use of gamification and can impede existing works in already established areas of research or practice (Deterding, et al., 2011).

Further, some argue that the current lexicon around gamification fails to represent a particularly new or distinctive phenomenon (Walz & Deterding, 2015), thus increasing the difficulty of delimiting gamification practices within other areas of research. It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that for the long-term proliferation and use of business-oriented gamification initiatives, gamification and its terminology needs to exist in the space of common cognitive ground (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2008).

For this reason, this study discusses prominent definitions and areas of overlap within gamification research and practise. By adopting this approach, the purpose of this study and its subsequent findings will be distinguishable from the existing body of literature. Moreover, this study will assist future efforts within the academic community to converge around a common language applicable to gamification systems, specifically those used within the contact centre industry.

3.5.2. Working Towards a Practical Definition of 'Gamification.'

On the surface, gamification appears to represent the practice of turning regular tasks into games. In fact, this notion is one which causes arguably the most confusion amongst those not familiar with the terminology, as it is often the pretext in which marketers and celebrities refer its use (Marczewski, 2013). From an etymological standpoint, such confusion is understandable as the word gamification derives from a modified version of the term game or 'gamify', with the suffix '-fy' denoting transformation and gamification, where '-ation' denotes action.

Using the word in such a way does, however, present several obstacles for academics and industry. Foremost, determining where instances of gamification sit amongst the existing body of literature becomes a substantially more challenging task; specifically, in areas such as IS or computer science where words such as 'games' and 'simulations' are relatively commonplace. Furthermore, by referring to gamification in such a broad and unrefined way, we inadvertently invite the general populace and business to abuse its use. In turn, this has the potential to perpetuate exploitative or deceitful practices where anyone wishing to cash in on the rising popularity of traditional video games, can ascribe the label 'gamification' or 'gamified' regardless of any legitimate association or positive benefit. The potential long-term consequence is an increased risk of desensitisation or hostility towards otherwise beneficial initiatives. Therefore, since the first usage of term presented by Pelling was devoid of specificity, consideration needs to be given to not only the origins of the phrase but also important surrounding concepts. The most crucial of which is arguably the concept of 'game' and by extension the idea of 'play'.

3.5.2.1. Concepts of Play & Game

While everyone has an innate tacit understanding of what constitutes a game, and when they are at play, articulating the difference between the two is a difficult task. One possible explanation is that the nature of this problem is often not apparent until we consider the complexity of the terms' subjective nature. Within the context of gamification, this issue is compounded further, as the use of mechanics commonly found in games, outside of their traditional game setting, removes the few cognitive heuristics our intuition tends to rely on when disseminating the two. These usually being easily understood rules or simple structure.

This notion then lends itself to two appropriate questions; firstly, at what point should we consider a system as gamified and secondly, is it reasonable to expect users to 'play' with these systems in the same way they would a traditional game. In attempting to answer these questions, many existing studies on gamification defer to the works of Rodger Caillois and, specifically the book '*Man, Play and Games*' (Caillois, 1961). Caillois distinguishes a continuum of concepts existing between the two primary notions, "Paidia" and "Ludus".

Paidia is "the spontaneous manifestation of the play instinct" (Caillois, 1961, p. 28). The play instinct he describes is an act of unbridled and free-flowing, unproductive behaviour likened to the acts of young children as they laugh when shaking a rattle or interacting with toys. He argues when in a state of paidia, for the child the action is one of expression and, of feeling that he or she is the sole origin of such expression, eventuating in others giving him or her attention (Caillois, 1961, p. 27). This expression is also entirely self-serving and can be the source of curiosity. Such is the case when a child plays with a loose tooth, only to discover probing it with their tongue induces pain and fright. Paidia then is the spontaneous free forming improvisation of actions done solely for the amusement of the actor.

Conversely, Caillois (1961, p. 29) positions Ludus as the result of introducing structure through "conventions, techniques, and utensils" to these free-flowing behaviours which in their extreme forms conclude with the formation of formal games. Ludus then is the process of applying organisation to these expressions through competition or conflict as one works towards a predetermined goal (Deterding et al., 2011). Caillois (1961) theory defines four types of experiences that exist along the paidia-ludus continuum these categories are;

- **Agon** (Competition). Conflict between players, themselves or the rules of the game.
- **Alea** (Chance). Fortune or unpredictability, experiences induced by elements outside the player's control.
- **Mimesis** (Mimicry). Role-playing, feelings of fantasy or empathy towards scenarios and events
- **Ilinx** (Vertigo). The sense of altered perception, for example, motion sickness or dizziness (pp. 14-26)

Within the context of practical applications of gamification, however, little focus is often placed on the concept of *paidia* and playfulness (Deterding et al., 2011). Instead, academics and industry have converged around definitions which emphasise the implementation of structured elements (*ludus*) or “game mechanics” to induce desired behavioural change. For this reason, McGonigal argues that gamification at its core has less to do with any concept of “playfulness” and more to do with what she defines as “gamefulness” (McGonigal, 2011). Gamefulness she argues is the experiential state induced through games or game-like experiences.

Many academics and industry leaders, however, appear to have converged, at least initially, around the definition of ‘the use of game design elements in non-game contexts’ (Deterding et al., 2011). Deterding posits that gamification is not a new expression but one that simply encompasses many other parallel definitions such as funware, behavioural games and surveillance entertainment. Deterding, et al, (2011) draw an important distinction between two widespread uses of the terminology. Firstly, they acknowledge the rapid proliferation and institutionalisation of traditional video games, and their perceived engagement and entertainment power. Secondly, they recognise that much of the interest generated around the concept of gamification is under the pretence that gamification can, as an extension of traditional video game mechanics, induce the same degree of engagement in more productive environments.

The Deterding et al. (2011) definition has been adopted by many, largely due to its acknowledgement for the fundamental elements inherent to gamification, and how they differ in relation to existing disciplines. These foundations can be broken down to ‘game design’, ‘game elements’ and ‘characteristics’ (Werbach & Hunter, 2012, pp. 78-81). This definition has not seen universal acceptance though, and in many instances acts as a point of contention for many current characterisations of gamification due to its inherently subjective nature. Huotari and Hamari (2012, p. 19) question the usefulness of such a definition by asking, “How can a service designer possibly identify a non-game context, when the existence of the game is dependent on the subjective perception of the player or user.” The logical conclusion they draw is that it becomes impossible. To this end, several researchers have expanded, deviated or adapted Deterding’s definition to fit specific industries or contexts

(Huotari & Hamari, 2012; Neeli, 2015; Werbach, 2014; Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011), some of which are discussed below.

3.5.2.2. Game Mechanics & Elements

Sometimes referred to as ‘characteristics’ or ‘game elements’, game mechanics represent the fundamental components or mechanisms behind driving player behaviours within game contexts. As with other areas in game and gamification design, there has been much debate surrounding what constitutes a game mechanic and subsequently whereas a discipline it is situated.

Lundgren and Bjork (2003) approach this discussion with a broad definition of game mechanics stating:

A game mechanic is simply any part of the rule system of a game that covers one, and only one, possible kind of interaction that takes place during the game, be it general or specific. A game may consist of several mechanics, and a mechanic may be a part of many games. (p. 4)

Järvinen (2008, p. 254) differentiates between game rules, and game mechanics stating that “there cannot be a game mechanic without rules” and that rules facilitate the relationship between game elements and their effects on the game. Mechanics, he argues, are a “means to guide the player into particular behaviour by constraining the space of possible plans to attain goals”. Sicart (2008, para. 24) builds upon this definition contesting that “game mechanics are methods invoked by agents, designed for interaction with the game state”. Game states being the systems of functional inputs and output that provide games with their rules and structure (Järvinen, 2008).

While there have been several attempts at classification of game mechanics, one of the most frequently cited is that posited by Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek (2004). One reason for the popularity of this classification is that Hunicke et al. (2004), position the concept of game mechanics within a framework of interactions. With interactions considering both the game designer and the end user, and at the same time acknowledging the elements that allow game mechanics to function. Hunicke et al. (2004), state that their Mechanics, Dynamics, and Aesthetics (MDA) framework is ultimately a lens in which game related initiatives, in general,

could be viewed. Within this framework, Hunicke et al., outline the three concepts of MDA as:

- **Mechanics** – Describes the components of the game at the level of data representation and algorithms
- **Dynamics** – Describes the run-time behaviour of the mechanics acting on players input and each other's outputs over time.
- **Aesthetics** – Describes the desirable emotional responses evoked in the player when interacting with the game system.

Mechanics represent the functional components, dynamics the behaviours, aesthetics is the descriptor of those facets that address the question of “what makes games fun?”. Much like the Caillois' continuum of paidia and ludus, Hunicke et al. (2004) present a taxonomy of player experiences, which comprises of eight elements; Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Taxonomy of Player Experiences	
Sensation: Game as sense-pleasure	Fellowship: Game as social framework
Fantasy: Game as make-believe	Discovery: Game as uncharted territory
Narrative: Game as drama	Expression: Game as self-discovery
Challenge: Game as obstacle course	Submission: Game as pastime

It is the contention of Hunicke et al. (2004) that each game contains combinations of these experiences to generate what the end user will consider as “fun”. For example, a game such those in the popular Final Fantasy series, which are narrative driven role-playing games that allow users to explore vast worlds with a degree of self-directed freedom, would be comprised of the experiences Fantasy, Narrative, Expression, Discovery, Challenge and Submission.

However, while Hunicke et al. (2004) is now one of the most well-known models of game design elements, it is not entirely devoid of criticisms. For instance, Bui et al. (2015, p. 4) contests that MDA “confuses users’ experiences with aesthetic elements; that is, it

conceptualizes immediate user experiences as aesthetics”, and suggest that aesthetics have traditionally represented the independent components of a system encompassing “art beauty, and visual elements” (Kapp, 2012, pp. 46). As such Bui et al. (2015) adopt an approach consistent with Tractinsky (2004), in which their “framework separates aesthetics as design characteristics from users’ immediate interactions or experiences with these aesthetic elements.” (Bui et al., 2015, p. 5).

3.5.3. Motivational Theories in Gamification

Human motivation has long been the subject of intrigue for researchers who wish to answer the fundamental question why do we do, what we do? This line of questioning has resulted in numerous theories across an array of disciplines many of which, hold significance for those acting within a gamified environment. Because the deployment of gamification in its various contexts is to direct user behaviour. Within contact centres such directions often to achieve explicit goals, these goals include improving business efficiency, increasing employee skill and building organisational commitment. To achieve these objectives, techniques and practices uncovered through the field of psychology are being increasingly relied upon to elicit cognitive responses in gamification users towards tailored goals. The foundation of much of the existing literature surrounding gamification comes from these studies and, as a result, it is pertinent to consider these psychological findings for their potential relevance within New Zealand contact centres. This study however is not grounded within the discipline of psychology but, rather, leverages established psychological theories to increase the researcher’s sensitivity towards theoretically relevant motivational and gamification concepts.

3.5.3.1. The notion of ‘Fun.’

The concept of “fun” is hard to define. It is by its very nature a subjective and personal experience that depending on the degree of investigation can pose ontological questions that exist in an almost perpetual state of semantic debate. Equally, fun is an area of research that has been given little explicit attention within the existing body of gamification literature. Despite this, some game design authors other than Hunicke et al., have proposed ways of thinking about “fun” which can be of use in the development of traditional games and gamification systems.

One such definition comes from Koster (2013) in his book *'Theory of Fun'*. Koster (2013, p. 40) argues “fun from games arises out of mastery. It arises out of comprehension. It is the act of solving puzzles that makes games fun. With games, learning is the drug”. Mollick and Rothbard (2014, p. 7) have also investigated the concepts of mandatory ‘fun’ in work contexts. Mollick et al. argue that “fun” does not need to come from an inherent desire to complete a task but instead can be inflicted upon a user by a game designed specifically to make that task more enjoyable. They state that; “work isn’t always fun, games are fun, so turning work into a game will make work fun, and lead to happier employees” (Mollick & Rothbard, 2014, p. 7).

The commonality between these approaches is that the concept of fun, within games or ludic contexts, is reliant on the pursuit of task proficiency. Within the existing body of academic literature surrounding gamification, this need to seek competence is explained within through a combination of disciplines, specifically flow and self-determination theory.

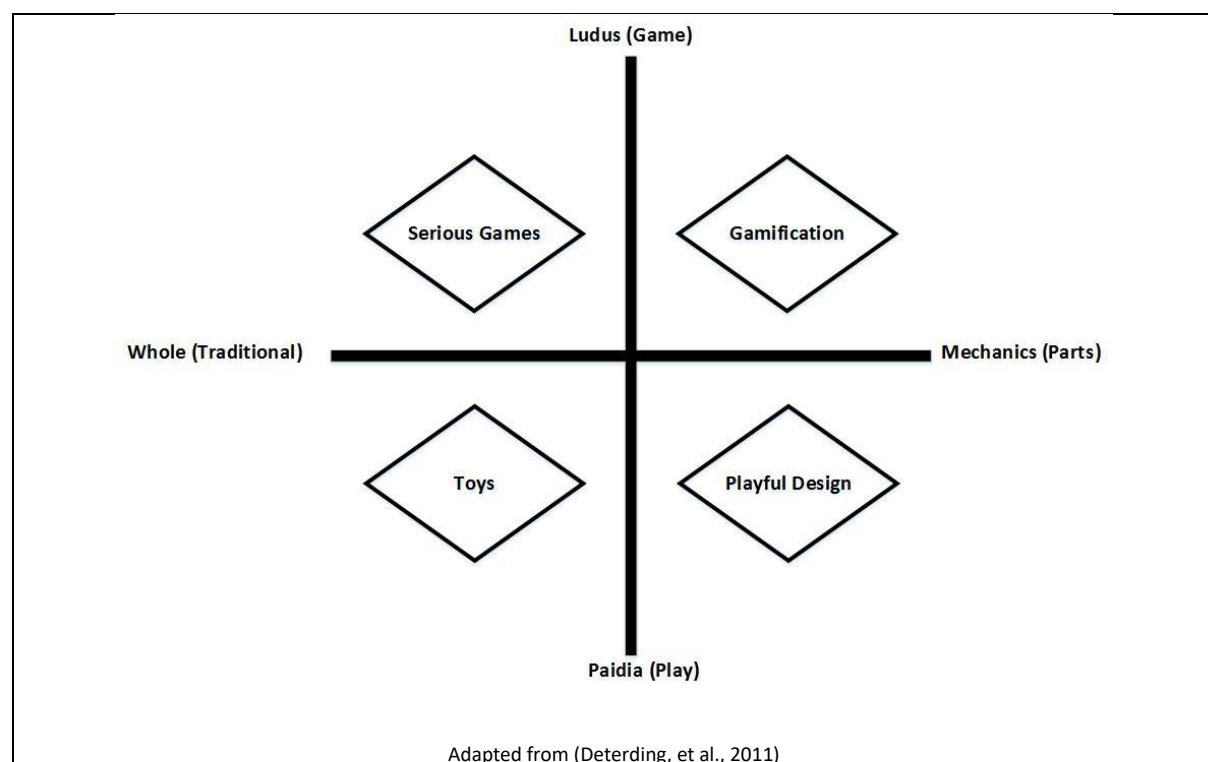


Figure 3.3.1: Ludus, Paidia and gamification

3.5.3.2. Self-Determination Theory

Of the existing cognitive theorists attempting to understand and explain user behaviour, few have been cited in gamification literature more than those studies on self-determination theory (SDT) attributable to Ryan and Deci (2000). Ryan and Deci locate their work in a contrary position to that of traditional behaviourists such as Skinner (1953), which contends that external reinforcements only form a portion of our understanding of human behaviour. Rather, they argue that people are driven primarily by an internal desire for growth, which must be supported by the external environment. Arguably, therefore, the fundamental goal of an individual is to reach an intrinsic point of motivation to complete tasks, whereby tasks are pursued for no other reason other than free will, eventually rendering them in a state of self-determination.

Deci and Ryan (2008) state that SDT is an organismic dialectical approach to explaining behaviour. Actors are assumed to be active organisms “with evolved tendencies toward growing, mastering ambient challenges, and integrating new experiences into a coherent sense of self” (Ryan & Deci, 2011, para. 4)

SDT posits categorising underlying motivational factors as constituent components of one of two primary elements, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic reward. Intrinsic motivation they claim is the desire or impulse to complete a task for its sake. Demonstrable through activities which induce interest in an actor amidst an innate drive to perform the task or seek out and extend one’s capacities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For instance creating art, playing with a ball or socialising with friends would all be considered as intrinsically motivating tasks, if any or all were conducted solely for their innate purpose and not in the pursuit of reward. Conversely, extrinsic reward is about placing a focus on the presence of external sources such as rewards or regulations when driving task completion. For example, a child completing their homework to receive a gold star, an employee completing a report for a bonus or a gamer completing a level for a virtual item.

While studies of gamification frequently cite SDT, few have attempted to discuss or empirically test the notions of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in gamified contexts (Mekler, Brühlmann, Tuch, & Opwis, 2015; Seaborn & Fels, 2015). Further, little empirical research has investigated the influences gamification has on deployed systems. And is particularly relevant,

as many organisations invest in Information systems to meet business objectives, particularly those surrounding increased end-user adoption and customer engagement. Increased user adoption is a major factor because it improves organisation productivity while mitigating economic losses and discontent among employees (Goodhue, Wybo, & Kirsch, 1992).

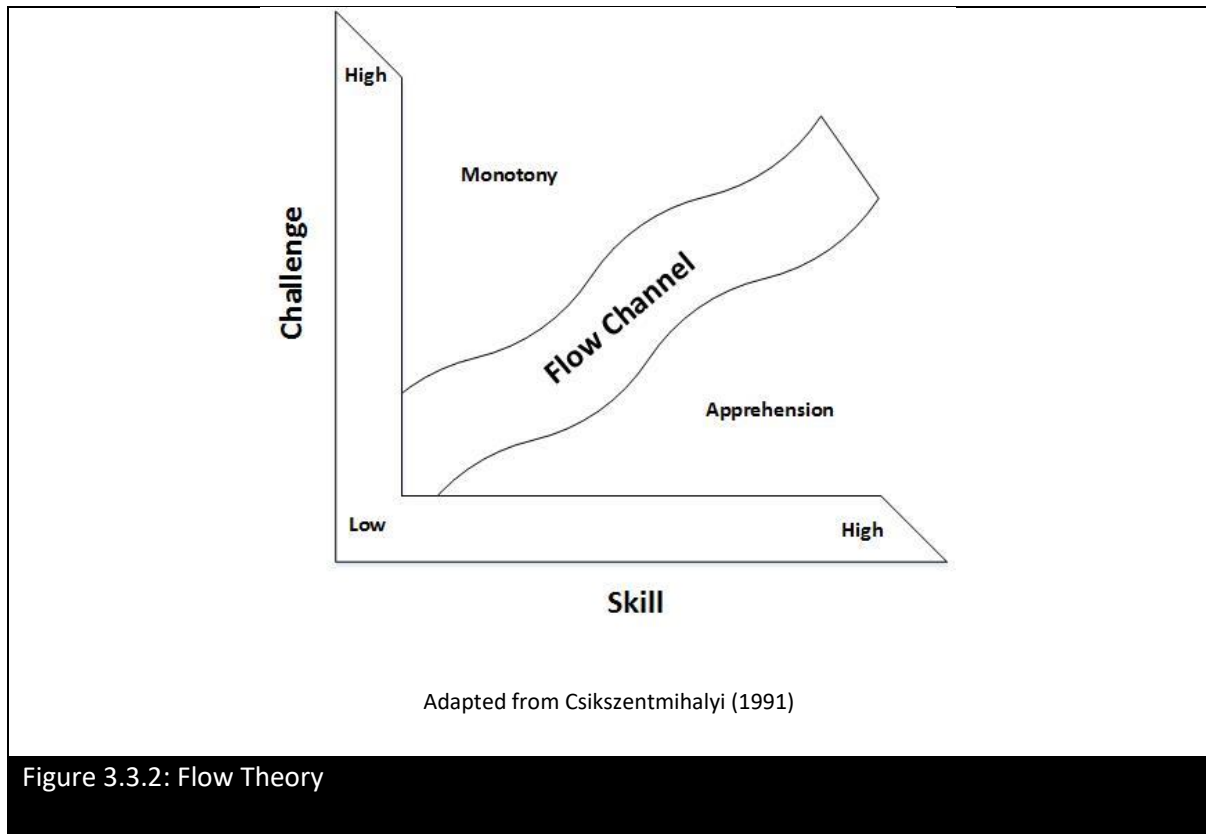
A key component of driving user adoption is the ability of an IS system to induce personal motivation in end-users (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003), which, has influences on the perceptions of ease of use (Venkatesh, 2000). Gamification, therefore, represents an emerging approach that organisations are beginning to rely upon to help direct desired behavioural change (Paharia, 2013; Robson et al., 2016; Zichermann, 2011). While end-user adoption is one reason for the implementation of gamified enterprise information systems, there is a significant gap surrounding the explicit effects of intrinsic motivators and extrinsic rewards in gamified systems (Stanculescu, Bozzon, Sips, & Houben, 2016). Therefore, a need exists to understand the contexts subject to gamification initiatives better, and those mechanics and techniques that are antecedents of driving desired user behaviour (Kankanhalli, Taher, Cavusoglu, & Kim, 2012).

3.5.3.3. Flow Theory

Explanations such as those discussed of user motivation are often mentioned alongside the cognitive theory of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Csikszentmihalyi (1991, p. 4) defines Flow as, "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it".

Flow theory is the result of a several decade's long endeavours by Csikszentmihalyi to determine what facets of the human experience drive people into a state he defines as the "optimal experience". Csikszentmihalyi argues that the result of entering this state is a sense enjoyment so gratifying and deep that people will exert immense amounts of energy with little concern for any tangible benefit they may receive in return (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). The long-term purpose of harnessing this state then is to provide people with the tools necessary to lead fuller, more satisfying lives through their innate creative drivers. Once in harmony an individual will enter the "flow zone" (Schell, 2014) or "flow channel" (Figure 3.3.2), a narrow margin existing between anxiety or frustration and boredom. Heinzen et al. (2015) liken this

flow channel to the psychological principle “the Goldilocks effect” wherein attribute importance to events that are not too simple or overly complicated.



Some game designers have attempted to take this notion a step further, stipulating that even within the flow channel there is room for experiential optimisation. Schell (2014, p. 122) argues that an alternate, and possibly more enjoyable experience could be offered to the user if a cyclical approach to rewards and challenges are designed to exist specifically within the flow channel.

At its core, however, Flow is an autotelic process. That is to say, for a state of flow to be present, the activity must be intrinsically motivating for the person, and this intrinsic motivation must act as its primary purpose. In traditional games or ludic activities, this is a common occurrence, as while engaged individuals are not seeking any extrinsic reward or goal, they are merely facilitating the activity itself. For example, parents and children may participate in weekly athletic activities for no purpose other than enriching their own lives. Of course, this is not to be confused with parents who attend with the intent of furthering their

child's professional ambitions. Rather, what it alludes to are those parents who perceive the interactions with their child while participating in itself a rewarding experience.

Csikszentmihalyi (1991) suggests that while some people are more prone than others to reach a state of flow in any given activity, some contexts are also more inclined to produce autotelic experiences in their actors than others. He argues that more enjoyable experiences occur in contexts representative of a ludic activity, wherein clear rules and objectives exist, and individuals have the freedom of autonomy to overcome challenges. It is no surprise therefore, that numerous studies have deployed the concept of Flow. In disciplines, such as education (Salanova, Bakker, & Llorens, 2006; Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Shneider, & Shernoff, 2003) and information systems (Koufaris, 2002) to commercial video games (Cowley, Charles, Black, & Hickey, 2008).

Some studies have also leveraged the concept of flow to develop industry-specific models or heuristics for producing enjoyable experiences. One such model created by Sweetser and Wyeth (2005) positions flow as a central concept of developing enjoyable computer game experiences. Titled 'GameFlow', Sweetser and Wyeth (2005) examine the elements of Flow within the context of real-time strategy games and develop criteria for reviewing and designing successful video games. However, the authors stress that the GameFlow model acts only as a starting point for successful video game design and, given the rate of technology advancements in the home video game market it is arguable that its explanatory power is limited only to the substantive context of real-time strategy games produced in the early 2000's.

Within gamification, flow theory acts as a guideline for practices or principles that can be leveraged to tailor gamification mechanics and experiences to assist in developing states of optimal experience in users. In gamification initiatives used within the workplace, flow theory tells us that there must exist a degree of harmony between the delegated work tasks, the user's ability to complete those tasks and the gamification systems. Equally, flow theory illustrates that to generate optimal experiences which are sustainable, the ongoing challenges presented by both the role and the gamification system must remain sufficiently stimulating while, at the same time, remaining consistent with the user's skill acquisition.

3.5.3.4. Personality Type, User Type and Taxonomy

Behavioural segmentation studies and player typologies have to date in part guided the use of broad gamification techniques (Tuunanen & Hamari, 2012). Likely this is because much of the literature surrounding gamification, and guidance for application in business is heavily reliant on the explanatory power of 'player' or 'personality' typologies (Duggan & Shoup, 2013; Kumar, 2013). This approach is not dissimilar to techniques used in modern marketing campaigns, where consumer segmentations attempt to identify and isolate behavioural patterns to better target and develop products or services. Within the context of gamified contact centres, this segmentation occurs at an employee level, in which, desirable traits are targeted and induced through the use of gamification initiatives (Van den Berg, 2014). While traditional game studies address player typologies, few have endeavoured to test their effectiveness in gamification contexts empirically. Equally, few have empirically tested their effectiveness in contact centre environments. Despite this, an explicit reliance is being placed on these initiatives within the industry to direct their use (Kumar, 2013; Van den Berg, 2014). The most influential of these is Richard Bartle's four player types (Bartle, 1996).

The creation of the Bartle player typology came about by observing the behaviours of game players in Multi-User Dungeon systems (MUDs). MUDs by today's standards are a primitive way of allowing users to engage in role-playing fantasy settings, with nothing more than a black computer screen and colour coded text messages to represent specific actions or events. Within MUD's there is only a simple user interface, with all information and activities represented by text generated by the computer or interacting players. It is arguable that MUD's are the foundations of what would later evolve into the Massively Multiplayer Online genre of games (MMO's), where players can create virtual avatars and live out virtual lives in parallel worlds via the internet. Nonetheless, MUD's represent one of the earliest stepping stones for the genre. The Bartle player typology emerged from an investigation into the behaviours of players within a commercial MUD which Bartle himself created, titled "MUD2" (Bartle, 1996). The catalyst for the inquiry was a heated debate among the core users of the product, concerning the deceptively simple question of "What do people want out of a MUD?" (Bartle, 1996, para. 4). Bartle claims that this issue generated an abnormal level of discussion within the MUD2 community and eventuated in the creation of four behaviours that players enjoyed above all else.

Bartle lists these as;

- Achievement within the game context
- Exploration of the game
- Socialising with others
- Imposition upon others

The last of which was the ability of players to “cause distress” to other players when permitted by the game world. Bartle would go on to further refine these categories and their relationships with each other, eventuating in the Bartle player type axes (Figure 3.3.3).

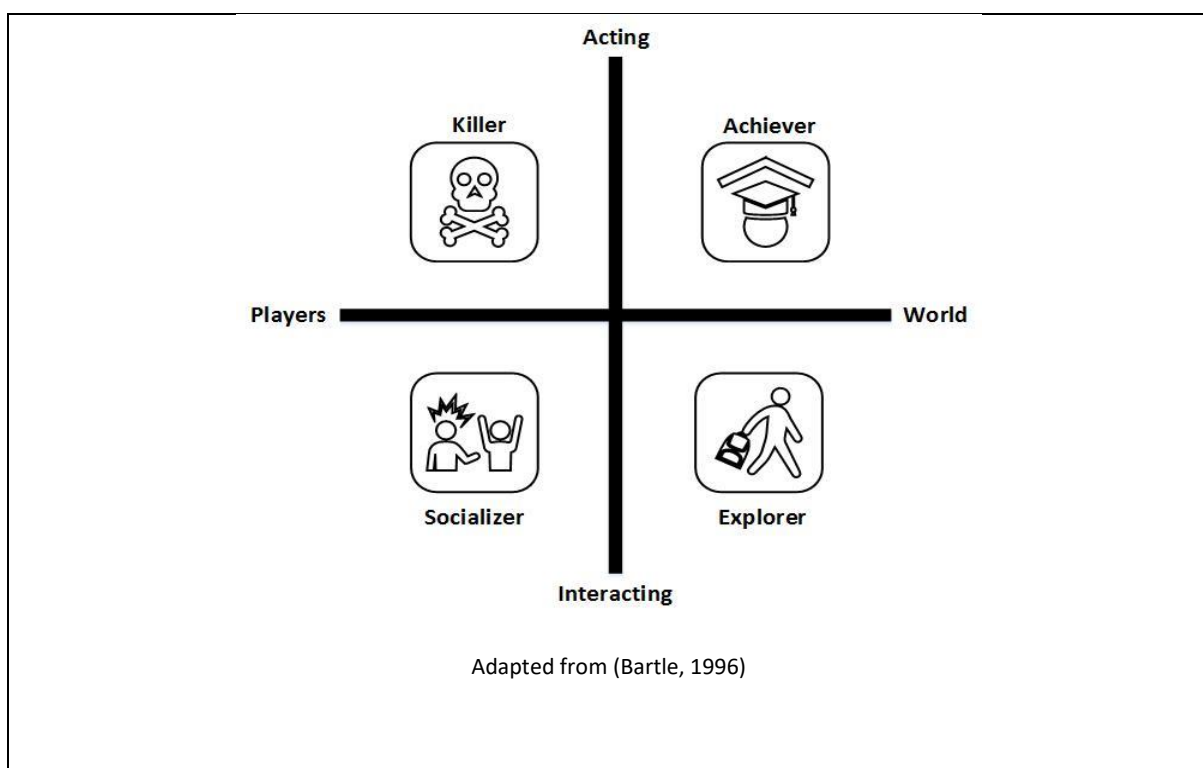


Figure 3.3.3: Bartle Player Types

The player axes represent the two dimensions of play, acting and interacting vs players and the game world. Each of the quadrants represents the degree to which a player preferred interacting with players or the game world and which tasks were the primary drivers of their enjoyment level.

While the findings of Bartle’s (1996) player types are cited frequently within modern gamification literature (Kumar, 2013; Werbach & Hunter, 2012), several criticisms around its use exist. The most prominent of which being that Bartle’s player types were created as a means of identifying user behaviour within MUD game worlds (multi-user dungeons), not as a broadly generalisable description of user behaviour outside of the substantive context.

More specifically, when creating Bartle player types no consideration was given to non-game contexts, and despite the frequent reliance on player types within the deployment of gamification systems, they offer limited explanatory power (Dixon, 2011). Equally, criticism exists of the player axes for their overly simplistic nature and the assumption that player behaviours are static and unchanging during play (Tuunanen & Hamari, 2012). However, (Tuunanen & Hamari, 2012) contend that much of this criticism is misplaced and is reflective of the misuse of the original work. These player-types are in fact so misrepresented that to dissuade further misapplication, Bartle, in 2012 publicly denounced their application in gamification or marketing contexts (Bartle, 2012).

Despite this, some authors have attempted to expand on such typologies through further empirical testing, the most notable of which being that conducted by Yee (2002); (Yee, 2006a, 2006b). Yee utilised a factor analysis approach in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) to generate a player behavioural model (Table 3.2). The resultant model comprises of three overarching behaviour types and a further ten subcomponents. While the Yee model has many similarities to the Bartle player types, it is through the inclusion of the subcomponents that we see several deviations. For example, Yee expands on notions of achievement behaviour by including actions such as player power progression and, adds new categories such as immersive customisations to player's appearances. (Yee, 2006b)

As with the Bartle player typology, Yee asserts that the explanatory power of his behavioural model is limited to the observed context. (Tuunanen & Hamari, 2012, p. 49) suggest that rather than designing systems based around these and other player typologies the discipline of gamification stands to benefit by utilising them simply as a "point of departure". (Tondello et al., 2016) go some way in achieving this, by developing a hexad framework incorporating the personalised requirements of gamification based on survey responses from University students.

Table 3.2: Yee's Factor Analysis of Game Motivations

Achievement	Social	Immersion
Advancement (Progression, Power, Build-up)	Socializing (Communicating, Assisting, Friendship)	Discovery (Exploration, Unearthing, Detection)
Mechanics (Statistics, Optimization, Investigation)	Relationship (Social support, Relationship building)	Role-Playing (Story-Driven, Character based, Classes)
Competition (Rivalry, Aggravation, Authority)	Teamwork (Collaboration, Team-based Achievement)	Customization (Appearance, Style, Individuality)

3.5.1. Areas of Overlap: Gamification, Simulations, Serious Games & Edutainment

Given the inherently subjective nature of terms such as game and play, it is natural that binding these concepts to any one field or discipline has proven to be a challenging and nebulous task. Further, these attempts often meet with the reality that a significant overlap that exists between neighbouring concepts, which, if not accounted for, can confound efforts to further understanding. For this reason, this section briefly discusses those closely related concepts of gamification which have been highlighted by the literature as established areas of study that overlap. While within the literature there are many areas that the notions of gamification, and by extension game and play intersect, the concepts of Enterprise gamification, marketing gamification, simulations, serious games and edutainment are the most relevant for further discussion in this study.

3.5.1.1. Enterprise Gamification

Enterprise gamification (EG) is the emerging practice of specific gamification systems or services deployed in Enterprise Information System (EIS). While the broad objective of gamification is to increase engagement and directed user behaviours, the goals of EG builds upon this by leveraging existing enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM) and supply chain management (SCM) tools to facilitate organisational objectives. EG systems, therefore, could be considered as a subset of a gamification as a

broader concept, in that it aims to focus explicitly on the application of game-like mechanics in enterprise contexts.

However, as with other specialist areas, EG suffers from an absence of any one universally accepted design strategy (Herzig, Ameling, & Schill, 2012; Raftopoulos, Walz, & Greuter, 2015), leading to an overreliance on broadly defined and sometimes ineffective design principles. In part, this is due to the wide array of contexts, technology solutions and business purposes utilised (Raftopoulos et al., 2015). Nonetheless, researchers have identified the need to define the unique aspects of enterprise gamification solutions further, and as a result, have attempted to determine a series of working taxonomies (Raftopoulos et al., 2015). Further, the inadequacies of the popular gamification definitions that support EG definitions is notable, as they fail to consider the unique aspects of enterprise environments.

One such definition proposed by Neeli (2015) suggests that while, the Deterding classification of ‘the use of game design elements in non-game contexts’ is sufficient for consumer-focused initiatives, within the context of EG it fails to capture the relevant goals or purposes of business-driven processes. For this reason, Neeli (2015) expands on Deterding’s work, positing that the following revised definition should be considered;

Gamification in the enterprise is the use of game design elements to engage, motivate, and persuade employees, customers, and partners on work and initiatives of the enterprise, to develop positive attitudes, personal and professional achievements, and productive behaviors. (p. 490)

The revision of the classification includes the addition of new attributes; purpose (motivate), participants (employees or users) and outcomes (behavioural change). Neeli argues that gamification in enterprise contexts requires a simple analysis of motivation and engagement and that with this new definition EG systems stand to benefit from a more thorough design process while removing the current “state-of-market” overreliance on mechanics such as points, badges and leaderboards (Neeli, 2015, p. 490).

Raftopoulos et al. (2015) offer a degree of congruence around this definition, with their preliminary EG taxonomy framework. They state that while each iteration of EG will depend largely on the context-specific business objectives and the nature of the relationship with end users, five key parameters can be utilised to guide its use. These parameters are;

- **Primary Purpose** – An organisation's main reason for using gamified EIS, e.g. customer loyalty, marketing/sales, education, motivation or engagement.
- **Target Audience** – An organisations intended target audience, e.g. Customers, Staff, Industry
- **Technology Strategy** – The selection of technology solutions, e.g. Vendor, self-built, web-based and service modifications
- **Core Gameplay** – An organisations style of play with core rules which constitute a game, e.g. Collection, Puzzle solving, Survival.
- **Key Mechanics** – The use of game mechanics such as points, virtual badges, currency rewards and missions/quests.

While the authors' state that this taxonomy attempts only to form a common language around EG and, key points of the decision-making, it nonetheless illustrates the need to gravitate towards a set of more comprehensive EG definitions and practices.

3.5.1.2. Gamification & Marketing

Zichermann and Linder (2010) provide some insight into how the concepts of gamification can be used to facilitate environments that are more rewarding and meaningful for end users within marketing contexts. They claim this process is mainly based on creating "sticky content" (Zichermann & Linder, 2010, p. 13), a term that has its origin rooted in web-based analytics systems designed to monitor how long users stay on a web page and their number of reoccurring visits. The real world equivalent to sticky content he argues is referred to by marketers as customer "loyalty". Zichermann says that the focus of 'Funware', or gamification, is for businesses to become more aware of their users' behaviours and ultimately encourage desired actions to achieve business objectives. Achieving this is managed by creating predictable behavioural patterns, using game-like mechanics from traditional games such as rules and rewards. Zichermann seeks to define gamification as "the process of game-thinking and game mechanics to engage users and solve problems." (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011, p. xiv).

At the core of this definition is Zichermann & Cunningham's belief that gamification is an amalgamation of concepts such as 'advergaming' and 'games-for-change' alongside the non-

game context in which the observation occurs. For this reason, he argues that the strength of gamification comes from peoples' desire to adhere to aspects of our everyday life, which he considers as game mechanics. Zichermann and Cunningham (2011) liken these mechanics to the average person's daily commute to work wherein they are required to board a train in a crowded station. He describes the process as a "train game", where participants rely on their tacit understanding of patterns and behaviours to go through a process of strategising the best approach to the board while adhering to unspoken social norms, or "rules", mandating how one conducts themselves. The victors are said to be the people receiving the benefit of a seat on their long journey or a good view out the window. Those who are not fortunate to receive the reward exhibit behavioural change as they re-evaluate their strategies coming into the next "level", or trip. This observation is unique in that it reveals the game-like nature of otherwise mundane tasks, many of which we are subject to, often without even realising. For example, if railway staff wanted to induce particular behaviours in participants to the "train game", they could reward or incentivise users through the qualitative benefits of being first or early to the station.

Huotari and Hamari (2012) take a less idealistic approach as they examine gamification within the field of service marketing. Service marketing is a deviation from traditional marketing strategies in that it focuses on "service-dominated logic" (Huotari & Hamari, 2012, p. 16). While mainstream marketing approaches view the production and subsequent value creation of a product as the sole domain of the company, a service marketing approach acknowledges that within the context of businesses they create no tangible product, and instead offer services, the customer is in a distinctly different position of value co-producer. As such, there are no existing definitions of gamification that adequately capture the unique aspects of service marketing due to their inherently large all-inclusive nature. In positioning their definition, they cite the deficiencies of preceding classifications that emphasise 'the use of game elements' and the impracticality this introduces to many industries. They argue, if we consider 'game elements' as a precursor to defining gamification systems, without setting boundaries concerning what constitutes a 'game element'. Then we open up generic information systems, such as the stock exchange or decision support systems, to being needlessly classified as games or gamified (Huotari & Hamari, 2012).

Their argument, therefore, hinges on the failure of existing definitions to sufficiently account for the subjective elements of games and what they believe to be an inherent incompatibility. As an alternative, they suggest viewing gamification as a process in which a ‘gamifier’ attempts to induce ‘gameful experiences’ within a service using ‘affordances’. As such, they re-define gamification within the context of service marketing as (Huotari & Hamari, 2012, p. 19); “gamification refers to a process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences to support users’ overall value creation”.

3.5.1.3. Simulations

Like gamification, simulation is a concept that has seen numerous definitions within literature. In part, the breadth of definitions come as the result of the terms common usage in industries such as engineering, education, medicine and traditional video games. Equally, the term itself is not one inherent to software or computer environments. For instance, it is normal within employment training programs to refer to customer-employee role-playing scenarios as a simulation, or in less formal circumstances, a hobbyist drummer may simulate playing his instrument. Of interest to this study, however, are the definitions primarily concerned with computer software and specifically those that position themselves within the realm of traditional games.

Parker and Becker (2013, pp. 1-2) offer one such definition stating a computer or software simulation is; “A computer program that is intended to represent some system at a specified level of detail, so that the input to the program will generate an output that corresponds to the output of the system when given that input”. At its most fundamental level then, simulations are attempts to replicate or represent, as accurately as possible, an event or process using computer software.

However, complications exist with this definition as traditional games often try to replicate real-world scenarios, physics or concepts of fantasy while remaining reliant on the input from users or players to generate a corresponding output. The question then is to what extent is one considered a simulation, and on the spectrum of paidia and ludic behaviour where does it fall relative to gamification initiatives. Parker and Becker (2013, p. 8) look to clarify this issue by expanding the terminology to encompass a concept they define as “ludic simulations”.

They argue this is “an interactive graphical simulation that includes game-like aspects, but falls short of having all of the properties of a computer game” (Parker & Becker, 2013, p. 8).

This notion, however, is one which has been explored in some detail in the past, albeit with slight variances to terminology (Becker, 1980; Coppard & Goodman, 1979; Horn & Cleaves, 1980). One of the more cohesive attempts was conducted by Dorn (1989), as he investigated the interchangeable nature of terms such as simulation games, game simulations, games with simulated environments. Dorn (1989) concluded that ultimately narrowing down any one universally applicable definition represents a significantly troublesome task and, irrespective of the outcome, it is less important than producing a working definition. To that end, he posits a broad yet pragmatic definition of simulation games as;

Simulation games are activities undertaken by players whose actions are constrained by a set of explicit rules particular to that game and by a predetermined endpoint. The elements of the game constitute a more or less accurate representation or model of some external reality with which players interact by playing roles in much the same way as they would interact with reality itself. (p. 3)

This definition differs from the concept of gamification in a few subtle ways. Namely, an emphasis is placed on the elements of games constituting a “more or less” accurate representation or model of an external reality. Gamification, while normally integrated within the context of an external reality, does not propose to replace or replicate such reality. Instead, gamification is concerned with enhancing pre-existing realities with affordances for game-like experiences.

3.5.1.4. Serious Games

While accepting that a broadly defined definition may be more pragmatic, we nevertheless must consider how this may overlap with neighbouring practices such as serious games. Serious games are the result of using games to achieve an explicit purpose, such as learning or skill acquisition. The terminology found in education, healthcare and government service sectors, has seen a surge of interest over the past decade alongside gamification and EG initiatives (Susi, Johannesson, & Backlund, 2007). With various estimates placing the global market net worth between \$2-10 billion (Serious Games Association, 2012).

As with gamification, however, serious games is a term which has encountered much debate in the academic community, mainly revolving around its situation as a discipline and how to address its classification (Susi et al., 2007). According to Sawyer, Rejeski, and Scholars (2002), the modern serious games movement began with the release of the 2002 video game America's Army which he claims "was the first successful and well-executed serious game that gained total public awareness" (Gudmundesen, 2006, para. 3). Americas Army is a game often referred to from the perspectives of both a serious game and a simulation game (Shilling, Zyda, & Wardynski, 2002).

Nevertheless, it is apparent that many new incantations of serious games definitions are influenced by the work of Sawyer et al. (2002), albeit each to a varying degree of nuance and usage. One such definition offered by Corti (2006, p. 1) claims that serious games are "all about leveraging the power of computer games to captivate and engage end-users for a specific purpose, such as to develop new knowledge and skills". This definition differentiates itself from the simulation game space by incorporating elements of engagement and captivation to the end user.

Another popular definition which takes a similar approach is presented by Zyda where serious games are (Zyda, 2005);

A mental contest, played with a computer in accordance with specific rules that uses entertainment to further government or corporate training, education, health, public policy, and strategic communication objectives. (p. 25)

Conversely and, further confounding the issue, Michael and Chen attempt to distance the serious games notion from traditional games. By outlining the explicit non-reliance on entertainment in serious games with their definition, "games that do not have entertainment, enjoyment, or fun as their primary purpose" (Michael & Chen, 2005, p. 21)

3.5.1.5. Edutainment

The concepts of serious games and to a lesser extent simulations also overlap with an area called Edutainment and neighbours concepts such as gamification. Edutainment, short for education entertainment, refers to media tasked with increasing one's education while also providing some form of entertainment value. Unlike gamification however, edutainment

generally maintains the context of a full-fledged game environments, where gamification takes only components of those games and attempts to insert them into educational contexts. While the term has been used less frequently since the emergence of serious games and gamification, within the contexts of educational services it is sometimes still relied on. Charsky (2010, p. 180) building on a definition offered Hannafin and Peck (1988) defines edutainment as “a type of computer-based instruction designed to motivate the gamer using the characteristics”. The primary difference between serious games and edutainment he argues is the reliance on particular game “characteristics”. These features are said to exist on continuum and range from variances in competition, goals, rules, player choice, challenges and fantasy.

While there exists a body of literature surrounding simulation games, serious games, edutainment and their contentions position as disciplines (Deterding et al., 2011). In this instance the author concurs with Dorn (1989) position that focuses on converging around language which enables researchers to conduct their study and remain manageable. As such, the researcher accepts that ludic simulations represent an area bordering traditional games. He also agrees that serious games share much in common with edutainment, and the pretext for using the terminology will depend largely on the intent of the study or practice. The researcher also acknowledges that these definitions are representative of a wider debate occurring in the subjects in which they originate and, for this reason, discusses the topics specifically through the lens of a gamification researcher.

3.5.1.6. Gamification as a Process

While many gamification definitions focus on the explicit application of game-like mechanics, some suggest that the gamification process itself would benefit from greater emphasis. The reasoning behind this being a belief that organisations have, for some time, been applying game thinking to achieve organisational objectives (Werbach & Hunter, 2012, p. 25).

To this end, proponents of this position believe that gamification fails as a term to accurately capture the complexities of successful initiatives, and find that existing definitions lack the required degree of nuance to be practicable (Werbach, 2014). Werbach refers to these definitions as focusing on the ‘elemental’ components of gamification and argues that faults with this approach become apparent when we accept that not everything that includes game

elements is in fact gamification. For instance, the element of social collaboration is commonly found within traditional games and work contexts, however, assuming that all social collaboration constitutes as gamification has the potential to remove the terminologies power to explain a distinctive practice.

To mitigate this, Werbach proposes that we view the act of 'gamification' as a process. He argues that we direct focus at the activities and their relationships with being game-like. Werbach (2014) contends that by doing so, designers are encouraged to

Think about how to enhance and deepen the game-like aspects of their designs, rather than thinking their job is done once they drop in points or badges. (p. 267)

Werbach also suggests that the concept of gamification does not need to be limited to non-game contexts and that games themselves can, in fact, become gamified. Huotari and Hamari (2012, p. 19) concur with this notion while citing the impracticality of concepts such as 'gamefulness'.

It is the opinion of the researcher that Werbach's view on 'meta-gamification' has seen a degree of validation from traditional games industries over the past decade. Large global organisations, such as Sony Computer Entertainment, Microsoft and Nintendo, whom all operate in the traditional video game sector, have all, in one way or another incorporated game-like mechanics into their proprietary hardware's operating systems. The latest gaming products, such as, the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One, have integrated elements such as points, virtual trophies, achievements and social media in ways that would not traditionally be games. The defining attribute of these initiatives, however, is that they exist as an added layer of game elements to encourage higher player engagement on top of, yet still independent of the traditional game medium itself. While these game-like elements are often awarded through the use of traditional video game play, their ultimate purpose lies in driving engagement within a wider context of social networks and, to propagate the additional purchase or use of products and services controlled by the platform owner. It is because of this added layer of persistence and ulterior purpose when removed from the traditional game-context that many of these game-like initiatives could be argued as legitimate forms of gamification.

3.5.2. Criticisms & unintended outcomes of gamification

Within the existing body of literature, gamification is discussed almost exclusively from a position of positivity. Researchers and industry experts locate gamification as a fresh approach to improving users' lives, increasing engagement and streamlining workflow (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011). However, to date, little attention has been given to the potential consequences of poorly implemented or ill-conceived instances of gamification. For that reason, this section discusses briefly a few of the studies that have ventured into this area of research and, considers their lessons within the context of this study as further informing the researchers' theoretical sensitivity.

One of the earliest arguments opposed to gamification was put forward in 2011 by Ian Bogost, in an online article titled "gamification is bullshit" (Bogost, 2011). Bogost's contention at the time was that from a moral perspective the art of 'bullshit' and, by extension gamification, is one synonymous with the practice of concealment. He argues that while concealment is the action, the goal of the 'bullshitter' is to impress or coerce others for their gain. Within the context of gamification, this is done through an over-reliance on easy to implement, low yielding, repeatable techniques created as tools of user manipulation by marketing consultants to capture an ever-growing audience of video game enthusiasts. The '-ification personifies such a practice' and '-ify' suffixes, which he likens to being told an ugly object can be 'beautified' or a document 'falsified', alluding to a simple, easily applicable but rarely trustworthy solution. Thus, he claims a correct naming convention for gamification is the term 'exploitationware'.

Following the widespread attention from both academia and traditional video game media around his article (Bogost, 2011), Bogost once again elected to revisit his disagreement in Walz and Deterding (2015) book 'The Gameful World' (Walz & Deterding, 2015). In this new discussion, he reframes his initial argument through a comparison between gamification and professional consultants. The primary role of consultants he states is to benefit themselves through the continued growth of a portfolio that gives the perception of successful techniques and strategies, irrespective of real-world performance. For consultants, he claims the clients' satisfaction is a distant concern, providing the perception of success is maintained and they can continue to secure work. Gamification in a similar fashion then relies upon the desire and inability of businesses to leverage the engagement capabilities of traditional

games, by promising to ‘gamify’ and provide easy replicable, and timely results. However, the benefits ultimately reside with the gamification practitioner and the practice serves only to perpetuate those benefits.

After this initial wave of discussion, academics began to consider more seriously the potential consequences or deficiencies of gamification as a discipline. Callan, Bauer, and Landers (2015) outline ten business-related scenarios focusing specifically on how to ‘avoid the dark side of gamification’. Their contemplations cover a range of potential problems, including reward mismatches, motivational misalignments, goal setting, diminished novelty, employee value perception and metric calibration issues. The scenarios attempt to address concerns expressed by Gartner (Burke, 2013), who had previously included the concept of gamification in their 2014 industry Hype Cycle (Gartner, 2014). Similarly, select studies have called into question the long-term benefit of gamification initiatives as their effectiveness appears to diminish over time (Farzan et al., 2008; Hamari, 2013). Diminished effectiveness is a problem echoed in the traditional video game industry, where over one-third of all commercially purchased games are not completed by the purchaser (Abernathy & Rouse, 2014). Gamification has yet to overcome the paradox of heteronomous direction and autonomy, in which a game designer is regulating the degree of freedom a user has within a gamified system, which in itself can lead to a lost sense of autonomy and subsequently diminished motivated disposition (Sicart, 2015)

3.6. Converging on a Practical Definition of ‘Gamification’

This review of extant gamification literature has revealed that given the subjectivity supporting the core components of gamification initiatives, converging around any single definition is a problematic task. The heart of this problem centres on individual choices, or trade-offs researchers must make when adopting any one given meaning. These trade-offs may come in the form of limitations on the scope of game mechanics or concepts of game and play but equally, may come through the introduction of broad definitions that serve as a catch-all solution. In an attempt to address this issue, Appendix 2 includes an examination of a brief non-exhaustive compilation of many of the prominent gamification definitions currently used by academics and industry.

Several factors informed the choice of an appropriate definition of gamification to use within this study; the numerous definitions that currently exist (Appendix 2), the experiences of the researcher; the substantive context in which this study occurs, and the primary goal of the research. It was to some degree therefore possible in the early stages of this study to determine the boundaries of any appropriate definition of gamification to use. For instance, a definition that was needlessly broad and inclusive could result in the misdirection of data collection or analysis and, a definition that was too prohibitive or based on only popular gamification mechanics could fail to capture the reality of emerging gamification deployments in New Zealand contact centres. Therefore, from the definitions compiled, two are uniquely positioned to act as suitable guides for a study of gamification in New Zealand contact centres.

The first of these definitions are offered by Deterding et al. (2011), who states that gamification is “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts”. Deterding et al. (2011) definition currently serves as the most highly cited amongst academic studies and, acts as the basis for many others attempting to adopt the concept into new contexts (Hamari et al., 2014; Huotari & Hamari, 2012). As discussed in Section 3.5.2.1 the popularity of this definition comes from how it embraces the innate subjectivity of what Deterding et al. define as ‘elements of games’. Instead of delimiting gamification to the explicit use of certain mechanics such as points, badges or leaderboards. Deterding et al. definition accepts that gamification can occur at various levels through actions which are ‘characteristic’ of games, such as interface design, design patterns, design principles or heuristics and different game design methods (Table 3.3). Deterding et al. (2011) outline the concept of non-game contexts as one that encompasses the use of game elements in those outside of ‘normal expected use’. While normal expected use they argue is contingent on social, historical and cultural shifts, the purpose of its addition is to facilitate the growth of subcategories of gamification. Deterding et al. (2011) anticipate that the positive growth of gamification research will eventually result in a fracturing of context-specific investigations, each of which requiring subcategories in a similar way that the serious game discipline has evolving areas such as health games, news games and training games.

Table 3.3: Levels of Game Design Elements

Game-Element Level	Example
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Game Interface Design Patterns	<i>Badge, Leaderboard, Level</i>
Game Design Patterns and Mechanics	<i>Time Constraint, Limited Resources, Turns</i>
Game Design Principles and Heuristics	<i>Enduring Play, Clear Goals, Variety of Game Styles</i>
Game Models	<i>MDA; Challenge, Fantasy, Curiosity</i>
Game Design Methods	<i>Playtesting, Playcentric Design, Value Conscious Game Design</i>

The second definition is offered by Huotari and Hamari (2012) “A process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences in order to support users overall value creation”. The stated purpose of this definition is two-fold, firstly, it comes from an investigation into gamification initiatives in service marketing contexts. And, as such, is designed to consider the unique needs of its setting and, secondly, it adds to the Deterding et al. (2011) definition in several key areas. One of the most notable being the concept of ‘game-elements’ (Table 3.3).

Huotari and Hamari (2012) argue that the sum of gamification should be determined not by the explicit use of particular game-elements but, rather by their ability to afford gameful experiences. Gameful experiences being the structured form of free-flowing playful experiences. They suggest that this approach also necessitates considering the notion of ‘non-game contexts’. While Deterding et al. argue that non-game context are those outside of ‘normal use’, Huotari & Hamari suggest that the experience of ‘gamefulness’ is too subjective and fleeting to depict certain environments as ‘game contexts’ and others as not. For instance, a soccer player may feel gameful while playing their weekly match but, others on the team may perceive the same activity as stressful and work-like. Deterding et al. (2011) appear to agree with this notion, as they refer to such experiences as fragile, unstable and ‘flickers’ between playful and gameful. Huotari and Hamari (2012) suggest then that the solution is to leverage system agnostic definitions that aim to induce ‘gameful experiences’.

The goal of gamification, after all, is almost universally to enable greater states of engagement or 'gamefulness' and not the rigid application of popular 'game mechanics'.

While the opinions of Huotari and Hamari (2012) highlight several points of contention surrounding subjectivity in the Deterding definition, the researcher believes that these points of contention are not necessarily conflicting, nor would they preclude the definition from use within this study. For instance, while Huotari and Hamari (2012) posit the creation of gameful experiences is more important than the particular use of any given mechanic or design practice. Deterding et al. acknowledge that their current classification of 'game-elements' is a heuristic for aspects 'characteristic' of games, and classify such features at various levels. However, they concede that even within this classification, much room for debate still exists over what constitutes a 'characteristic'.

It is, therefore, contendable that Huotari and Hamari (2012), argument of 'gameful experiences' are reflective of this debate, and represent the variances in strict and liberal interpretations around elements such as design intent or outcome. After all, traditional game design has long utilised similar experiential states such as flow, autonomy and mastery to guide the creation of gameful activities, many of which are recognised by gamification researchers as fundamental components or objectives. To this end, while Deterding et al. may limit characteristics to elements that are found in most games, or play a significant role in gameplay, an alternative interpretation may justifiably require the elicitation of 'gameful experiences' before being determined as a 'characteristic' to games.

Thus, following the findings of this literature review, this study has elected to adopt the formal definition from Deterding et al. (2011).

The use of game design elements in non-game contexts. (*p. 9*)

With the understanding that determining what constitutes as 'characteristic' to games will require a degree of subjective interpretation. In this sense, the researcher relies on his own experiences within the traditional video game industry and academic discipline to remain sensitive to relevant 'characteristics' of games within the substantive context of New Zealand contact centres but, equally uses Deterding's 'game design elements' as the guiding foundation for this investigation.

3.6.1. Distinguishing Gamification Elements

This study commences with an intentionally broad classification of the elements characteristic to games, the purpose of which is to establish within the context of a contact centre environment what developers and employees perceive these components to be. This study, therefore, considers multiple approaches to gamification mechanics and design principles, informed by the pre-commencement literature review and on-going theoretically sensitising research.

The study acknowledges that the use of traditional mechanics such as points, badges and leaderboards are common components of many gamification research efforts to date. It, therefore, follows that within the current lexicon of gamification studies, researchers who elect to ignore such practices may risk generating a theory that is viewed by academics and industry as being captured within neighbouring disciplines such as playful interactions or simulations.

As the intent of this study and precursory literature review is to investigate the use of gamification techniques explicitly, it does not disregard the use these mechanics. Guided by existing literature a short list of popular mechanics and techniques is collated and summarised in Table 3.4 below

Table 3.4: Generalized gamification Elements				
Author	Hamari et al. (2014)	Paharia (2013)	Deterding et al. (2011)	Zichermann and Linder (2010)
Elements	Points Leaderboards Achievements Levels Story/Theme Clear Goals	Fast Feedback Transparency Goals Badges Levelling up Onboarding	Badge Leaderboard Level Time Constraint Limited Resources Enduring Play	Points Quests Engagement Loops Badges Levels Onboarding

	Feedback	Competition	Clear goals	Leaderboards
	Rewards	Collaboration	Play centric- design	
	Progress	Community		
	Challenge	Points		

Table 3.4, which is not exhaustive, represents current generalised gamification elements. Meaning they are not industry-specific and if desired, apply to various contexts.

However, the definitions of gamification presented by both Deterding et al. (2011) and, Huotari and Hamari (2012) place no such explicit requirements on generalizability and, further, unambiguously warn against them. The purpose of this is to ensure that narrow or restricted views of characteristics do not bind emergent instances of game elements and gamification initiatives. Within the context of a grounded theory study, restricting the investigation to only those mechanics identified previously would unnecessarily limit the emergent and explanatory power of the methodology. Table 4, therefore, does not represent the unique needs or requirements of gamification initiatives utilised in the contact centre industry, nor does it represent the goals and intent behind their use.

3.6.2. Subjectivity in Gamification

As defined in section 3.6 gamification is defined the practice or application of “game design elements in non-game contexts”. While this definition acts as the backbone for what is considered to be gamification in this study, however, it is accepted that this is an innately subjective term. In part, this definition derives from the researchers own beliefs within the constructivist paradigm wherein he acceptances the existence of multiple co-constructed social realities, but also partly in recognition of the various interpretations surrounding concepts of ‘game’, ‘play’ and ‘characteristics of games’. For clarity, the researcher briefly outlines his own beliefs around these concepts.

Within this definition, the researcher accepts that “game” refers to structured behaviours bound by rules or competitive strife where the individual works towards goals (ludus), and

contrasts with the free-flowing unbound actions of 'paidia' or play (Caillois, 1961). It is also accepted that, as defined by Deterding et al. (2011), design elements represent components that are 'characteristic' to games. Characteristics personified as elements representing the heuristics, patterns, models methods and mechanics used within the game to provide its structure.

Further, the researcher accepts that characteristics remain, nebulous and personal criteria. A point highlighted in the arguments made by Huotari and Hamari (2012) who suggest abstract concepts such as the ability to induce 'gamefulness' are the most critical components of defining gamification. In this instance, the researcher agrees with the notion that the concept of 'gamefulness' plays a crucial role within gamification. As without the inducement of a game-like experience from design patterns, heuristics or mechanics, these concepts would be inseparable from routine practices and likely fall inside accepted definitions of neighbouring concepts, such as simulations or serious games.

With this in mind, the researcher elected to navigate this subjectivity by considering the existing literature, his own beliefs, the beliefs of participants and the goals of the contact centre industry which represent gamification elements.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented a review of the literature surrounding contact centres, emotional labour, burnout and the potential solution offered through game-based initiatives called gamification. The contact centre literature demonstrates that within service work a disconnect exists between employee skills, capacity and freedom in their roles. Equally, the literature identifies the high-intensity nature of frontline contact centre work produced through organisational efforts to improve efficiency for increased prosperity. The consequence of these increased demands, however, is apparent through the elevated rate of intention to turn-over and, as a result, organisations look towards emerging information systems for a possible solution. Gamification represents one such avenue and, as such relevant facets of the gamification literature is explored and discussed. The chapter concludes by identifying the chosen definition of gamification used for the remainder of this study.

Chapter 4. Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

The philosophical position of any researcher plays a significant role in how they elect to approach a research topic. Therefore, this chapter commences with a discussion addressing the components that form the underlying philosophical beliefs of a researcher, namely, their ontological, epistemological and axiological beliefs. The subsequent sections continue this discussion by highlighting the researchers' worldview, being the constructivist paradigm, and the use chosen strategy of inquiry, namely grounded theory. Given the many emerging variations of grounded theory, the chapter also briefly discusses the relevant historical aspects of the methodology, to better situate the researchers own position within the evolving branch of constructivist grounded theory utilised in this study.

4.2. Research Paradigm

Predicating the design of a study and subsequent selection of the method is the philosophical position held by a researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). This amalgamation of beliefs and constructs that guide the research process are commonly known as a researcher's paradigm, or worldview (Lincoln et al., 2011). A paradigm is, therefore, the comprehensive framework of how one views the world. Creswell suggests that worldviews carry significance as they encompass experiences and beliefs that are "shaped by the discipline area of the student, the beliefs of advisers and faculty in a student's area, and past research experiences" (Creswell, 2009, p. 6). These experiences, however, extend much further than a given research context and incorporate an individual's lifetime worth of experiences surrounding reality and knowledge.

Paradigms are implicit to human understanding and the assumptions we each make about the world, even those for which we hold no cognisance. Researchers embarking on a study are therefore somewhat obligated to confront the inter-relatedness of their paradigm, discover which approaches they subscribe to and holistically evaluate the effectiveness of a chosen design. While at the same acknowledging their perspective of the world. To this end, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) subscribe to the belief that a researcher is obligated to review four

distinct philosophical elements, ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology. Therefore these components are examined in the context of this study context below.

4.2.1. Components of a Paradigm – Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology

Ontology is the philosophical discipline concerned with the nature of social entities and beliefs related to the nature of existence (Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007). Bryman and Bell (2007) purport that the central questions of ontology for a researcher's consideration are whether social entities should be considered as objective and existing in an independent reality to their social actors, or whether they are regarded as constructs of the social actor? Simply put, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108) phrases this question as "What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it"?

Epistemology is the philosophical discipline concerned with determining what is acceptable knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2007), and is founded on two primary questions; how do I know the world, and what is the connection between the known and the inquirer? (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Epistemology within the research process is a critical set of beliefs which assist in illuminating the justification and rationale for a study. Denicolo, Long, and Bradley-Cole (2016) argue that evaluating one's epistemological perspective has several benefits for a research project. First, it aids the researcher in recognising the many ways in which reality is perceived and known. Second, a researcher will become better equipped to communicate these perspectives to readers and peers. Finally, it acts as a means of triangulation when considering the overall paradigm employed and the appropriateness of a chosen method.

Ontology and epistemology, therefore, share a degree of philosophical interdependence, as holding an ontological position will often compel a subsequent epistemological view. For instance, if a researcher subscribes to an ontological position which holds that reality is tangible and physical they would be limited to epistemological positions that regard the establishment of facts or laws as being contingent of verifiable hypotheses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 101). Such hypotheses and their subsequent testing would be the product of continuous experimental control, where the research endeavours to eliminate extraneous factors by manipulating the context of the research itself (Willis et al., 2007, p. 9). Conversely, for those who believe reality is a construct limited to what exists through our perceptions and senses, a subjectivist epistemology provides the inherent nature of knowledge, accepting that

individual and collective reconstructions coalesce around consensus (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 101).

Heron and Reason argue that in addition to ontological, epistemology and methodological considerations modern research should also acknowledge the fourth element of axiology (Heron & Reason, 1997), they reason that:

The first three questions - the ontological, the epistemological and the methodological - are all about matters to do with truth... The fourth and axiological question is about values of being, about what human states are to be valued simply by virtue of what they are. This is a necessary complement to balance and make whole the concern with truth exhibited by the first three questions. And the first value question to be raised is about the valuing of knowledge itself. (p. 10)

Originating from the Greek words *axios* (worth) and *logos* (to reason) axiology strives to illuminate the personal standards inherent to everyone so they may acknowledge them within a study. The value of a researcher's axiological position is found in the reflection of one's values and, ultimately the acceptance of their ability to guide the research process.

The interrelatedness of axiological values, therefore, must be considered within the context of a researcher's paradigm at the outset of a study. For instance, researchers who subscribe to a single objective reality, which holds that personal beliefs, hopes, and expectations have no place in the determination of research findings, are compelled to acknowledge and mitigate their own biases to avoid interference with controlled research environments. These researchers would also be obligated to consider the role in which their axiological values have played in the selection of the very topic of inquiry by questioning how the subject matter came to the fore and why is it considered valuable. Proponents of socially constructed, multiple realities on the other hand, who believe values and lived experiences are inseparable from the research process, should endeavour to describe, articulate or otherwise account for, but not eliminate these same factors (Ponterotto, 2005).

4.3. Investigating Paradigms

Informed by these discussions and, aware that many other philosophical worldviews exist within the literature, the researcher has considered four major paradigmatic positions. The

following sections have been informed predominantly by authors with considerable experience and, who are regarded as trustworthy and reputable within both qualitative and quantitative strands of research (Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln et al., 2011; Mertens, 2010).

4.3.1. Positivism

The positivist paradigm holds that the existence of reality is single and objective, and as a result can be observed regardless of an individual's perspectives. Positivist research aims to identify, predict and measure this single reality (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Ontologically this set of beliefs positions positivism as subscribing to naïve realism.

From a historical perspective, positivism is a paradigm which has a lineage of scholars encompassing, Aristotle, Galileo, Comte and Kant (Mertens, 2010; Willis et al., 2007, p. 34). Thus, positivism is a position often presumed as synonyms with 'science' or the 'scientific method' (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 17). This belief is due to the historical dominance of quantitative research designs positioned within a positivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Epistemologically, subscribers to the positivist paradigm align with an Objectivist viewpoint. Objectivism predicates a position that holds that the researcher can detach themselves from the subjects of investigation completely. Moreover, failure to isolate the researcher and research subject jeopardises the validity of any findings. Lincoln et al. (2011, p. 103) elaborate, stating positivism maintains an epistemological belief of total objectivity, such that for, a positivist "there is no reason to interact with who or what researchers study."

Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 16) outline five fundamental principles for positivist research which further clarify the underlying assumptions:

1. Only phenomena and hence knowledge confirmed by the senses can genuinely be warranted as knowledge
2. The purpose of theory is to generate hypotheses that can be tested and that will thereby allow explanations of laws to be assessed
3. Knowledge is arrived at through the gathering of facts that provide the basis for laws
4. Science must be conducted in a way that is value free (i.e., objective)

5. There is a clear distinction between scientific statements and normative statements and a belief that the former is the true domain of the scientist.

4.3.2. Post-Positivism

Post-Positivism is viewed as the natural progression of the positivist paradigm and follows a naming convention that acknowledges its evolution from the traditional perspectives. Post-positivists hold the ontological position of critical realism and maintain that while an objective reality exists, it is impossible for humans to perceive and measure it perfectly. This probabilistic view is contrasted with the traditional positivist position, in which researchers strive to predict and subsequently control nature (Lincoln et al., 2011). In part, the post-positivist ontological belief is driven by an acknowledgement that researchers are limited by any associated research instruments and the unperceivable variables of nature (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln et al., 2011). The position of a post-positivist therefore aligns with a traditional and historical positivist approach insofar as the fundamental assumption that a single measurable reality exists. However, it acknowledges and accepts that this reality may never be fully understood.

Epistemologically proponents of the post-positivist paradigm adhere to a position of objectivism, relying on the hypothetical-deductive method of hypothesising, deducing, and generalising. Demonstrable through a strict adherence to subject isolation and a concerted effort to eliminate potential bias through contamination. Unlike the traditional positivist position that values the falsification principle of “true until disproven”, post-positivists determine the validity of findings through peer approval and acceptance, which the subject does not dictate (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 104).

Creswell (2007, p. 7) illustrate the fundamental assumptions of the post-positivist position;

1. Knowledge is conjectural – absolute truth can never be found. Thus, the evidence established in research is always imperfect and fallible.
2. Research is the process of making claims and then refining or abandoning some of them for other claims more strongly warranted.
3. Data, evidence and rational considerations shape knowledge.

4. Research seeks to develop relevant, true statements, ones that can serve to explain the situation of concern or that describe the causal relationships of interest.
5. Being objective is an essential aspect of competent inquiry: researchers must examine methods and conclusions for bias.

4.3.3. Participatory Worldview

Advocates of the participatory worldview subscribe to the ontological position of a subjective-objective reality and argue that reality is co-created by the mind and the surrounding cosmos (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 195). This position accepts that social encounters retain a transactional and interactive nature and are guided by our inherent subjectivity. Heron and Reason (1997, p. 11) elaborate these interactions are subjective “because it is only known through the form the mind gives it;” yet objective “because the mind interpenetrates the given cosmos which it shapes”. The participatory worldview holds that the true nature of reality can only be known through the lenses of subjectivity, and accepts that the objectivity of this knowledge is dependent on its creation by the knower and others who may have influenced its inception (Heron & Reason, 1997; Lincoln et al., 2011).

The participatory worldview as argued by Heron and Reason (1997) consists of an epistemological position comprised of four components which constitute our subjectivity; experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowledge. Experiential knowledge is the result of direct encounters and face-to-face meetings. Presentational knowledge “emerges from and is grounded on experiential knowing” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 281) through our intuition and resonance with our world. Propositional knowledge is “knowledge by description of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing” and is expressed in “statements and theories that come with mastery of concepts” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 281). Practical knowledge is the ability to illustrate competency and understanding through demonstration and skill.

Research undertaken within the participatory worldview rejects the positivist and post-positivist notions of isolated subjects and researcher. Instead, reliance is on collaborative forms of inquiry, in which the researcher and subject engage in a democratic dialogue to extract knowledge. Heron and Reason (1997) outline this research process through the following steps:

- Co-research and co-subject will define the questions they wish to explore and methods they will use (propositional knowledge)
- They apply the methodology together or separately in applicable context (practical knowledge)
- Leading to new encounters and experiences (experiential knowledge)
- These findings are then represented in a way others can understand (presentational knowledge)

4.3.4. Constructivism

Constructivism or the 'naturalistic paradigm' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2010) is a viewpoint which refutes notions that it is possible to view the human social world and the natural world in the same way. Constructivists argue that each of these worlds operate in fundamentally different realities, with the human social world being that of a mental construct subject to individual interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The meaning of these unique interpretations is directly related to the researcher's experiences, characteristics or external stimuli (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Stake, 1995). In essence, proponents of the constructivist paradigm refute positivist notions of a single objective reality or truth and instead subscribe to a belief in local, specific and co-constructed realities (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 193) Ontologically this position is relativism.

Denicolo et al. (2016) argue that proponents of the constructivist position hold that;

Our interpretation is influenced by existing patterns or beliefs. These patterns or beliefs are termed 'constructs'. Constructs are the units that make up the sense of self and are used to judge the efficacy of a new experience. We 'construe' a new experience because we interpret it on the basis of our existing constructed sense of self. (p. 16)

It follows then that constructivists inherently accept that the relationship between the researcher and knowledge is context and subject specific. Constructivists, therefore, hold the epistemological belief that knowledge exists in a state of transactional/subjectivist co-creation (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). With knowledge created from the process of researcher/participant interaction, during which the inquirer and inquired into are fused into

a single entity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In this sense, researchers who hold a constructivist position become “passionate participants” to the data generation process as opposed to mere observers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 99). Preissle (2006, p. 691) posits that constructivists must acknowledge the paradox in which “we are studying ourselves, studying ourselves and others”. While, Guba and Lincoln (1994) offer a less puzzling explanation, clarifying, that the constructivist paradigm accepts the inquirer cannot separate their own subjective experiences or observations from an investigation and that this link is a fundamental and central part of our understanding of a given subject.

Butt (2013) elaborates on this position, outlining the constructivist perception:

From a constructivist perspective, there is no central command mechanism providing integrity to the person. Instead, the sense of self is distributed but coordinated according to core role construing, leading to self as community as a better metaphor. (p. 15)

Axiologically constructivism accepts that the researcher's values and lived experiences are inseparable from the research process (Ponterotto, 2005). In positivist paradigms, reliance leans towards researcher neutrality. This same independence, however, is not available for constructivist researchers; rather constructivists are required to acknowledge these biases and cognitively position them in such a way that they can account for them through the use of techniques such as mental bridling (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2003). Constructivist research, therefore, endeavours to explore and account for the values, hopes and expectations of a research project alongside accounting for any pertinent “lived experiences” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 131).

4.4. Paradigm Considerations

At the outset of this study, the goal was not the discovery of a formal generalisable theory. Rather, it was to contribute to the existing academic body of knowledge through the development of a substantive context-specific theory capable of explaining the actions of a subsector of the service industry. The adoption of this approach ensures that the findings will have explicit industry relevance, and practical applicability to inform current thinking around staff engagement, motivation and performance. Furthermore, there was an expectation that the insights borne out of this research would lead to the development of new industry policies and practices for the deployment and utilisation of gamification systems, which will, in turn, enhance staff well-being and organisational productivity within the sector. However, to successfully achieve the research approach would have to balance the hoped-for outcomes with the paradigmatic lens of the researcher.

Therefore, the philosophical position of the researcher plays a crucial and fundamental role in attempts to shape, investigate and achieve this research objective. Indeed the appropriateness of the researcher's paradigmatic position must be acknowledged and accounted for to ensure the integrity, quality and validity of the overall study and associated findings. The process began with the researcher committing to a degree of introspection and identifying their own beliefs about the nature of knowledge and the nature of reality, eventuating in a synthesis between the subscribed paradigm and methodology of choice.

4.4.1. Constructivist Paradigm Selection & Justification

After much consideration and reflection concerning paradigmatic positions and suitability for this research, the constructivist paradigm was deemed to be the most suitable for this study. The primary reason for this being that the approach is entirely congruent with both the ontological and epistemological beliefs of the researcher.

Ontologically the constructivist paradigm holds that reality is the result of social constructions, which take into consideration the experience of the researcher, social upbringing, age, race and other defining attributes. As a result, constructivists accept that multiple socially constructed realities exist and that individual interpretations ultimately dictate what is considered to be genuine and real. The researcher does not share the view

that one could completely detach themselves from research subjects and the wider investigations to achieve impartiality.

Within the context of this study, however, the researcher accepts a rationalist-constructivist view. This position as outlined by Stake (1995, p. 101) recognises the concept of several truths. An outside reality exists, and this reality corresponds directly to our understanding of it. The aim of the research, therefore, is not to discover but instead to construct a purer understanding of these realities, and fits with the goal of this study. Which, is not to pursue answers to defined research questions or to test existing hypotheses but instead, to investigate a broadly defined topic based on experiences and suggestions from within the academic literature.

The researcher rejected the participatory paradigm, because although the researcher subscribes to and accepts many of the philosophical positions held within this paradigm. Specifically, the researcher agrees in part that subjectivity plays a predominant role when considering the nature of reality, but, ultimately disagrees with the notion that reality is overly reliant on collaboration between researchers and research subjects. To this end, the participatory paradigm also presents a methodological constraint in which research under this paradigm mandates the use of a democratised research approach. Such approaches reposition the inquirer into a role of co-researcher and co-subject and are most suitable when addressing research questions that pertain to imbalances in power or subjugation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

While gamification represents a steadily maturing area of research, there was little reason to believe at the outset of this study that oppression played a significant role in the explicit use of game-like techniques, or that specific sub-sectors of the chosen industry were likely to benefit unequally from their use. It would, however, be remiss to suggest that gamification and the New Zealand telecommunications industry are somehow immune to such problems, or not to acknowledge that these may be issues for future researchers. However, currently, no studies have highlighted abuse as a central or crucial issue that should be at the forefront of empirical investigation within gamification context particularly those based in New Zealand contact centres. Instead, given the emergent nature of gamification implementations in New

Zealand, it was the opinion of the researcher at the outset of this study, that issues such as these were not readily apparent and could be examined explicitly at a later date.

Epistemologically the researcher accepts that their own experience within the New Zealand contact centre industry, combined with expansive knowledge of the traditional game development process, and previous endeavours in gamification research have formed opinions and biases that have the potential to directly or indirectly influence the research process. The researcher believes that it is not feasible to purely quarantine these biases, but argues that the research approach chosen should be capable of ensuring theoretical and practical relevance while accounting for them. To this end, the study wanted to use a method of data generation that positioned the researcher in a transactional role, allowing for direct researcher-participant interaction. Utilising this approach not only allowed the data to be theoretically relevant but also was also consistent with the belief that doing so enriches the data generated. To facilitate the data generation process and to mitigate some of the researcher's inherent bias, the study relied predominantly on face-to-face interviews consistent with a constructivist approach. Doing so expedited the data generation process while allowing the researcher to take advantage of serendipitous sampling methods such as snowball sampling.

The axiological belief of the researcher is that transparency about their assumptions, experiences, and objectives is paramount. Constructivist research approaches mandate that researchers should at all times encourage and enable open and truthful relationships with their research participants and intended publication audience.

4.5. Research Design

There has been a resurgence in utilisation methods that focus less on the quantity and frequency of events, and more on the intimate relationships between researchers, participants and the socially constructed phenomena under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 4). Accordingly, the way we view quantitative and qualitative research has also evolved. Creswell (2007) contends that despite the historical perspective, in which quantitative and qualitative act as independent opposites, a more precise view is one that considers the two as representing opposing ends of a spectrum along which a study and its accompanying methodological assumptions reside. At the quantitative end of the spectrum, a research project will commonly employ deductive means of inquiry and strive for objectivity and impartiality above all else. Such thinking comes as the result of ontological and epistemological beliefs that hold reality as being both single and objective, and in which the acquisition of knowledge comes about by detaching the researcher from the subject (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Conversely, qualitative approaches are commonly, but not always, positioned alongside the philosophical beliefs of interpretivism and constructivism, and assume that underpinning the discovery of knowledge is socially constructed realities, reliant on language, lived experiences and shared meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011).

The goal of interpretive and constructivist research is to understand context-specific meanings “ascribed to social or human problems” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4) by creating inductive views of relationships between theory and research (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 402). Therefore, qualitative studies emphasise providing accurate and detailed interpretations of a social phenomenon, which are the product of drawing data from the observed substantive context. To this end, qualitative research relies on real-world scenarios from within the substantive context and often uses multiple methods for data collection (Creswell, 2009). Ideally, for an interpretive study data collection will be conducted through personal contact with the respondents in their natural environment (Creswell, 2007). However, in some circumstances, surveys or other indirect means may be leveraged. These methods tend to differ from their quantitative counterparts as reliance is usually placed on open-ended questions to elicit greater meaning. Regardless of the method used, the ultimate goal of the researcher remains to capture perceptions and experiences through empathetic understanding.

Denzin and Lincoln (2004) articulate this purpose through their definitions of qualitative research:

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. (p. 35)

And: (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011)

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. (p. 3)

Quantitative research, however, relies on hypothesis testing and deductive investigation; qualitative approaches such as grounded theory address the topic of inquiry through inductive hypothesis generating. This process usually begins with a broad open question that does not limit the researcher to investigating any one particular issue. Birks and Mills (2011) succinctly outline this approach through the lens of grounded theory;

A key characteristic of traditional grounded theory research is that the researcher enters the field of study without the narrow research questions or hypotheses common in other research designs. (p. 20)

The focus, after all, is for a greater understanding of the processes supporting phenomena, particularly those constructed through an individual's interpretations and relationships.

4.5.1. Selecting a Strategy of Inquiry

While research design commonly occurs through the lens of either a qualitative or quantitative approach, it is important to recognise that these distinctions do not always present an understanding of why one is more appropriate than the other. Nevertheless, as the purpose of this study is not to test a hypothesis but rather to achieve a greater understanding of social phenomena within the dynamic contexts of contact centres, a qualitative approach was deemed a more appropriate mechanism than a quantitative one.

Informed by the discussion of Kumar (2005), Willis et al. (2007), Creswell (2009) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the researcher conducted a preliminary investigation of established qualitative approaches. With the case study (Yin, 2009) and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approaches both identified as potentially suitable strategies. The case study and Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were considered the most appropriate as they would both facilitate a detailed exploration of phenomena. However, within the context of this research, a case study approach presented some limitations. While individual case studies would elicit a comprehensive understanding of different settings, and no doubt provide a degree of comparative analysis, they would nonetheless constrain data to the case studies in question.

For example, high staff churn in contact centres is a recognised problem. Knowing that staff frequently move from one organisation to another, and across the industry. Case studies would, amongst other factors, exclude discourse related to such things as a respondent's previous working environment, reasons for leaving former employment, and differences in gamification practices between and across sectors. Case studies would expose the study to the risk of capturing data from participants or organisations with constrained, biased or limited perspectives such as those who perhaps view gamification as a novelty and effectiveness as limited.

Further, the range of technologies used in gamification is not limited to just traditional enterprise information systems. With many existing gamification processes are striving to take advantage of new and novel technologies such as social media, mobile devices or cloud-based services to drive user motivation; many of which have rapidly changing landscapes (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In itself, this is problematic from the position of a case study as it is a fundamental requirement to define and bound the scope of the case before the commencement of the investigation, which holds the potential to introduce unnecessary risk to data acquisition by overlooking technological innovations.

After considering the risks and limitations that a case study approach posed, and the potential for kerbing the theoretical and practical relevance of the study and its findings, the researcher discounted this approach in favour of Grounded Theory which was deemed to be a more appropriate methodology for this particular research.

4.5.2. Selecting Grounded Theory

Grounded theory as a methodology is suitable for this research project for several reasons. Firstly it enables the researcher to identify and describe phenomena, their associated characteristics and the social process behind them (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Secondly, the substantive research gap identified is suitable to the inductive theory building approach of grounded theory (Brooks, 1997). Thirdly, grounded theory is now one of the most commonly used qualitative research methods, and is widely considered by academics as both rigorous and credible (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Morse et al., 2009). Additionally, Carson, Gilmore, Perry, and Gronhaug (2001) contend that a grounded theory approach is particularly suitable and applicable for use in a study when it is an interpretive study, where research focuses on complex personal social processes, and when existing theories are limited. Further, Urquhart argues that grounded theory is particularly useful in instances where little or no previous theory exists (Urquhart, 2012, p. 10).

Within the context of this research, it was important to acknowledge gamification is not only as an embryonic academic discipline but has also only recently appeared in a formal capacity in commercial enterprise information systems (Stanculescu et al., 2016). Moreover, when considering the broad objectives of the study and the context of New Zealand contact centres, it was apparent that little to no literature existed to explain the social processes taking place adequately.

Practical issues such as participant recruitment, flexibility and research integrity were also pertinent to the selection of a grounded theory design. A grounded theory approach also facilitates researcher access to a wide array of candidates, which, would, in turn, allow for greater exposure to emerging instances of gamification techniques and, increase the probability of capturing previously undiscovered or unconsidered social phenomena.

By adopting this approach, the researcher would also be able to remove any unnecessary restraints around predefined contexts and research questions. Further, it was the foremost concern of the researcher that the data generated be robust and diverse data. As such it was necessary to retain a degree of flexibility in data capturing techniques and contexts to ensure that a wide net capable of capturing previously unconsidered experiences be provided (Glaser, 1978, p. 44). Current gamification literature has its roots in behavioural

theories such as cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and self-determination theory, yet little has been done to examine the real world application of enterprise gamification systems and their motivational benefits or lack thereof.

4.6. Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, as envisioned by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was established upon the principles of symbolic interactionism as a means of constructing abstract theoretical explanations of social processes (Charmaz, 2014). These explanations emerged through the systematic generation of theories derived through a process of comparative analysis and collection of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At its core, GTM is said to be a method of producing substantive theories explicitly grounded in empirical investigation (Seldén, 2005). Moreover, in its most minimalist form can be considered through the mantra “theory [w]hich emerges from the data” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010, p. 32). Hence the title, ‘grounded theory’.

While most approaches to GTM share a degree of commonality; to determine which GTM approach was appropriate for this study it was pertinent to consider the origins and reasons for divergence into multiple strands and schools of thought. This examination, therefore, commenced with an investigation into the backgrounds and core beliefs of the two founding co-authors and the variances in approaches they took over subsequent years.

4.6.1. Grounded Theory: A Historical Overview

Glaser and Strauss's formal work on GTM began in the 1960s, through a collaborative effort at the University of California (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010, p. 32). During this period the authors confirmed a divergence in their qualitative method from traditional approaches, resulting in the release the first Grounded Theory manual, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

The release of ‘Discovery’ heralded the creation of a qualitative method at a time when sociology research was frequently passed over in favour of prevailing quantitative methods. The aim was to provide researchers with a systematic qualitative method for constructing abstract theoretical explanations of social processes (Charmaz, 2014). Glaser, later

lamented that during this period the dominance of quantitative methods brought with it an elitist bias and the accompanying preconceptions lent themselves to the verification of theory, as opposed to the creation of new (Glaser, 1998). Glaser and Strauss intended to illustrate that their systematic approach to qualitative research was not only scientifically acceptable but, could act as a legitimate alternative when seeking the discovery of new theory.

The two co-founders eventually differed in their approach to the emerging method. In the early 1990s, these differences became more evident with the release of Strauss and Corbin's "Basics of Qualitative Research" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Which introduced a more procedural approach to Grounded Theory (Bryant, 2009; Urquhart, 2001), through the systematic breakdown of the coding process and an insistence that researchers leverage a coding paradigm and supplementary 'conditional matrix'.

Glaser objected to this revised approach to GTM at a fundamental level, and he believed that the deviation from some of the core tenets of GTM undermined the nature of the method he had helped create (Bryant, 2009; Urquhart, 2001). Central to Glaser's complaint was the notion that the Strauss and Corbin variant of GTM introduced an overly rigid and prescriptive approach to the method. Glaser claimed that by 'forcing' codes through a particular paradigm the emergent nature of GTM would be diminished (Glaser, 1992).

What followed this dispute for the wider academic community, however, was a realisation that the authors and their methodologies differed enough in their approaches such that each should now be considered unique and distinct (Morse et al., 2009). In recognition of the two variants, appropriate naming conventions, Glaserian and Straussian, have been adopted (Boyчук Duchscher & Morgan, 2004). Boyчук Duchscher and Morgan (2004, p. 606) suggest that ultimately a theory's degree of groundedness lies in the differing epistemological emphases.

In part, this ongoing evolution of the method is attributable to the versatility of GTM and the constant willingness of researchers to apply it in contexts not initially considered by the founding authors (Stern & Porr, 2010). Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2008, p. 26) contend that the approaches to modern GTM have evolved to a point where they now "exist on a methodological spiral and reflect their epistemological underpinnings". Mills et al. (2008, p.

32) also, suggest that researchers should remain cognisant of their ontological and epistemological positions to select a point on this spiral where ultimately they feel “theoretically comfortable”.

Grounded theory is now one of the most commonly used qualitative research methods (Morse et al., 2009). In part, this success could be attributed to its distinctive ability to generate new theory where non-previously exists (Urquhart, 2012, p. 10). This process of theory generation differs from traditional positivist approaches in that emphasis is placed on theoretical emergence, systematically observed from data within a substantive context. GTM, therefore differs from traditional quantitative methodologies, in that it ultimately does not attempt to test a predefined hypothesis. Albeit this does not preclude a GTM from playing a role in the verification of theory. The strength of the methodology, however, comes from its explicit flexibility and reflexivity to the iterative data collection and analysis process. Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp. 1-2) argue that GTM bridges a gap where traditionally there has been, “An overemphasis in current sociology on the verification of theory, and a resultant de-emphasis on the prior step of discovering what concepts and hypotheses are relevant for the area that one wishes to research”.

Thus, the grounded theory process does not commence with a narrowly defined hypothesis or set of research questions but instead relies on those that are the direct result of the data collection and analysis process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach ensures that the data supports any resultant theory (Urquhart, 2012). Regardless of ontological and epistemological assumptions, proponents of grounded theory also agree that a core set of characteristics will exist in any GTM study. These characteristics consist of but are not exclusive to; theoretical sampling, constant comparison, coding, core category, memoing, and rigour (Hood, 2007; Suddaby, 2006). Suddaby (2006, p. 637) recommends that the importance of these characteristics is not understated, as it is a common mistake for researchers to “methodologically slur” GTM through an overreliance on mechanical techniques such as content analysis or word counts.

GTM, however, distinguishes itself as a standalone method for systematically gathering and analysing data to produce a new theory. To this end, Glaser argues placing lesser focus on the hypothesis testing of preconceived notions to avoid ‘forced categories’. That is not to

say, however, that techniques such as content analysis or word counting cannot form part of a GTM study. Rather, they are a set of tools to assist in the development of the “core category” and the pursuit of ‘theoretical saturation’. Hood (2007) also argues that without adherence to these fundamental characteristics of GTM a study positioned as grounded theory may not stand up to academic scrutiny.

4.6.2. Selecting Constructivist Grounded Theory

The question for any researcher wishing to utilise a grounded theory, is; which approach do I choose? Mills et al. (2008) assist researchers in this decision-making process by emphasising that the variations of grounded theory inhabiting their methodological spiral reflect a researcher’s epistemological underpinning.

While constructivist grounded theory adopts the open-ended, inductive and comparative approach of Glaser and Strauss, it also allows researchers to use the strategy “without endorsing mid-century assumptions of an objective external reality, passive, neutral observers or detached narrow empiricism” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 469). Instead, researchers using a constructivist deviation may freely approach the methodology with the assumption that multiple social realities exist, are co-created and that their involvement is not just that of neutral-passive observers. The implications of this are that a researcher need not strive to erase their preconceptions, but instead endeavour to evaluate how those assumptions shape the resulting analysis (Charmaz, 2014). The constructivist grounded theory also assumes that theories are not discovered, but rather constructed by the researcher and his or her participants. Epistemologically this position strongly aligns itself with that of relativism.

As previously discussed, the researcher in this instance aligns with a constructivist worldview, and, his epistemological beliefs do not align with those of Glaser and Strauss’s original work on GTM. Glaser’s work is congruent with the epistemological position of realism, in which the researcher believes that the data reveals findings (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000). While, Strauss positions his brand of grounded theory within an epistemological viewpoint of contextualism, with findings being the construction of inter-subjective understandings of phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Mills et al. (2008, p. 26) comment that when selecting a branch of GTM though, “the form...followed depends on a clarification of the nature of the relationship between researcher and participant”.

For this reason, this study acknowledges that it is positioned within the constructivist paradigm, and accepts that there does not exist an individual objective reality in which social constructs of the mind are measurable. Instead, when considering the social world, the researcher holds a position consistent with that outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 43) “there exists as many such constructions as there are individuals”. Ultimately the branch of GTM relied on in this study is distinguished from traditional GTM through its epistemological and ontological assumptions, yet retains the core characteristics by building upon the work of the founding author of Constructivist Grounded Theory, Kathy Charmaz.

4.7. Rigour & Validity

While qualitative methods and, in particular, those used within grounded theory are increasingly accepted across a broad array of disciplines, constant criticism is levelled against their appropriateness and scientific adequacy (Beck, 1993). The reason for this is that, unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research does not subscribe to the traditional scientific frameworks reliance on deductive analysis and investigation, but rather relies heavily on inductive processes of emergence and generation. Therefore, there exist natural apprehensions around the deviation from long-held assumptions surrounding traditional scientific approaches which, have been contingent on their ability to demonstrate criteria of rigour and validity (Beck, 1993; Golafshani, 2003; Hammersley, 1991; Seale, 1999; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Traditional research, often falling under rigid positivist paradigms, has been contingent on its ability to demonstrate four core concepts. Kaufmann and Denk (2011) clarify these criteria as:

- Internal validity assumes one objective reality.
- Reliability assumes stability and replicability.
- Objectivity assumes the researcher’s ability to remain independent from the researched subject
- External validity assumes notions of objective generalisability.

The applicability of these criteria within the context of qualitative research, however, is contentious and contestable, with some questioning the appropriateness of universal definitions, particularly for issues about validity and reliability (Stenbacka, 2001; Winter, 2000).

Lincoln and Guba (2000) argue that unlike traditional scientific approaches, qualitative research cannot be judged by the traditional positivist assumptions, as they are fundamentally incommensurable. An argument founded on the juxtaposition of the core principles of the positivist and interpretive paradigms. With the former being the predominant paradigm of inquiry in quantitative studies, and the latter having a qualitative inclination. They argue that within the positivist paradigm, research mandates objectivity, specifically in that the researcher strives to distance themselves from the subject under investigation while believing in a single objective reality. Conversely, interpretivism contends that the notion of researcher-participant separation is ill-conceived or impractical at best and, there exists an obligation to acknowledge the existence and influence of social reliance's and biases intrinsic to both the researcher and research subjects. This position undoubtedly affects the formation of knowledge and goes some way to explaining why interpretivists are more likely to accept the existence of multiple personal realities. These considerations are however an ongoing point of contention amongst academics, the issue often being referred to as the objectivist-subjectivist debate (Gasson, 2004).

Arguably, contention surrounding this issue is further fuelled by the appropriation of quantitative terminology within qualitative research (Morse et al., 2010), wherein the meaning of words such as 'rigour' and 'validity' are often finely nuanced by authors not necessarily subscribing to common etymological definitions. Which is viewed by some within the qualitative field as being problematic and, who argue that the practice of applying quantitative standards to qualitative studies is confounding. While at the same time claiming the adopted terminology fundamentally fails to encapsulate the intricacies of qualitative works and worldviews (Janesick, 2003).

Stenbacka (2001) proposes part of this issue is dependent on the intrinsic incompatibility that exists between the objectives of qualitative and quantitative research, which stems from the very intentions of research itself. She argues that this conflict becomes apparent when considering the accepted definitions of concepts such as validity, where the emphasis is on quantification or "the intended object of measurement is actually measured" (Stenbacka, 2001, p. 551). The goal of qualitative research she argues is never to measure anything but rather to strive for understanding over explanation. Stenbacka (2001) goes on to say that while the quantitative understanding of validity is inappropriate within qualitative research,

a study focusing on understanding a social phenomenon can guarantee its breed of validity by ensuring respondents collaborate of their free will, and care is taken to identify those likely to have theoretical relevance. Reliability, on the other hand, is a notion she refutes within qualitative studies, claiming that it is ultimately the result of demonstrable quality enhancing actions such as thorough process descriptions “enabling conditional intersubjectivity” (Stenbacka, 2001, p. 551).

Guba and Lincoln (1982) offer a degree of congruence when they claim that within the context of qualitative research the concepts of traditional validity, objectivity, external validity and reliability should be placed aside in favour of an alternative, more suitable set of criteria. They position these as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Guba and Lincoln (1982) state that credibility is the criteria by which we view the research as being valuable and believable to the research participants. Its importance comes from the directive of qualitative research to understand phenomena and the belief that the ability of research participants to confirm findings is critical. Moreover, the employment of strategies such as prolonged engagement/observation, triangulation, member checking and peer debriefing reinforce the credibility of a qualitative study.

Transferability is the capacity of the research findings to be transferred to contexts outside of the direct substantive observations. While it is accepted that direct transfers are likely to be impractical, the study should nonetheless provide enough clarification around the research context or core assumptions that there is a consistent degree of transparency in the process. The direct application of these findings to other settings, however, is ultimately left to researchers wishing to leverage them.

Dependability relates to the ability of a researcher to account for the dynamic context that they are observing. It is the obligation of the researcher to illustrate how changes in this respect were made, for what reason, and any other influencing factors. Unlike the quantitative notions of reliability, dependability aims to provide qualitative researchers with a means to account for the stability of the data collected (Rolfe, 2006; Shah & Corley, 2006; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Closely related to this concept is confirmability. While qualitative research tends to acknowledge the absence of a single objective reality, confirmability is the criterion which represents the degree of a study’s findings to be confirmed by a wider

community. In this sense, it demonstrated through the same transparency process as dependability.

While Lincoln and Guba illustrate a broad approach to rigour within qualitative research, some authors contest that grounded theory occupies its own distinct paradigm on the research landscape (Holton, 2008). For this reason, in the seminal grounded theory texts of Glaser and Strauss (1967) Glaser & Strauss, consideration is given to the concepts of rigour through the unique methodological lens of grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) Glaser & Strauss discuss these criteria in the first instance as;

- **Fit** – is the theory appropriate for the substantive context?
- **Understandable** – Will third parties unfamiliar with the substantive context understand it?
- **General** – is the theory applicable broadly in the substantive context?
- **Control** – Are proponents of the theory afforded control over the structure and processes in the substantive context?

These criteria were later revisited and modified by Glaser in his book 'Theoretical Sensitivity', the reason for this was due to further refinement and the addition of the new criterion 'modifiable' (Glaser, 1978, pp. 4-5).

The revised position includes:

- **Fit** – The categories must fit the data and represent the substantive context phenomena
- **Work** – The theory should be able to explain what happened
- **Relevant** – The theory is applicable and relevant to those within the substantive context, and understandable by those outside it.
- **Modifiable** – The theory should be adaptable to future enhancements or developments through further theoretical exploration.

Following their methodological divergence, these concepts were revisited by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Commencing with the three categories of data quality, research process and empirical grounded, the pair move to define ten additional ten "basic criteria" and thirteen "additional criteria" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 144). This rapid expansion is likely related to their

initial uncertainty with respect of how to best tackle the issue of evaluation. As Corbin said, “everyone agrees evaluation is necessary, but there is little consensus about what that evaluation should consist of” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 297). She also questions the appropriateness and suitability of terms such as rigour, validity, truthfulness and goodness. The core position of surmising Strauss & Corbin’s interpretation is emphasising ‘credibility’ as the core indicator and source of demonstrating trustworthiness and believability. Both characteristics which they suggest provide accurate representations of the observed phenomena.

The founding author of the constructivist branch of grounded theory, Kathy Charmaz, presents a third interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). Moving away from the elaborate criteria set out by Strauss and Corbin, but with more specificity than Glaser’s revised iteration, she presents her four criteria:

- **Credibility** – Logic and conceptual grounding. Illustrated through the researchers understanding of the data and research context. Concepts, codes, categories and theory are logically connected with sufficient.
- **Originality** – Representative of the significance of the study. Shown through the theoretical creativity and, the ability of the findings to contribute to our current understanding.
- **Resonance** – Consideration that the theory has meaning for those that it is relevant to. Demonstrated through the tacit understanding of those in the observed environment.
- **Usefulness** – The ability to be practical in application and elucidate further theoretical contributions through additional studies based on the original works.

Evidently, the lack of consensus surrounding rigour acts as a significant challenge for any researcher wishing to use qualitative methods, and specifically those contemplating the use of grounded theory.

In this study, the researcher’s position is consistent with the belief that first and foremost grounded theory should result in theory which is relevant to the substantive context, be practically applicable and allow for future theoretical iteration. The rigour of a grounded theory study should also be integrated throughout the research process, derived as a result

of embedding characteristics which encourage credibility, understandability, trustworthiness and applicability. Demonstrable through the practical application of theoretical sensitivity, and by subscribing to routine yet integral phases of the grounded theory process; encompassing coding, memoing, constant comparison and theoretical sampling. This position is consistent with (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2008, p. 17) who say that good qualitative research is iterative, with all components from design, data collection and analysis routinely undergoing regular checks to ensure theoretical clarity and fit. It is through strict adherence to the fundamental principles of the grounded theory process that the resultant findings and analytical process presented within this study are both rigorous and relevant.

4.8. Ethical Integrity

While rigour and validity represent the obligation of the researcher towards the research process and its intended audience, ethical integrity is the consideration of obligations held towards those directly involved with the conduct of the study. Qualitative research often places the researcher in a position of privilege about sensitive or personal information about their participant's lives, relationships or industry practices. Therefore, researchers are frequently privy to information that has the potential to damage, harm or otherwise impede those they examine. As such, there exists an inherent obligation within the research process to maintain ethical integrity towards anyone who is involved in the research process and equally, any person impacted by its outcomes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

While ethical concerns are not limited to qualitative research, the most suitable approach to ensuring ethical integrity is not as inherently ubiquitous as with other research methodologies. Qualitative studies are often subject to subtle and, unique challenges that may not always be present within different research methodologies (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2004). Thus, ethical considerations should be the result of a holistic evaluation of the common factors that contribute to the research process, alongside the individualised and continuous assessment of the dynamic research context.

Within qualitative studies, reliance is often placed on the accumulation of data through direct contact with participants and, dependence on tools such as intensive interviews, observations and an array of audio-visual materials (Orb et al., 2004). While these tools provide high levels of insight, they are also commonly accompanied by various ethical dilemmas. As is

exemplified in areas which are of a characteristically sensitive nature, such as health or social research, where a greater degree of care and consideration must be given into how a researcher will gain access to informants and, the delicate nature of the topics under discussion (Orb et al., 2004). What ultimately guides the decisions in the face of these predicaments, are the values or core beliefs surrounding what is held to be right or wrong within the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 52). Accordingly, this observation inevitably leads researchers conducted a degree of introspection and, to ask two appropriate questions of themselves “How do I know what is right?” and “What should I do” (Thompson, 2010, p. 1).

In reflecting on these questions, one must consider the arguments surrounding the inclination of research to concern itself foremost with self-serving benefits, while placing participant remunerations in a secondary position (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). To this end, researchers are assumed to take advantage of their ability to write a dissertation, leading to career advancement, publications or result in royalty checks. The benefits for the participants, however, are much less discernible with any potential change to industry coming from research often delayed. Such a disconnect is of particular concern to a study focusing on the contact centre industry, which recognises that high employee churn and intention to turnover, positions participants such that any real benefits of partaking in a study may never reach them. Therefore, to guide the choices within this study surrounding ethical dilemmas and, to ensure that the advantages of this study did not become the sole domain of the researcher or his supervisory team, a utilitarian approach has been assumed.

4.9. Conclusion

This chapter commenced by introducing and discussing the elements that form a researcher’s ontological, epistemological and axiological worldview. Through this discussion, the researcher reveals that his beliefs align with the constructivist paradigm and, as a result, discourse acknowledges that within this study the researcher views the collection of data as a co-construction between researcher and participant. The implications of which, are that the researcher accepts his past experiences, views and opinions hold a position of prominence when co-generating data. To that end, recognising the researchers’ inherent beliefs, their relevance to this study, and the unique research objectives, grounded theory is identified as

an appropriate strategy of inquiry. Discourse addresses the significant historical aspects of grounded theory, which assists in situating the researchers chosen branch of constructivist grounded theory. Rigor and validity within the constructivist paradigm are also discussed, in conjunction with how the researcher ensured ethical integrity throughout the research process.

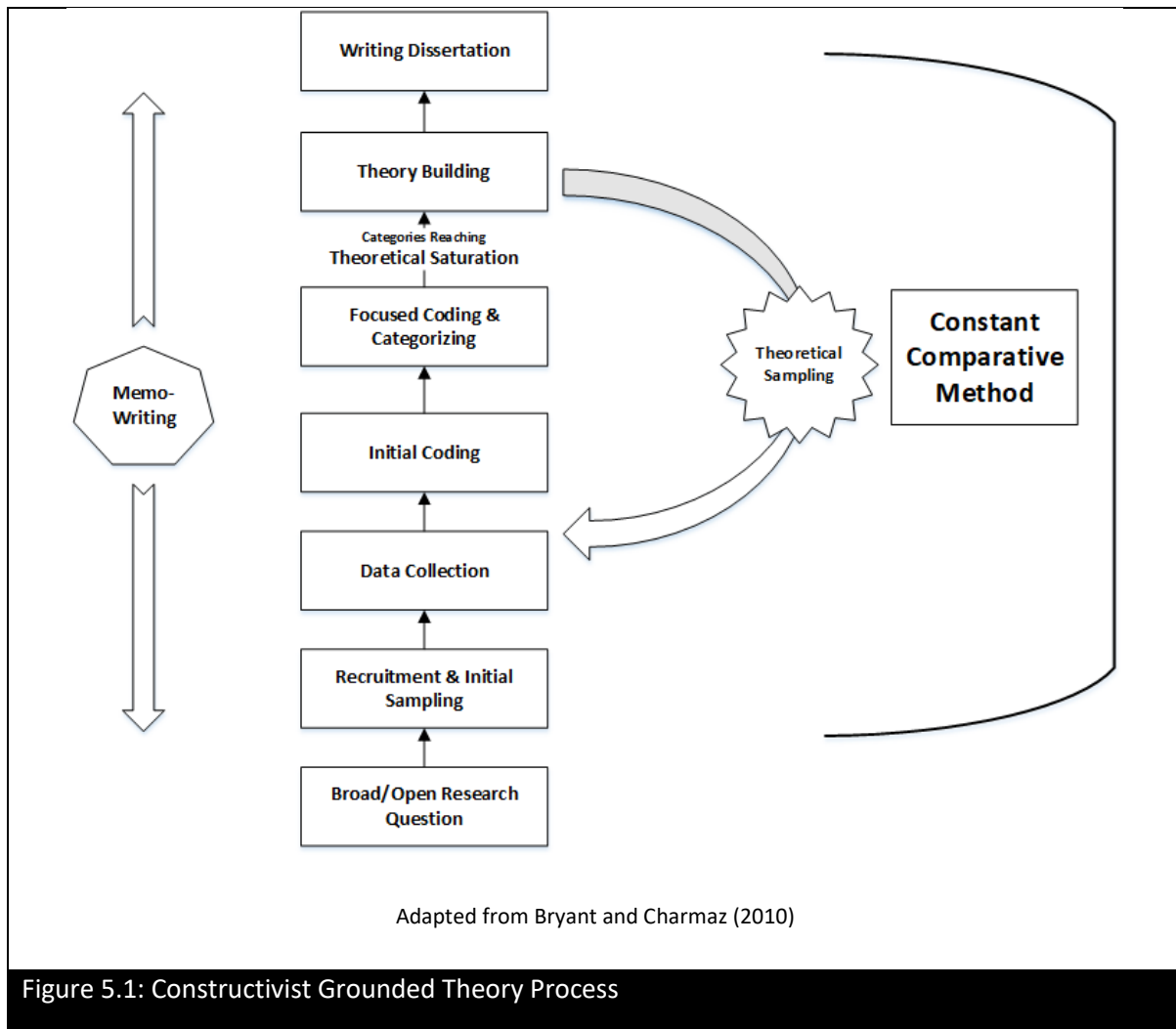
Chapter 5. Data Generation

5.1. The Grounded Theory Process

The following sections outline the constructivist grounded theory approach used in this study. This process relies on numerous coding procedures which, compare similar theoretical incidents against each other to unveil their conceptual meaning. Incidents within grounded theory are segments of transcripts that display behaviours or patterns, while concepts are the underlying abstract meanings supporting them. These associated explanations are aggregated to form categories and sub-categories, which, can be thought of as containers for conceptual characteristics.

Supplementing coding procedures, this uses notarisations or 'theoretical memos', as a means of connecting incidents and concepts to garner insight to aid the development of explanatory theory. Incidents and concepts are analysed through a cyclical process of constant comparison, in which each phase of data collection and coding is evaluated against itself and previous iterations to produce new theoretical insights. The resultant insights assist in directing additional sampling.

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) plays a role in this study, as all interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and stored within the NVivo software package. While relying on CAQDAS to assist with the analysis of data and, for the majority of the coding procedure. The constructivist grounded theory process is rarely straightforward and, in some instances it was necessary for the researcher to adopt more traditional means of analysis through the use of diagrams, whiteboards, pens, paper and other materials on hand. Primarily this was done to capture fleeting moments of serendipitous discovery. Because of this, the process of analysis and data generation is one that offers significant insight into the generation of theory but, also one which is incapable of completely capturing or adequately conveying elements of analysis which took place solely in the researchers own mind. Nonetheless, throughout the following sections, the transferable aspects of the data generation and analysis process are outlined, with these resultant findings discussed later within Chapter 6. Figure 5.1 provides a visual overview of the constructivist grounded theory process adopted for this study.



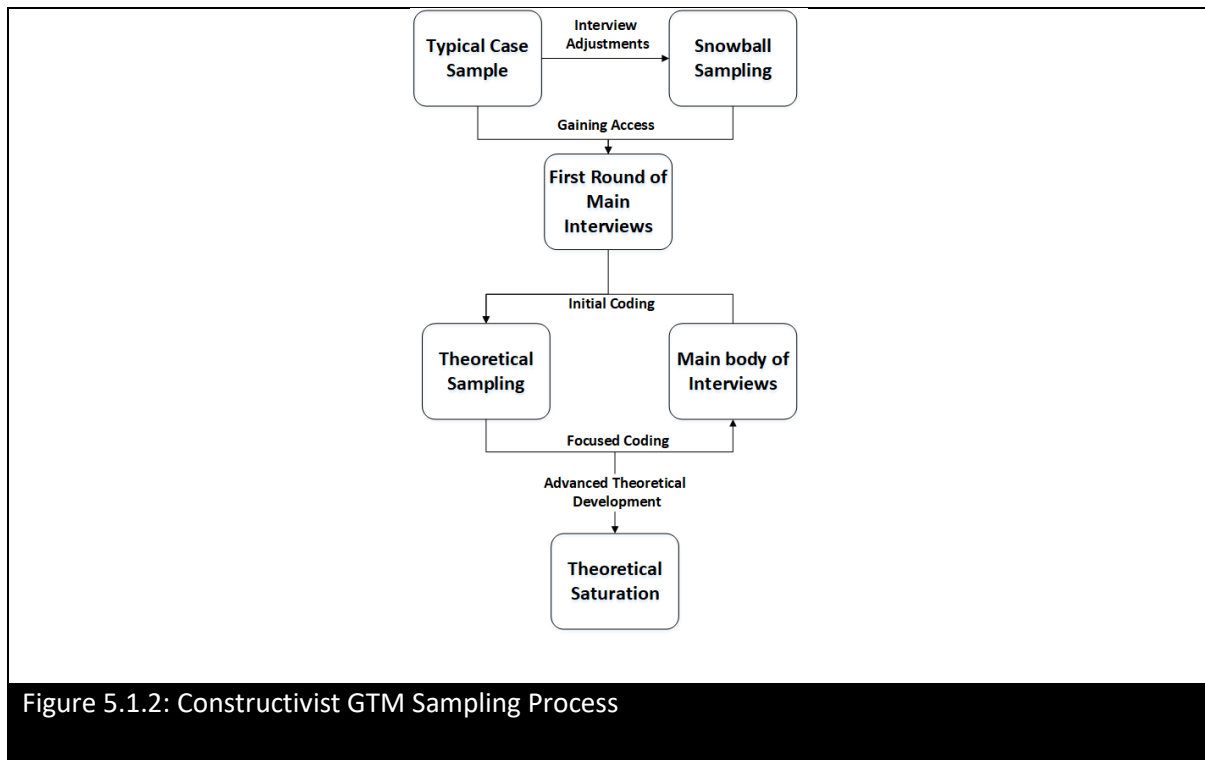
5.2. Sampling Process

The sample from which data is drawn to inform any study undoubtedly has considerable influence on the integrity of any findings and theoretical inferences. An argument especially true in the context of GTM research which seeks to elicit substantive understanding. Moreover, qualitative researchers are behoved to reflect upon the specific sampling techniques leveraged, to ensure that a study is viewed as being credible (Charmaz, 2006).

To achieve the substantive intent of this study and maintain the credibility of research outcomes, the sampling procedure adopted firstly identified individuals working in the contact centre industry, with prior exposure to the application of gamification techniques or were aware of these techniques.

It is not possible at the commencement of grounded theory studies to predetermine the size and extent of the nature of the necessary sample, nor the conceptual and theoretical

direction an investigation will take. Therefore several sampling methods are needed to identify individuals with the appropriate industry exposure. For this study, sequential sampling techniques included purposive sampling, followed by snowball sampling and finally theoretical sampling (Figure 5.1.2).



5.2.1. Initial Purposive & Snowball Sampling

While the majority of sampling in grounded theory studies is the result of theoretical sampling, initial data gathering and recruitment efforts must first take a more purposive approach. Such an approach to sampling is necessary due to the practical limitations of sampling theoretically from codes or categories before sufficient data is available. Charmaz stresses the importance of this point stating that the value of theoretical sampling is ultimately limited before the development of categories as, its primary purpose is to enable the researcher to confirm, clarify and expand on them (Charmaz, 2014).

As such, the initial data gathering within this study was reliant on a typical case purposive sample, followed by the process of snowball sampling. Typical case purposive sampling is a method that focuses on organisations and individuals who are representative of, or, a part of the phenomena under investigation (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

The researcher was able to rely on his experience in the fields of contact centre and gamification to identify preliminary participants. In each instance, the previously discussed cognitive technique of mental bridling (Section 2.2) was also used to account for and mitigate, as much as possible, any undesirable bias.

The rationale supporting the use of typical case purposive was to ensure the generation of data from within New Zealand based contact centres that were credible sources of reliable data on gamification and employee motivation. Typical cases provided a practical solution to the initial phase of data collection, within which the researcher expected that the companies selected would maintain an abundance of knowledge surrounding the phenomena under investigation and, possibly other factors unconsidered or overlooked by the researcher at the commencement of the study.

The recruitment of typical case samples came from large nationwide companies that had seen consistent success within the New Zealand contact centre industry over the past ten years. The decision, in the first instance, to focus on large organisations was driven primarily by two requirements of the study. First being large corporations are perceived to be better equipped deploy gamified services for their employees, second, the experience of the researcher was mainly in large organisations, which made him more confident about his ability to collect data in a familiar environment.

Therefore, within this study, the researcher broadly defined the initial purposive sample with the characteristics outlined in Table 5.2.5.1

Characteristic	Description
Age	All Ages
Gender	All Genders
Employment Status	Fulltime/Part-Time
Role	General Front Line Capacity
Exposure	All Levels

Location	Auckland & Christchurch, New Zealand
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Table 5.1: Purposive Sample Characteristics

The potential impact of a participant's age was an aspect that required some initial deliberation. The concern being that, as gamification had only recently emerged as a formal workplace phenomenon participants who were longstanding or preparing to exit the industry may be unfamiliar or disinterested with its use. This concern was eventually set aside, however, as existing literature concerning gamification indicated that many emerging gamification instances tended to rely on common game design principles and heuristics, such as points, badges and leaderboards that would be easily discernible to virtually all participants. Equally, both the potential age and gender of initial purposive samples was considered in relation to available statistics on traditional digital game media, in which it is believed many gamification techniques are replicated from. Traditional game industry reports signify that the average age of game players is thirty-one years old and that there is almost an equal split between male and female involvement at 52% and 48% respectively (Entertainment Software Association, 2014). Current or recent employment within the contact centre industry was also considered as crucial, as it was deemed essential to capture purposive samples representative of current typical contact centre workers. Further, participants were expected to have direct involvement with Frontline contact centre work in at least general capacity. A general capacity was determined as having sufficient exposure to the physical and emotional demands of taking calls in front-line role, while also being aware of relevant support mechanism or reward schemes. This required the participant to have either fulfilled the role of a frontline agent at some point in time or, been intimately involved with their inner workings through the indirect position of a team leader or manager. However, the researcher accepted that many contact centre roles have a blended or cross-department nature, in which, only part of the role may be frontline centric. Finally, initial participants were selected from within the Auckland and Christchurch regions of New Zealand, as this allowed the researcher to be flexible and provide quick access where participants were under significant time constraints. The purposive samples identified served as the basis for the initial pilot interviews, discussed in detail throughout Section 5.4.1.

Snowball sampling, a means of convenience sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2007) was similarly relied upon to develop a database of potential participants following the pilot interviews. Snowball sampling is a variation of purposive sampling and in this study proved to be extremely advantageous as reliance was placed on sampling convenience to ensure the availability of required data while also allowing for a broad range of data collection. At the conclusion of each pilot interview participants were asked to identify others who met the characteristics of the study. While a focus was on those currently active within the industry, snowball sampling further enabled the capture of those who had recently exited the industry as participants would be familiar with friends or family known to have exited the sector (Kumar, 2005). This approach allowed for the capture of experiences from those who may have left the industry due to disengagement or low motivation while providing a versatile way of capturing unexpected and inter-related experiences.

5.2.2. Theoretical Sampling

Glaser & Strauss define theoretical sampling as (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

The process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. (p. 45)

Its uniqueness comes from the reliance on past data collection and analysis to inform the source of new related data. Theoretical sampling requires the researcher to simultaneously refer to previous codes and analysis to identify gaps in the emergent theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which guides the researcher towards what, where and how to collect the next source of data. This freedom provides researchers with a dynamic and flexible approach to pursuing data collection relevant to poignant theoretical concepts or gaps within the data. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 47), two key questions should be at the forefront when sampling, “What groups or sub-groups does one turn to next in data collection” and “what is the theoretical purpose”. Asking these questions ensures that categories sufficiently direct subsequent data collection (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010).

In practice, however, theoretical sampling must act as a secondary phase of data collection. Due to the inability of yet to be discovered concepts being able to inform preliminary sampling

approaches. As a result, GTM studies initially rely on a purposive sample relevant to the area of study (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 68). Once data collection commences, coding and category development begins, and the cyclical process of constant comparison and theoretical sampling begins. Data collection then continues until relevant codes and categories are sufficiently theoretically saturated.

Therefore, within this study theoretical sampling followed the guidelines of (Glaser, 1978) and took priority once sufficient data was generated to adequately guide further avenues of theoretical insight. Such insights are the culmination of theoretical memos, observations, field notes and secondary data sources which increased the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher towards pertinent theoretical concepts. The relationships that primarily directed the theoretical sampling process, however, were those formed through the coding and analysis process. Emerging codes and categories led the theoretical sampling process by illuminating what areas or sources of data needed further investigation. For example, in instances where analysis identified that social collaboration was a noteworthy concept, research would be directed towards appropriate lines of questioning or the recruitment of participants who had exposure to team-based frontline contact centre work and gamification initiatives. The resulting samples therefore, consisted of twenty-four in-depth interviews conducted in eight New Zealand organisations. With participants compiled from a variety of multifunction roles, including customer service, technical support, team leaders, developers and managers.

The following sections, discuss the generation of these relationships and the underlying principles that directed the adopted coding process.

5.3. The Coding Process

Coding in its most basic form is commonly considered as “a means of categorising data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each piece of the data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 43). The purpose of these categories is to capture social phenomena occurring within a context at a conceptual level (Charmaz, 2006) and subsequently provide a link to inform our understanding of the relationship between data and theory (Charmaz, 2014). These initial thoughts and codes are then later subsumed into higher level concepts as analysis of the data progresses (Jones & Alony, 2011; Stern & Porr, 2010).

Coding is a process that sometimes erroneously perceived as the exclusive domain of GTM. This perception is due to the core role coding takes within grounded theory studies and the reliance placed upon it for theoretical development. Urquhart clarifies this confusion, however, stating that while coding is a fundamental component of the grounded theory process, “not all coding is GTM” (Urquhart, 2012, p. 35). In fact, coding is a technique successfully used in a broad range of qualitative studies across a multitude of disciplines. At the forefront of GTM research, however, is the view that the coding process is one which is performed as a multiple-stage procedure, commencing with variants of initial coding (Glaser, 1992) sometimes referred to as open coding (Charmaz, 2006) followed by focused coding or axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Coding in GTM studies is also not the sole means of analysis; rather it merely constitutes a part of the data interrogation process (Figure 5.3) which allude to further theoretical opportunities (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The individual elements of the data interrogation process are discussed in more detail later in this chapter but, in brief, they are the culmination of methods such as theoretical memos, theoretical sorting, theoretical sampling and constant comparison. The order of these methods, however, often varies between practitioners as their practicality and usefulness of being dictated by the given research paradigm and context (Charmaz, 2006). However, far from a rigid and prescriptive methodology (Charmaz, 2003), GTM caters to this flexibility and as a result acknowledges that the mechanics of coding and analysis will vary from study to study.

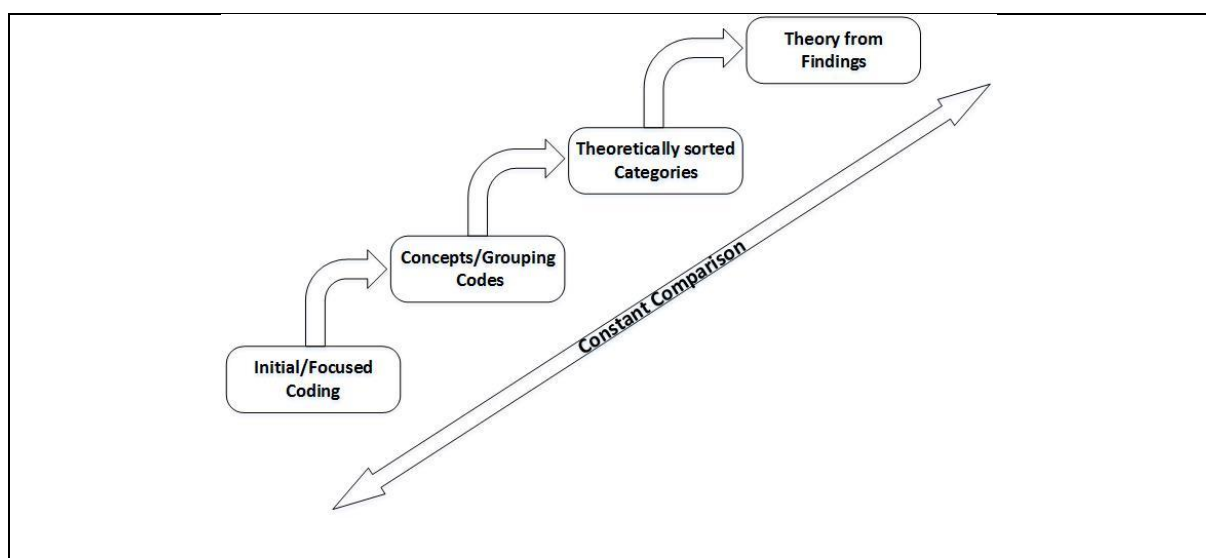


Figure 5.3: Grounded Theory Coding Processes

5.3.1.1. Initial/Open Coding

Ultimately, the goal of coding is to capture what is occurring in a social context, and a common starting point is to rely on low level, bottom-up, open codes in the first instance. Usually, these will appear in shorthand and provide the researcher with a means of reflection in which all meanings of the data can be considered (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Bottom-up codes are particularly useful within the context of GTM as the suggestion for codes comes from the data and not by pre-existing literature or theory. Moreover, is in contrast to top-down coding approaches, in which established concepts or theory are broken down into smaller categories from the outset. Typically, the bottom-up coding process occurs at a line-by-line or word-by-word level which minimises the chances of missing important categories (Holton, 2007; Urquhart, 2012, p. 38). While this process can initially be painstaking and slow, the ease and speed in which codes emerge and develop improve as the researcher becomes more familiar with the data (Glaser, 1978).

At a mechanical level, to generate line-by-line or word-by-word codes most rely upon two techniques: gerunds and *in vivo* codes (Mills & Birks, 2014). Gerunds are codes which consist of verbs used as nouns, normally those that finish with 'ing' and, carry the benefit of not only identifying concepts within the data but also assist with keeping the data focused on the participant's experience (Charmaz, 2014; Mills & Birks, 2014). *In vivo*, a Latin term translating roughly to 'taking place within the living', is a coding method which assigns labels to portions of data while attempting to retaining a greater degree of closeness to the researcher by using the participants' language. *In vivo* codes assist the researcher by being memorable and distinct, while also remaining sufficiently descriptive of an occurring phenomenon.

Glaser outlines several rules of conduct to assist researchers in ensuring the proper use of codes and, offers three reflective questions researchers should ask of the specific data at hand to help guide the coding process. (Glaser, 1978)

These three types of questions keep the analyst theoretically sensitive and transcending when analysing collecting and coding his data. They force him to focus on patterns among

incidents which yield codes, and to rise conceptually above fascinating experiences. (p. 57)

- What is the data a study of?
- What categories does this incident indicate?
- What is actually happening in the data?

Glaser suggests that researchers should utilise the line-by-line approach and suggests that within the context of a GTM study they should always code their material themselves. Glaser makes this final point from a mostly practical perspective, in which he believes researchers will be unable to supply pre-set codes or categories to guide hired help until after the concepts have emerged. This scenario is paradoxical, as the emergence of concepts informs the generation of codes and vice-versa. He indicates that such an approach will also prohibit informing theoretical developments from the primary researchers own expertise and intuition and, in turn, limit the explanatory power or relevance of the study (Glaser, 1978). Within the context of this study, and from the perspective of modern constructivism, the researcher conducted all phases of the coding process, including initial or open coding himself. The reasoning behind this decision was a strong belief that researchers should code their own data as the coding process itself extends interpretation to account for a researcher's own values and tacit knowledge (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006; Mills et al., 2008).

Within this study, the process of open coding commenced at a line-by-line level where the data was broken down and analysed for relevant theoretical incidents and concepts. These concepts then acted as the basis for further analysis, as subsequent coding efforts compared for similarities and differences. As open coding represents the initial phases of data analysis, many of these concepts formed as descriptive categories but, nonetheless provided further refinement and contextual relevance towards the research objective. As following open codes emerged, the researcher collated similar descriptive categories to reduce redundancy and further refine concepts emerging from within the data. Table 5.2 includes examples of how the open codes generation process.

Table 5.2: Example of open codes generated from interviews

Interview excerpt	Open code examples
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<p><i>[Examination process]</i> I knew and I would say I technically can't answer that question for you but what you might like to do is approach it this way or research these types of things. But you are right they are visible there so they could go these people have taken the exam so maybe I could talk to this person. And I am pretty sure that they do that, or at least in situations would approach somebody that they know is in that position already <i>[Social collaboration assists exams]</i>. So they might sneak the system where the first port of call might be their team leader who would say I can't give you that answer and then maybe after that they will go to their peers which is resourcefulness still <i>[Perceived resourcefulness]</i>. [TP10 CSR/TL]</p>	<p><i>Examination process; Social collaboration assists exams; Perceived resourcefulness;</i></p>
<p>Like I don't use the work computers. <i>[Personal device for social media]</i> It is all on my phone. I may have used Facebook on the computers maybe once or twice, and that is generally just to get contact information for people <i>[Infrequent social media use at work]</i>. But I have never really used; I can't really imagine [company name] would be the company that would monitor <i>[Limited concern for company social media monitoring]</i> [TP14 CSR/Tech]</p>	<p><i>Personal device for social media; Infrequent social media use at work; Limited concern for company social media monitoring</i></p>

Each interview was subject to at least six rounds of open coding with pilot interviews being subject to eight. Because with each subsequent interview new codes and concepts generated further theoretical insight into areas previously unconsidered and, thus, necessitated the reassessment of previous interviews. Pilot interviews were subject to additional rounds of open coding as the researcher became familiar with coding practices, emerging theoretical

concepts and areas of interest from observations and within the literature. While conducting open coding the researcher also consistently evaluated how his own experiences and biases influenced the generation of theoretical concepts and, where possible, acknowledged the factors that had led to their creation with theoretical memos.

Over the course of this study over 800 low-level open codes were generated. The high number of initial low-level codes is indicative of their descriptive nature and, also represents the rapid proliferation possible with a line-by-line approach. It is the belief of the researcher, however, that while this approach to coding is time-consuming it accounted for all possibilities emerging from within the data and enabled a greater degree of versatility when going back and forth between evolving higher-level concepts. From these initial findings and, following several rounds of analysis refinement, 103 higher-level concepts were adequately developed to offer further theoretical insight, while being sufficiently grounded in the observed data. Relevance of data to emerging concepts determined the open code selection process, in conjunction with their ability to make a theoretical contribution to the development of higher level categories and inform further theory development through the next phase of the coding process, that being focused coding.

5.3.1.2. Focused Coding

Focused coding, sometimes referred to as selective coding, is the second phase of the coding process. Glaser defines this stage as the period in which a cognitive effort is made to limit codes to those which relate to the emerging core category (Glaser, 1978). Charmaz (2006, p. 280) elaborates that the focused coding phase can only begin after a researcher has identified potential core variables, but this does not preclude the researcher from returning to open coding if emerging concepts require.

Unlike initial or open coding, where a focus is on the deconstruction of data, focused coding aims to link together and integrate existing categories (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 95). Glaser suggests that the ultimate benefit of this process is to act as a way of delimiting the theory to a single core variable (Glaser, 1978, p. 61) which will rationalise the collected data in related categories. By bounding to a single core variable, the process of following data collection is then sped up dramatically (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010, p. 280) allowing the researcher to saturate relevant categories without committing immense amounts of time to unrelated data.

Thus, focused coding is a process of refinement reflective of the constant comparison method. Researchers are required to continuously question the data and identify gaps in the analytical scheme that require further data collection (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 96).

Table 5.3 demonstrates how this coding process took place within this study, commencing with existing open codes, comparing incidents and contrasting against one another through a systematic process of data generation and analysis. Through this process, the researcher was forced to evaluate similarities, discrepancies and underlying uniformity emerging from within the data. This process, however, was not a linear one. It was commonly the case that the researcher would elevate a code into a focused subcategory, only to find that when contrasted against data collected through subsequent interviews, similar concepts would emerge and offered new insight into the previously generated category. In such instances, the elevated subcategories took on these new characteristics and, acted as a milestone, signifying that data should once again be the subject of analysis through the new theoretical lens. In most instances, this reanalysis resulted in the evolution of the focused category and led to new lines of questioning and theoretical insights. This process resulted in the generation of twelve subcategories which, signified the initial stages of primary category refinement and core variable development.

Table 5.3: Example of focused coding process

Example of open codes	Focused Coding Subcategories	Main Category
<i>Need to go above and beyond, communal under-performance, negative perception of worth, skill & social conflict, comfort in role, resource limitations, social influence</i>	Inhibitors	
<i>Physical recognition, social interaction, positive perception of</i>	Enabler	

<i>worth, desire to progress, seeking additional responsibility</i>		
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5.3.2. Constant Comparative Analysis

The constant comparative analysis method, like coding, is another integral and inherent aspect of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and is a primary means of establishing analytic distinctions (Charmaz, 2014). Unlike other methodologies, instead of isolated ‘one-time’ instances of data collection and analysis, grounded theory offers an ongoing, iterative process of data gathering and analysis. This process occurs through an analytical method that commences from the first instance of data collection, and at each subsequent level, comparing and contrasting while identifying similarities, differences and relationships between the data. (Charmaz, 2014). This practice continues throughout the drafting process until the conceptualisation of the final theory and includes the interrogation of all categories, memos and important traits of the data (Hallberg, 2006).

Within this study, the constant comparative analysis commenced alongside open coding, with labels ascribed to data identified as incidents or concepts, and was then further analysed by comparing them against each other. As the analysis continued, the iterative development of codes and themes ultimately shaped decisions surrounding the location of the next source of data. Subsequent data was critiqued and coded once again subjected to the cyclical process of constant comparison, as it was compared and contrasted to that which had been previously gathered and sorted. During this process emerging constructs which contained similar characteristics became aggregated into higher level concepts, subcategories and main categories which aided by a process known as theoretical sorting (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

5.3.3. Theoretical Sensitivity & Memoing

Theoretical sensitivity is the accumulative personal traits, attributes and characteristics of the researcher that inform their unique understanding of a research context. These perceptions provide a deeper level of meaning through the recognition of situational complexity and nuance within the framework of a study. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 46) define theoretical sensitivity as “the researcher’s ability to have theoretical insight into his area of research, combined with an ability to make something of his insights”.

According to Suddaby (2006, p. 638), theoretical sensitivity describes the “tension between the mechanical applications” of grounded theory and the “interpretive insight”. Which, ultimately contributes to a researcher's ability to understand generated data, ascribe meaning to that data and, the “ability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 44). The degree of influence theoretical sensitivity has in a study and the means of accounting for it, however, is yet another area in which the founding authors disagree. Glaser believed that for grounded theory to remain effective, it must, in all aspects, necessitate a level of openness and neutrality. Strauss & Corbin, on the other hand, subscribed to a more formal, routine approach.

Within the context of this study, accomplishing theoretical sensitivity is through the acknowledgement of the researchers pre-understanding surrounding the substantive context of contact centres and gamification process, the constant use of reflective cognitive techniques such as mental bridling, a continuous engagement with gamification related media and the grounded theory tool of theoretical memos.

According to Glaser (1978, p. 83), theoretical memos are “The theorising write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding.” moreover, he states they provide the “bedrock of theory generation” in GTM studies. These theoretical ideas he argues, present the researcher with a creative platform in which concepts can be viewed from various angles, in a non-committal fashion to elucidate greater meaning from within the data.

From a practical perspective theoretical memoing consists of a researcher recording a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages to “exhaust the analyst's momentary ideation” (Glaser, 1978, p. 84) of the data under observation at the time. Within the context of a GTM study, due to the potential for fleeting ideas to be lost or supplanted by other emerging concepts, the recording of memos takes analytical precedence, over any other task an analyst may be conducting at the time (Glaser, 1978, p. 83). Charmaz addresses the significance of memos stating that when writing a memo, researchers should actively stop and analyse emerging codes or thoughts in every way which occurs to them at the time, as this process will allow for the capture of questions or comparisons which ultimately guide the direction of the study (Charmaz, 2014).

Memos, therefore, were used in this study as a dynamic means of capturing data in any form, and in doing so, they carried the added potential of highlighting relevant areas of literature during the later stages of theoretical development (Urquhart, 2012, p. 113). They also represent a critical part of grounded theory as they not only aid comparative analysis but also encompass and guide theoretical development from the inception of a study until its completion, or point of theoretical saturation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Along with the example theoretical memos presented in Chapter 2, the researcher has used memoing techniques to assist with the analysis of data presented throughout Chapter 6. By capturing theoretical concepts that occurred to the researcher during the coding process. For example, the following memo captures early ideations around system exploitation and, particularly those which aligned with the past experiences of the researcher:

***KPIs and Exploits** - Participants have, to date, demonstrated varying degrees of familiarity with the concept of gamification. Their responses have ranged from familiar and interested, through to unfamiliar and ambivalent. While the latter could present a challenge for this study, it is my belief that through such responses I am given a snapshot into contact centre work environments normally hidden from the outside observer. It is also interesting to consider that many of the dissenting opinions align with my own experiences within the contact centre industry. Particularly those around exploiting KPI systems for the gain of extrinsic rewards. During my time in the contact centre industry I was often tempted to partake in such behaviour and, admittedly, had made new agents aware of known exploits with full knowledge that they make take advantage of them.*

From this memo, several codes and categories about KPI systems, extrinsic rewards and social collaboration underwent further calibration. These adjustments assisted in the theoretical building of categories, while also provided new insights into pertinent lines of questioning. In total, this study generated around 200 theoretical memos, some of which are captured with the NVivo software, while others were on scraps of paper, voice dictation and cell phone note applications.

5.3.4. Theoretical Sorting

Theoretical sorting is a component of the later stages of the grounded theory process and one that ultimately guides high-level theoretical development. Theoretical sorting is the organisation of ideation memos and other information at a conceptual level, with the goal of coalescing previously fractured segments of data to create an outline of the emergent theory.

The decisions surrounding this sorting process are directly informed by the researcher's theoretical sensitivity and are immediately responsible for its theoretical completeness. Researchers who do not theoretically sort risk producing linear, one-dimensional and fundamentally weaker theoretical generations (Glaser & Holton, 2004).

Within this study, theoretical sorting forced the researcher to make "discrete discrimination" around the data collected and, formulate a logical explanation of the theory to determine where each piece of data fit naturally. Sorting had the added benefit of enabling the researcher to quickly see areas of pre-conceptualisation or over-conceptualisation and "forces ideation discrimination between categories while relating them, integrating them and preventing their proliferation"(Glaser & Holton, 2004, p. 65).

One natural question, however, was 'when should I begin theoretical sorting'? Glaser and Holton (2004) offered some insight into this issue stating that the process of sorting can ultimately start anywhere and that it will naturally "force its own beginning, middle and end for writing". They emphasise that the most relevant factor is to ensure it does begin. On a more practical level, they recommend a potential starting point could be through the examination of the core variable, or from the perspective of constructivist GTM, variables, and their interrelatedness to surrounding data and associated concept.

As with all other phases of the grounded theory process, theoretical sorting was subject to the cyclical process of constant comparative analysis and theoretical memo generation. As such during the sorting process, the researcher heeded the advice of Glaser and Holton (2004), as they urge researchers not simply to ignore revelations in the data but, rather ensure their integration into the emergent theory. In turn, this process assisted with the overall theoretical integration of concepts and ultimately aided in the development of existing categories (Charmaz, 2006). Within this study, this is demonstrable through the thematic developments produced throughout Chapter 6 & 7 as, without theoretical sorting, these developments would not have been possible.

5.3.5. Theoretical Saturation

Given the cyclical nature of initial coding, constant comparison and theoretical memos, it is predictable that all grounded theory researchers will eventually confront questions about the

appropriateness of sample sizes, and criteria used to determine their studies conclusion (Charmaz, 2014, p. 213). Within grounded theory, a concept known as theoretical saturation addresses such questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical saturation is the point in the analysis when categories are developed entirely at a highly conceptual level (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and where further data collection supplies no new information, sufficiently different to that already captured within a previously defined concept (Goulding, 2002; Locke, 2001).

In practice, however, the explicit point of saturation is often less visible and can be dependent on a variety of factors unique to the research objectives, scope and question (Morse, 2000). Given this, the determination of theoretical saturation is often problematic within the studies utilising methods such as interviews and coding, where reliance is on the serendipitous discovery of relevant theoretical developments. Within most GTM studies then, questions about exact sample size are often unquantifiable and, hence at the outset of a study, positioned as an unknown. Strauss & Corbin do offer some guidance, however, as they posit that grounded theory practitioners should attempt to narrow and refine their research objectives in the early stages of data collection which will subsequently limit the number of interviews required (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Morse (1995, p. 148) elaborate this position stating “The tighter and more restrictive the sample and, the narrower and more clearly delineated the domain, the faster saturation will be achieved”. While the ambiguity surrounding this issue may seem outwardly problematic, it is necessary to remember that GTM requires and, ultimately benefits from allowing researchers to let data, analysis and theoretical development determine the point of saturation rather than other external pressures such as possible time frames and deadlines (Glaser, 1978).

Conversely, it would be remiss not to acknowledge that due to the inherent subjectivity of theoretical saturation, there exists a divide among researchers as to determining when, if at all saturation is achieved (Dey, 1999). In part, this ongoing debate is fuelled by the absence of any one formal mandate or guide directing grounded theory practitioners, but also the reality of a methodology which remains open and reactive to the data, and is obligated to take into consideration the particular context in which it is operating.

Dey argues this subjectivity lends itself to support a notion of impracticality and implausibility for real saturation, claiming that categories are never actually saturated as they 'stop short of coding all of the data' (Dey, 1999, p. 257). He suggests instead that categories are ultimately the product of suggestions from the grounded theorist as opposed to saturated data while contesting that a more appropriate term is theoretical sufficiency.

An alternative proposition by Bryant and Charmaz (2010, p. 213) states that saturation is often forthcoming when contemplation leads towards thoughts such as "I heard the same stories over and over" or "I kept finding the same patterns", yet they contend that saturation is not the same as mere repetition. Holton (2007, p. 281) offers another interpretation "one stops when one no longer needs to continue", and Bowen acknowledges the difficulty researchers face by proclaiming a precise definition of saturation is still "nebulous" (Bowen, 2008, p. 139).

Glaser (2001) offers a degree of insight into this dilemma by and elaborating his position on saturation;

Saturation is not seeing the same pattern over and over again. It is the conceptualisation of comparisons of these incidents which yield different properties of the pattern until no new properties of the pattern emerge. This yields the conceptual density that when integrated into hypotheses make up the body of the generated grounded theory with theoretical completeness. (p. 191)

Despite these definitions, qualitative researchers continue to run the risk of falsely proclaiming saturation without a sufficient degree of rigour to support their findings (Morse, 1995). Appropriate attention should, therefore, focus upon the cohesiveness of samples, sampling techniques and richness of data acquired. Equally, researchers should be aware that failure to satisfactorily demonstrate saturation, will result in restricting their subsequent ability to accurately develop a theory as any supporting concepts will be theoretically impotent.

These contrasting approaches to GTM highlight the paradoxes researchers must ultimately overcome. This study follows strategies such as those outlined by Charmaz which emphasise open and aware relationships with the data. Accepting that irrespective of the approach a researcher takes, a claim of saturation or sufficiency must ultimately be demonstrable

through evidential support (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2008). To this effect, this study followed the traditional protocols of GTM, following the collection of data through theoretical sampling, constant comparison and all other discussed grounded theory techniques to ensure the development of a comprehensive and convincing theory.

5.4. Semi-Structured Interviews

Within grounded theory studies the data collection process encourages versatility. A point exemplified by Glaser in his assertion that within grounded theory studies 'all is data' (Glaser, 1998, p. 8). While subject to some criticism this statement (Bryant, 2003) nonetheless reflects the vast array of approaches grounded theorists may pursue data. Moreover, in the face of such overwhelming flexibility, the predominant question for grounded theorists becomes how to best go about the data collection process. Corbin & Strauss offer some guidance suggesting that the phenomena best determine choices of data gathering methods under inquiry (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Charmaz also asserts that ultimately the credibility of a study is determined by the 'richness' of the data gained (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010, p. 23). With rich data sourced from an array of techniques appropriate to the phenomena and context, serving to elucidate the generation of robust theory.

This purpose of this study is to examine and understand the behaviours and motivational influences of gamified enterprise information systems within the New Zealand contact centre industry. Furthermore, as an emerging motivational technique, it was anticipated that instances of gamification would appear in a wide array of styles and contexts while offering a diversity of motivational stimuli. It was crucial that the physical limitations of this study also be considered, namely the restrictions on time and access. Such a constraint limited the selection of data gathering techniques to those outside of real-time events, hence excluding ethnographic observations. Cognisant of the goals and limitations of the study, and the need to gather rich and meaningful data a strategy of qualitative interviews were deemed most appropriate (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative interviews are frequently used in grounded theory studies (Birks & Mills, 2011; Burgess, 1984; Goulding, 2002), and can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. In this study a structured interview approach was discounted due to the epistemological conflicts, it would present to the researcher. Structured interviews strive to retain control in the hands of the researcher by posing a prescribed set of research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2007) and inherently limit the scope of participant answers; this approach is more aligned with positivist and objectivist positions. As this study reflects that of a constructivist, worldview wherein reality and knowledge creation are co-constructions the obligation

remained to disavow the notion of data discovery and revelation. Rather constructivism holds that data is co-generated through the interactions of the researcher and respondent. It would, therefore, have been negligent to limit, through the use of structured interviews, the ability of the researcher or the respondent to facilitate the co-generation of data.

Unstructured interviews were foregone in favour of a semi-structured approach. This decision came in part from recognising time as an unavoidable constraint, but more so from the acknowledgement and acceptance that a semi-structured approach extended inherent benefits.

Commonly referred to as “intensive interviewing” (Charmaz, 2014), semi-structured interviews are suitable within the context of grounded theory as they provide the researcher with the requisite degree of flexibility to pursue emergent areas of interest, while also ensuring the full exploration of key concepts or topics. In a semi-structured interview, a researcher will often rely on an interview guide consisting of predetermined questions and prompts, however as ideas emerge the researcher is free to pursue them deeper with previously undetermined follow-up questions. The freedom and flexibility of conducting interviews this way ensure that the researcher can efficiently navigate and draw knowledge from the social situation (Burgess, 1984) while also having the opportunity to capitalise on any serendipitous theoretical openings that may be revealed (Smith, 1995).

In this study, the researcher questioned interviewees about the nature of their current contact centre roles, the existing reward systems or incentive systems in place, the nature of their relationship with these systems and their perceived motivational benefits. Interviewees were also questioned about their experiences with traditional video game media, and subsequently if they were aware of any connections or similarities between their workplace reward mechanics and those experienced in traditional entertainment. This approach was selected to elicit a greater understanding of the individuals’ consciousness for game-mechanics, or gamification processes, and how their utilisation within their workplace. A belief remained that exploration into game mechanics employed for purely entertainment purposes, would garner greater insight into a participant’s reasoning for favouring certain types over others, which would in-turn better highlight potential motivational benefits.

5.4.1. Pilot Interviews

Pilot interviews are those that assist the researcher in the initial phases of data collection to determine flaws or limitations with the current interview design (Kvale, 2008). The goal of pilot interviews is to refine the research questions, demonstrate the ability of the researcher to collect data and allow reflexivity in the face of unanticipated or incidental events (Sampson, 2004). Pilot interviews, therefore, act as a methodological testing ground for a study and, can be conducted informally and with small samples (Kim, 2011).

In many instances, qualitative pilot interviews will focus predominantly on participants unknown to the researcher as access and refined recruitment methods may not yet be fully established. In this case, however, the researcher was able to leverage existing industry contacts which offered several immediate benefits. One of which was that proposed pilot interview participants represented current and past employees of the New Zealand contact centre industry, each of whom had several years of experience and who had some familiarity with, and experience of gamification systems. Further, if possible pilot interviews should include participants who have similar interests or experiences to those intended for the study (Turner Iii, 2010). Moreover, the researcher had an existing relationship, built on mutual trust, with the proposed participants. Factors such as these all but eliminated the need for the researcher to build rapport to elicit the generation of meaningful data. As several of the pilot interview participants were still active employees within the New Zealand contact centre industry, they offered an accessibility to other potential interview candidates.

Initially, planning allowed to conduct three pilot interviews; however, a fourth was added later as the opportunity to interview an additional participant became available during the pilot phase. While the grounded theory approach does not have a predetermined number of interviews, this and other opportunities like it presented unique chances to refine the researchers interviewing skills. Doing so would ultimately influence the quality of data collection and overall sample size (Creswell, 2009). All pilot interviews were conducted face to face, with follow-up questions sent at a later date via email. From the conducted pilot interviews, two participants had experience within customer service and technical support roles in a frontline capacity, while the remaining two had a mixture of experiences from various departments and of varying seniority. The chosen participants in the pilot interviews represented a range of skills from within the New Zealand contact centre industry. Each had

expressed a variety of experiences with gamification initiatives, and each had held multiple roles, within his or her respective organisation's contact centres. The four participants had come from contact centres operating in a range of large organisations; from banking, telecommunication services and insurance. Each participant was selected based on the duration in which they had been active in their respective roles, with each exceeding twenty-four months of active contact centre work.

The desire to conduct pilot interviews was driven both by the obvious benefits from a practical standpoint but also to allow the researcher to test many of the selected techniques intended for use throughout the study duration. Specifically, the researcher was aware of his own limited experience with conducting interviews and, that this inexperience held the potential to impact the data collection and analysis process negatively. Pilot interviews, therefore, represented an opportunity to test newly learnt interview techniques and preliminary lines of questioning. Additionally, pilot interviews allowed the researcher to become familiar with the interview process that, in turn, assisted in ensuring the environments maintained a relaxed and natural feel. Care was also taken during the pilot interviews to highlight phrases or terminology that caused participants to pause in uncertainty. The researcher held particular concern for this issue as gamification is a relatively new discipline in commercial environments and academic language is not yet widely understood outside of academia. As a result of the pilot interviews, the researcher was also able to ascertain a level of theoretical sensitivity previously unavailable while, also adjusting to an appropriate standard of openness to elicit complete responses from participants.

It was imperative that while conducting pilot interviews with participants whom the researcher held existing relationships with, to retain formal interview protocols. Such an approach ensured that as interviews progressed, there would be a degree of habituation and formal components of the interview process would become second nature. Each pilot interview lasted for approximately one hour in duration. However, the researcher took advantage of the openness proffered by existing relationships, and discussion usually persisted beyond this timeframe. The pilot interviews were subsequently recorded in a digital format and, later transcribed manually by the researcher. Components of the informal discussions that held particular relevance to the study were condensed into theoretical memos and added to the pool of data, which was later, coded, analysed and used to inform

subsequent changes to interview questions that were reflective of new areas of interest and relevance.

5.4.2. Main Interviews - Gaining Access

Frequently within the framework of a study, the initial contact between a researcher and potential participants will be in the form of a letter, a phone call or at the recommendation of a friend. Regardless of approach, prospective participants are ordinarily requested to commit to a research project they may not fully comprehend. Any approach to potential participants can present some intrinsic complications for researchers and behoves them to consider potential obstacle mitigation strategies to overcome barriers so they may access the field of inquiry.

Gaining access requires the researcher to be adept at building rapport with prospective participants and, to have the ability to place themselves in a position where they can learn from them (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2004). Numerous factors may impede or enhance potential interactions such as the appearance of the researcher and their verbal and nonverbal communication skills (Burgess, 1984). Gummesson (2000) argues that researchers must ultimately contend with three types of access, physical, continued, and mental. Physical relating to securing access to the research participants, continued, related to the ongoing ability of the researcher to maintain that access, and mental denotes the researcher's own ability to understand what is being drawn from the research within its substantive context. At the same time, the researcher is also obligated to continually monitor the influences, reliability and validity of prospective participants (Burgess, 1984) while balancing the relationships and agendas of gatekeepers capable of obstructing further data collection (Gummesson, 2000).

It was crucial at the outset of this study to accept that the quality of given outcomes be correlated to the ability of the researcher to manage and develop participant relationships. The researcher recognised that given the nature of a grounded theory methodology, a degree of sensitivity and reactivity was necessary to identify and build upon the opportunities and theoretical relevance that emerging data may present. Since this study adopted an inductive grounded theory approach, the number of participants required was also dependent on the cyclical process of simultaneously coding, analysis and theoretical generation. This process

necessitates reactivity over a quantity until such point that the development of significant concepts and theoretical saturation is approaching. For this reason, it was necessary that the project identified participants from a broad range of roles within the New Zealand contact centre industry and participants who may have been subject to gamification systems.

5.4.3. Main Interviews – Obstacles & Procedure

Data collection began with a series of pilot interviews with individuals working in the contact centre industry whom the researcher knew. Within these pilot interviews, participants were those identified by the researcher as holding relative positions and or experience and who would be capable of providing sufficient insight to various levels of their respective organisations. As these participants were part of the initial purposive sample and, had an existing relationship with the researcher, initial contact was via a personal telephone call, email or existing social media connections, after which all other approaches followed the standardised approach which is now detailed.

After the identification of potentially suitable organisations or employees, each participant was sent a formal invitation letter to participate (Appendix 4). The letter summarised the purpose of the study and the expected outcomes and achievable objectives. The letter also indicated the level of commitment that would be required by participants and provided a brief outline of the topics of discussion. The letter also specifically addressed was their experience with gamification relevant to their given role and how this broadly influenced their own, or fellow staff member's motivation. The letter referred to the audio recording of interviews and subsequent transcription while alluding to the participant's opportunity to forego this if it would result in significant discomfort. This clause was included to prevent the possible alienation of potential participants to improve agreeable responses to requests for interviews. Moreover, some interviewees might refrain from expressing frank and honest opinions while being recorded. For others, this would not be a cause for concern, and subsequent audio recording ensured an accurate and full account of participant's experiences. Participants were also made aware of the processes adopted to ensure the protection of their anonymity and given the opportunity to request a copy of their transcribed interview validate accuracy. Further, participants were all advised they could request a copy of the findings at the study's conclusion, delivered in a condensed report.

Often when participants declined Invitations, they nevertheless appeared to hold a degree of interest in the topic of gamification with New Zealand contact centres. Ordinarily expressed through comments such as “this area is included in our current mandate” or “we are interested in the outcome of your study surrounding performance management tools and techniques across our industry.” Time and resource constraints, however, were reoccurring justifications for evading involvement. With first-hand experience of having worked within the contact centre industry, the researcher anticipated that some barriers might initially prove difficult to overcome. Moreover, the belief was that this problem might further compound at the commencement of the study given that recruitment was taking place during the months of October – December 2015. A time of year where larger organisations would be operating on minimal staff or dealing with increased workloads leading up to the holiday period. When participants failed to respond, to either the initial letter or subsequent phone calls or voicemail, attempts to make contact ceased. In cases where invitations were accepted, a follow-up phone call was arranged to organise a suitable time and location for the interviews to commence. In total, 24 participants accepted letters of invitation to the study via a combination of email and phone call.

While the initial goal of the recruitment process was to contact all potential participants directly, it became apparent that barriers surrounding time and scheduling would make this impractical. A strategy was devised, which entailed the recruitment of staff at larger organisations through approaches to, and with the assistance of, senior managers. Managers were given instructions around the types of participants desired, based on emerging categories or points of interest and, would attempt to accommodate through their recruitment efforts. Each manager contacted was given verbal or written instructions around concepts of interest that the research was hoping to examine further and, asked to consider these objectives when approaching staff. In each instance short discussions were had between the researcher and managers around the appropriateness of certain roles or potential candidates to ensure that relevant data could be captured.

Several reasons underpinned this decision. Firstly, it is a common industry practice for lower level staff members or “front line” roles to act as a shield for team leaders and other staff members when faced with customers seeking resolution escalation. As a result, processes and procedures are often put in place to obfuscate which staff members operate in any given role.

Consequently this made it difficult for the researcher to identify, from the outside, which employees had the requisite exposure to emerging gamification initiatives. Secondly, as gamification is a developing formal discipline, it was identified early in the initial pilot interviews that each company would use non-standardised methods of gamification deployment. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the development processes, roles and obligations of staff could vary widely between organisations. Finally, by allowing senior staff to assist in identifying those suitable for the study the expectation was that companies would be more open to providing access to other useful resources, such as private rooms for interviews and the gamification systems in question.

As a result, how this recruitment approach could influence the study was carefully considered. Specifically, the potential for managers to call upon only favourable staff members to participate in the study. To mitigate the risk of this occurring, the researcher requested that management forward a departmental wide email summarising the research, asking that people who wanted further information or who wished to participate, respond to the senior staff member directly. A list of respondents would then be forwarded to the author and contacted directly either via phone or email following the standardised procedure. Because of this two-step approach, the confidentiality agreement reflected the limited nature of discretion available, reminding participants that they were under no obligation to participate and could remove themselves from the study at any time. Section 5.4.3 details the implications of this. By adopting this approach, the study also benefitted from an initial perception shift around its legitimacy. The researcher was cognisant that in many instances there was a large age or experience discrepancy between the researcher and participant. While the average age of participants was around 30 years old, several participants were almost double this and, it was possible that in these instances, the age discrepancy alongside the associated perceptions of experience that come with seniority, could act as potential inhibitors to eliciting meaningful data. To overcome this problem, the researcher leveraged the existing rapport between managers and staff, which helped to provide credibility to the study in the early stages and, demonstrate that the researcher had sufficient expertise in the industry to understand their unique circumstances.

While the difficulty of gaining access varied between organisations and individuals, so too, at the outset, did the attitudes and perceptions of the participants, employees and managers.

Three broad categories captured these preconceptions, each of which came with obstacles to overcome.

So as to facilitate the identification of emergent gamification applications, a variety of questions were posed to participants, designed to elicit an understanding of their perception of the use of game-like elements in non-game contexts. These questions varied in their use of terminology, as it was necessary to consider the varying levels of exposure to the discipline of gamification and the traditional game medium. However, all participants were asked a variation of the question “How are games or game-like initiatives used within your work environment?”. The researcher segregated Interview responses into groups based on knowledge and exposure. The first of these groups were the gamification or traditional game enthusiasts. Among this group, there exists a positive perception of games or game-like initiatives, sometimes stemming from their involvement in game development or recreational use. Participants within this group tended to be enthusiastic about participation and required little convincing of the studies worth or positive trade-off. The second group were semi-informed users. These participants could be regarded as having some knowledge about gamification, although often they were often unfamiliar with the terminology and, did not tacitly comprehend that it may have benefits for engagement within their work context. This group would often require a short discussion usually revolving around clarifications of terminology as they were sometimes uncertain if the engagement systems they were involved with would fall under the broad definition of gamification. The final group comprised of those who had little to no knowledge of gamification or engagement systems yet after a brief discussion would contemplate its value in their context. This group consisted of participants who believed they had little previous exposure to game-like initiatives, at least in the capacity of first party interaction. Instead, members of this group often sought to elaborate on elements within their enterprise information system or management processes, which were the source of significant frustration within their immediate or secondary roles.

In some instances, the initial point of contact was cause for a conversation with participants. These conversations would stem principally from initial requests for more information about what gamification is or, clarification around whether their own experiences with reward systems would qualify as sufficiently gamified. In several instances, participants also alluded to their general reluctance towards reward systems, particularly those framed as a game.

These participants often held beliefs, which positioned attempts to motivate through reward schemes as condescending, and, there were concerns that any academic study would fail to capture the actual reality of the industry accurately. In many respects, this belief was unsurprising to the researcher who had spent several years working in the contact centre industry and had been subject to early iterations of gamification systems. Dissent towards reward systems by co-workers often echoed many of the common complaints the researched heard first hand. Nonetheless, this experience also provided a unique opportunity to express empathy towards the participant's situation and, assure them through practical examples that the study was not simply the product of a purely academic nature but, one also based on the researchers own pre-understanding of the industry

5.4.4. Reflection on Access & Obstacles

Upon reflection, the process of gaining access to participants and identifying enterprise information systems was prolonged well beyond the initially planned scope. However, this was necessary to ensure that sufficient variety of organisations and individuals took part and, that the correct procedures be followed to ensure the study supported academic scrutiny. Furthermore, many of the obstacles faced during the recruitment and interviewing process would have been significantly more problematic to overcome if it were not for the prior industry experience and knowledge of gamification systems held by the researcher. The rationale for such thinking is that an existing understanding of industry practices, gamification and game-like initiatives proved to be successful in overcoming numerous objections from potential participants or organisations who did not have an inherent interest in gamification or who were overly cynical about reward systems. These pre-understandings were immensely influential during the recruitment process but also allowed for the co-generation of data, which would otherwise have been unattainable.

5.4.5. Main Semi-Structured Interviews

The main body of interviews followed the process discussed in Section 5.4.1 and Section 5.4.2. Participants received an invitation to take part which detailed the study and anticipated outcomes and goals. This letter asked participants to indicate their willingness to join the study, and if they were agreeable, then each participant was issued with a formal confidentiality form and an information sheet. The participant information sheet (Appendix

4) introduced the researcher, the purpose of the study, a brief description of gamification and game-like initiatives, the reason for requested involvement and expected benefits. Information advised participants that the study would not expose them to any discomfort or risk and that participation was strictly voluntary. The researcher's direct contact details were provided to ensure that in the event of a participant having further questions, or wishing to resign from the study, they could do so at any time. The confidentiality agreement also noted that participants would be afforded limited confidentiality for the study. The limited status was to accurately acknowledge the reality and potential inference that those participants who were directed to this study by others or suggested by managers, could, theoretically, at least be identified as having taken part. To further mitigate the risk of identifying participants, each of the participants and organisations was issued pseudonyms in the form of an alphanumeric code for any data recording. This information was known only to the researcher, and no documentation outside of the initial consent forms contained any personally identifiable information.

The influence of power dynamics, between interviewer and interviewee, within the qualitative interviewing process, was considered. Specifically, the researcher was aware of his position of authority and inherent ability to define and guide the interview situation (Anyan, 2013). Moreover, in many respects, a researcher is an intrusive presence to an interviewee's social setting and has the potential to interfere with their present or future behaviour (Myers & Newman, 2007). In particular, this was a concern in regards to discussions surrounding emerging gamification or reward systems, as there was the potential for the researcher to inadvertently reduce their perceived novelty and distinctiveness (Deterding et al., 2011). Recognising that these factors carried the potential to influence the data generation process appropriate mitigation measures were applied.

Each point of contact with participants was an opportunity to demonstrate not only scientific competence but, also familiarity and empathy for those within the contact centre industry. Whenever possible, the author's past experiences within the industry were highlighted, alongside his gamification research. The objective was to open a channel of communication which was more candid and which would facilitate a degree of frankness and trust between the participants and researcher. Equally, at the time of each interview, appropriate clothing attire was selected to match the level of the participant's employment role, in hopes of

displacing some of the inherent power discrepancies. This strategy proved particularly useful as, in many sectors of the contact centre industry, lower level staff are afforded more freedom with casual attire while conducting their daily roles. Matching, as best possible, these industry norms ensured that any misconstrued perceptions of authority were not responsible for losing the candidness of previous communications. Equally, in instances of management or executive interviews an appropriate suit and tie was worn mirroring the level of professionalism they are familiar with in their daily role.

Following initial introductions, wherever possible any previous correspondence through emails or telephone calls was referred to as a starting point or 'ice-breaker'. The goal was to ensure that the participant felt comfortable and made sure that any sense of empathy previously displayed towards the interviewee was perceived to be genuine. Furthermore, the researcher referenced his industry experience using contact centre or gamification related vignettes. The effect of these stories was it further enabled participants to feel at ease and, develop a deeper level of rapport. This technique was ultimately beneficially not only for its relationship building effectiveness but, also its ability to elicit comparable stories from participants, as they attempted to reciprocate and meet my level of sincerity (Hesse-Biber, 2007). While in many instances these interactions were conducted before the commencement of the formal interview, those deemed theoretically relevant were captured shortly after in theoretical memos and, subsequently coded later.

As noted previously, all the main interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed and, participants provided with the opportunity to confirm their accuracy before analysis commenced. The interview process followed a semi-structured approach, directed by a pre-commencement guide (Creswell, 2007). Within the context of a constructivist grounded theory study, this method carried several benefits. Firstly, asking limited interview questions allows interviewees to communicate their experiences without the burden of trying to appeal to preconceived notions of where the interview should be going (Charmaz, 2014). Secondly, constructivist grounded theory places clear emphasis "into emergent phenomena and defining their properties" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 93). Finally, a semi-structured approach enhanced the interviews ability to move back and forth between data and analysis, a process which is critical to the use of grounded theory as "it enables the researcher to link events that otherwise might seem disparate" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 94).

The process of simultaneous data collection and analysis enabled the study to remain responsive to the given situation and “the emerging worldview of the respondent” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). Equally, it enabled the researcher to identify logical gaps within emerging concepts and tailor future questions to assist in closing them. While early interviews emphasised matters with a broad exploratory nature, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the study to progress in such a way that, as concepts emerged those, which were theoretically relevant, acted as a means of filtering and guiding subsequent rounds of questioning. As a natural result, in later stages of the study questions were more structured and subsequently introduced for their ability to inform existing concepts in the pursuit of theoretical saturation. Twenty-four interviews were conducted in total, resulting in 24.7 hours of digital audio recording. On average, each interview lasted approximately one hour. Each interview was also digitally transcribed and equates to about 520 pages of typed transcripts.

5.4.6. Informed Consent

This study necessitated strict adherence to the ethical principles of AUT. Therefore the process of informed consent was certified using three routine practices. At the outset, each participant was contacted through a preliminary email introducing the nature of the study, the reasons for its conduct and a request for involvement. This email provided the direct contact details of the researcher and his supervisory team. Moreover, informed potential participants that they could reply directly to the email if they had further queries or questions. In some instances, this introductory letter was subsequently forwarded by the initial recipient to relevant industry departments or team leaders and, in these cases; the same offer to inquire further about the study was extended. The second consent process was through direct phone calls with those interested in participating, direct communication with team leaders or managers and, in some instances further email communication. The purpose of which, was to ensure that ample time and the opportunity was provided to understand the nature of the study adequately.

It was also imperative that potential participants were allowed to seek third-party interpretations of the document if they did not feel inherently comfortable with their understanding. This process is not dissimilar to those found in New Zealand employment

statutes, in which it has long held that some workers may need assistance interpreting any form of binding documentation. As such, participants were each provided with digital copies of the consent form and information sheet before any meeting between themselves and the researcher. Similarly, those opting for interviews over the telephone or voice over internet (VOIP) were before interview a given digital consent forms. In these instances, forms were subsequently completed by the participant, returned to the researcher and confirmed as complete before the commencement of the interview. In all cases, participants were each given a chance to ask any further questions about the study before the beginning of interviews. Moreover, informed that they could discontinue participation at any time, however; of those that completed the interview phase of the study, none requested a withdrawal.

5.4.7. Privacy & Anonymity

When contributing to research that encroaches on sensitive topics through the collection of personal details or delicate industry information, it is not unreasonable for participants to expect the protection of their identities. Further, in such instances, it is accepted that researchers are under an ethical obligation to ensure participant confidence and anonymity. Baez (2002, pp. 35-36) refers to this duty as the “convention of confidentiality”.

The convention of confidentiality proposes that within the research process, confidentiality is concerned with the protection of private information and, is a general obligation to limit the potential for harm for those involved with a study. This obligation is one, which acknowledges that participants may have traits, behaviours, backgrounds or political beliefs that hold the perspective for harm if unveiled in unfavourable circumstances. The process of offering confidentiality then is one that is concerned predominantly with the mitigation of potentially damaging actions. For this reason, when addressing confidentiality researchers will typically issue a consent form that outlines the characteristics and procedures to which the study will adhere. Failure to complete this form will ordinarily preclude a participant's involvement in the study. In many instances, this involves accepting the reality that within certain contexts a researcher may not be able to collect data anonymously and the research participant must agree to a degree of risk.

Kaiser (2009, p. 5) argues that alongside the consent form, researchers must also proactively endeavour to generate “clean” data sets. Clean data they define as “data that does not contain information that identifies respondents, such as a name or address”. This definition is congruent with that found in the New Zealand Privacy Act (1993), which outlines and expands on personal information as any information about an identifiable individual that is reasonably ascertainable from the information or opinion. Within qualitative studies, personal information and the way it presents itself can vary widely (Kaiser, 2009), demonstrable through the subtle and often unconscious inclusion of nicknames, phone numbers, unique events or family names. Further, the solution to account for such information is not always as easy as ascribing a pseudonym. In instances where respondents offer unique life events or stories, it may be reasonably inferable who the source of the data is, regardless of any masking name conventions. In industry sectors that are small or, value strong interpersonal business relationships, this is particularly relevant. In such instances, the researcher is under an obligation to obfuscate the information to protect the identity of the individual, while at the same time safeguarding the integrity and rigour of the generated data (Urquhart, 2012).

Within this study, every effort has been made to meet these obligations. At no point during this study has the collection and storage of data occurred without the express consent of the individual. Moreover, throughout this study, all information is presented in such a manner that it is not possible to reasonably ascertain any personally identifiable association. Also, at no point during this study have the identities of participants been exposed to anyone other than the researcher and his supervisory team, without prior written consent. However, as this study utilised snowball sampling, the supplied consent and confidentiality forms accurately represented the limited nature of the possible concealment. Moreover, is of relevance as; the process of snowball sampling involves a portion of first participants informing the researcher of who they believe may be suitable for the study. While this referral is not in itself confirmation of the participant’s involvement, it still nonetheless provides a basis for reasonable assumptions about individual elements or participant accounts of the data. Particularly in respect to participants recruited through the recommendation of immediate managers or team leaders. As such, all involved with this study were offered from the outset ‘limited confidentiality’ reflective of this reality.

5.5. Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

Qualitative research is known for creating vast amounts of unstructured data through interviews, transcripts, field notes and theoretical memos (Cope, 2014). As such, researchers sometimes need to sort through voluminous data, which is often a labour intensive and time-consuming undertaking. Therefore, since the early 1990s (Hoover & Koerber, 2011) many qualitative studies have relied on the use of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS).

CAQDAS are software packages for modern computers, which provide a series of tools, aimed at assisting with the data collection and analysis phases of a study. While the robustness of instruments offered between CAQDAS can vary widely, within those often used for qualitative research, it is common to find features such as text, image, audio and video capturing utilities. Supplementing these tools are functions that allow for the generation and organisation of theoretical codes or relationships within the observed data. Researchers can then link their findings directly to the data, through built-in graphs or models and subsequently share the results among multiple researchers or locations with relative ease. CAQDAS is yet another way for qualitative researchers to provide a comprehensive 'audit trail' for their analysis and findings (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004). The primary advantages of these tools, though lie in their ability to free the researcher from the intensive process of manual organisation, to focus more liberally on the analytical techniques and theoretical meaning of gathered data (Cope, 2014), resulting in greater theoretical development or insights.

While on the surface CAQDAS delivers nothing but benefits to the researcher, there have nonetheless, been several criticisms and calls for caution when considering its use. One major criticism is that the within qualitative research CAQDAS can limit the diversity of approaches used to interpret data and this can limit the ways coding techniques are utilised (Dainty, Bagihole, Neale, & Stephenson, 1997). This argument hinges on the practical limitations of mass-produced software packages that are designed to cater to the generalisable needs of researchers and is an acknowledgement for the unique or emergent approaches some researchers may rely on during their coding process. Further, some argue that novice researchers may be overwhelmed with CAQDAS programs they are not familiar with, as the time to become proficient with them will depend equally on the software's suitability for the

research design and, the users own technical competency. Blismas and Dainty (2003, p. 461) also, highlight the danger that CAQDAS present through their proficiency in managing large data sets. They argue that researchers may tend to increase the data volume, while at the same time compromising the depth of analysis. They present yet another acute danger, in that CAQDAS allows for limitless coding processes and may eventuate in the “over code” of data. At the same time, by increasing the amount of superfluous data researchers risk nullifying the time-saving benefits of using CAQDAS in the first place. Furthermore, novices to the qualitative research process may unintentionally over-rely on CAQDAS instead of intuition or subjective judgement.

5.5.1. CAQDAS Selection

The selection of CAQDAS within this study took into consideration the potential benefits and consequences of its use, alongside the practical needs and experience level of the researcher. After a brief examination of various leading software packages, the researcher elected that this study would rely on a CAQDAS solution called NVivo from QSR International Pty Ltd. NVivo is a well-established name within the CAQDAS industry and, has existed under various titles since the early 1980’s. Initially, it operated under an acronym of the name Non-Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising (NUD*IST), NVivo was developed by Tom Richards to support qualitative researchers in their efforts to deal with amounts of unstructured data while investigating social phenomena. Since its inception, NVivo has become regarded as one of the most advanced data-handling software solutions available to qualitative researchers (Blismas & Dainty, 2003) and as a result currently, resides on its 11th iteration.

Several factors ultimately contributed to the decision to use CAQDAS but, none more so than the practical needs of the researcher. Early in the research planning phase, the determination was that the study would rely primarily on the use of semi-structured interview data and, that this data would come in the form of audio recordings and transcriptions. It was also requisite that this data would need to be readily available to facilitate the cyclical processes of constant comparison, coding and theoretical development and would likely, be voluminous. NVivo offered several advantages to the researcher in this regard, as it provided specific tools for data categorisation and management, alongside usability features such as built-in search,

colour coding and hyperlinking. NVivo also allows for the direct integration of audio files and text documents, allowing the researcher to store all the relevant data in a centralised location for easy, immediate access.

The researcher had also received limited training with the previous version of the NVivo software through university driven workshops, and utilised the software, albeit in a small capacity, for numerous short-term projects in the past. While these experiences lay the foundation for his understanding, it is fair to say that at the outset of this study the researcher was still a novice concerning the more complex elements of the NVivo software suite. For this reason, when required, assistance was actively sought from senior lecturers, supervisors and others experienced with its use. The security benefits were another key determinant for the selection of NVivo 11, as each NVivo database file could be assigned a unique password that would render the datasets inaccessible to those not authorised for their use. Less important, but still contributory was the availability of a perpetually renewed postgraduate license for the NVivo software, removing a significant financial burden for the researcher.

5.5.2. NVivo in Grounded Theory

The practical requirements of managing data and ensuring its security are paramount to the development of rigorous qualitative research, however; within the context of grounded theory studies, the benefits of using CAQDAS extend further than simple file sorting and data safekeeping.

The core tenants of the grounded theory stipulate that theoretical insight should emerge or co-generate from within the data. This process requires researchers to approach data at the outset at a low and descriptive level of coding and, eventually shift or reorganise categories towards higher theoretical conception. By way of achieving the necessary standard of conceptualisation, the data must be viewed holistically and requires a process of constant revision. A challenge for grounded theory researchers then is the question of how to best view a large body of data while also facilitating the discovery or generation of emerging relationships. CAQDAS and specifically NVivo, offer several solutions to these problems by allowing data to be collected, stored and presented in a multitude of ways that are conducive to theoretical development. For example, if required it is possible to position data in digestible charts, sub-categories, transcripts or other dynamic ways to elicit fresh insight on

relationships. When formed in NVivo, these relationships and theoretical developments then exist in formats that are readily producible for the research and can be presented throughout the study to further demonstrate rigour and validity (Bringer et al., 2004).

Further to the benefits of NVivo that have been thus far detailed, NVivo also allows for the creation of electronic memos which provide grounded theory researchers with an easily assessable digital log of their thoughts and ideations. Theoretical memos are a core component of the grounded theory process, and it is through these ideations that emerging categories traverse to higher levels of conception. NVivo facilitates this process by enabling researchers to not only capture thoughts but also to link them directly to existing categories or memos within their NVivo project file. Thus, offering a more versatile approach to the iterative process of memoing, refinement and theoretical development.

Within this study, NVivo was a mechanism through which to store memos. However, the researcher initially encountered several limitations when directly inputting them into the software. Primarily, NVivo offers limited word processing capabilities and assistance tools. The most notable of which being limited grammatical checks, formatting utilities and functions such as spell checking. For this reason, the researcher moved away from directly inputting memos into the NVivo software, and instead relied on applications such as Microsoft Word when drafting up ideas. Once formed, the memos were then copied and pasted into a standard NVivo memo file. While this process was cumbersome, it provided a previously unavailable level of accuracy to the text files when entered into the NVivo software, ensuring that any future coding efforts would remain accurate. While the importance of this step may seem limited in significance, it is necessary to remember that memos within the grounded theory process are designed to capture thoughts that may be inherently fleeting or present themselves at times that are not convenient to the researcher. Moreover, due to the serendipitous nature of discovery within the grounded theory process, this is mostly unavoidable. For this reason, memos are often captured in draft formats and, elaborated on at a more appropriate moment. If left unattended in these raw formats, however, over time it is likely that they would introduce significant overhead to the coding process that could otherwise be avoidable. These shortcomings aside, NVivo enabled the researcher to store relevant memos in a centralised location and in a logical format that allowed for easy accessibility.

Ultimately, though, the effectiveness of CAQDAS is contingent on the computer literacy of the researcher and, their ability to select and utilise functions of the software application that apply to their research needs (Mangabeira, Lee, & Fielding, 2004).

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter outlines the data generation process following the tenets of constructivist grounded theory. Discussion commenced with an introduction to the grounded theory process, depicting the methodological phases that used throughout. The chapter continues by illustrating the sampling process and, elaborating on the need for multiple sampling techniques at the outset of this study. The sampling criteria are also considered, alongside future recruitment efforts. Discourse addresses the analytical procedures produced through coding processes. Sample codes are presented to demonstrate how transcripts move towards higher levels of theoretical abstraction. The subsequent discussion then focuses on the sampling process, namely the use of semi-structured interviews and how the researcher overcame obstacles such as access, consent and privacy. Finally, the chapter details the influence of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software and the role it has played throughout this study.

Chapter 6. Findings

This chapter presents the foundations of an emergent substantive theory on the use of gamification in contact centres. These findings presented through the grounded theory process of semi-structured interviews, open codes, subcategories and main categories, present the data in a format that enables the reader to discern the inductive thinking process undertaken by the researcher.

The chapter commences with a discussion of the innate subjectivity of gamification, and details how the researcher elected to navigate its use. To this end, the analysis identifies the constituents of gamification within the New Zealand contact centre industry based on existing definitions and the findings of this study. The organisation of these findings are such that they illuminate the sequential scaffolding process utilised in answering the research questions:

- RQ1: How is gamification used in New Zealand Contact Centres?
- RQ2: What are the motivational influences of gamification in New Zealand contact centres?
- RQ3: How do frontline contact centre employees perceive gamification?

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study accepts the position of Deterding et al. (2011) and captured and investigated all relevant game-like elements identified by participants, regardless of their digital or analogue nature. To ensure the investigation remained manageable, however, the study relied on the guidelines provided by Deterding et al. (2011) towards game elements, and Huotari and Hamari (2012)'s arguments on the concepts of gamefulness. The chapter describes how this led to the formation of a category titled 'gameful KPI systems'. The next stage of the analysis examined the conditions of contact centre work and gamification use in such environments. Four main categories emerge: career mastery, superimposed benefits, fundamental teamplay and obstructed gamefulness. Each section presents open codes emerging from the data alongside their composite subcategories and main categories. As discussed in Chapter 5, the structure of categories is the result of elevating low-level codes through higher levels of abstraction, while simultaneously grouping conceptually relevant notions.

6.1. Identifying Game-like Initiatives

The implementation of gamification initiatives within the contact centre industry has to date been the subject of minimal empirical investigation. Therefore there was a requirement for this study to adopt an open and interpretive approach to understand gamification applications. By way of achieving this requirement, each interview addressed the beliefs of employees, managers, team leaders and key stakeholders around the attributes of gamification, and the facets of their roles they each thought contained game-like or 'gameful' inducing scenarios. Questioning of this type enabled the researcher to assess each participant's familiarity with gamification terminology and allowed the researcher to investigate the use of mechanics, techniques and design strategies that bore a resemblance to games, irrespective of an individual participant's exposure to gamification. As referenced by Deterding et al. (2011), it is important to consider gamification from this angle as elements which are 'characteristic' to games are subject to personal strict or liberal interpretation.

As previously discussed in Chapter 5, participant segregation allowed for three categories: enthusiasts, semi-informed and unfamiliar. Some participant responses illustrated a lack of understanding of gamification terminology and the requirements of digital or analogue game-like elements. In many instances, they were unsure whether to highlight specific techniques or not, because of an unfamiliarity with what gamification entailed. This is similar to other studies on gamification and appears to be related to the existence of a variety of definitions of gamification.

6.1.1 What is a Game to You?

In recognition of the varying levels of participant understanding, immediately following the pilot interviews the researcher elected to adjust the lines of questioning around gamification. Where early interviews would commence with discussions focused on gamification concepts, using the established academic terminology, later discussions were approached in a more amicable fashion reflective of the multiple levels of understanding from participants. Instead of asking participants to identify gamification, participants were instead asked variations of the question "what is a game to you?". This need arose from participants unfamiliarity with the academic boundaries that constitute gamification and, that for most within the industry the terminology was used infrequently at best.

The purpose of this question was also to enable participants to frame within their own social constructs what they believed a game to be. Discussions were sometimes broad and required the researcher to explicitly bring the conversation back in-line with the purpose of the study but, by enabling this freedom the study was able to acknowledge the heuristics participants used to navigate the subjectivity of identifying game concepts. This in-turn would allow participants to illicit, with minimal prompting, what they identified as sufficiently game-like or gameful.

I play a lot of games when I have the time to, like PlayStation or just, I actually like making a game out of anything like a lot of things, I have a lot of apps on my phone just random games I got into one called Clash of Clans when I first started at [company name].

This decision was reaffirmed by emerging theoretical insights and memos capturing the researchers' points of questioning that seemed to go astray when using the term 'gamification'.

Participants seem reluctant to discuss the concept of gamification initially. Most appear to be hesitant around the use of the term "gamification" with only a few so far identifying it akin to how it is viewed in a wider context. Despite this, when discussion turns to the concept of games participants often become enthusiastic and very open with their comments and criticisms around work practices. Memo-[17/08/2015]

By approaching the subject through the question of "what is a game to you", participants were also able to centre the discussion around scenarios which they viewed as producing states of gamefulness. This is because discussions would naturally emanate around games that they engaged with in their own free time, and self reportedly 'played' with.

The researcher believes that by allowing participants to reconcile game-like initiatives and concepts of gamefulness of their own volition, they would be better positioned to then extract game-like components which occurred within their work context. The caveat to this approach however, was that there was a constant need to be mindful that participants may simply identify aspects of their work life which they perceived as 'full games proper' or 'incidental' and 'quasi-gamification. To mitigate this, discussions were gradually guided

through subsequent bridging questions such as “Have games or game-like initiatives been used in your workplace, if so how?”. When participants identified aspects of their role which constituted traditional games, an emphasis was placed on the term game-like by repeating the latter half of the question. What became evident through this process was that by gradually moving away from the term gamification at the outset and, towards game and game-like, participants became well equipped to begin isolating the mechanics which intersected with their daily roles. This approach did however, require significant effort on the part of the researcher to disseminate ‘in the moment’ whether the participant was discussing traditional games or gamification. In this regard, the semi-structured interview research design played a significant role in ensuring the researcher had the requisite flexibility to navigate discussions which could quickly go off topic, as too did the researchers own theoretical sensitivity around traditional game mechanics.

Despite this, discussions following the identification of game-like mechanics naturally gravitate towards the intent behind their use. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to follow up conversations, expanding on questions such as “how or why do you believe they are used?”. Employees would then reproduce their beliefs around explicit design intent.

We have something called the [exam] it is like an exam that you can take to join the connect team for, billing and, for being an email agent. The way they have it set up now it looks like a game, where if you complete one, your name goes onto this house kind of thing. But aside from that I guess with KPIs as well because you get rewards for it every month and then you can track how well you’re progressing.

I know there is a campaign matchup where they have virtual dollars. This is generally done during Christmas time and, they have an auction so they can go in and bet on prizes. They hit the KPI; they own [virtual] currency and, they bid. [TP13 TL/CSR]

These and similar findings were later compared and contrasted against responses from developers and managers responsible for initiative deployments. This was done in order to triangulate and identify, from the perspective of organisations, the game-like initiatives expressly developed.

There will be maybe questions probably five questions and if you get the answer right you might win [virtual] money as well from that team leader. Usually a team leader will be running it and managing it. The recent one was a list of pieces of information to figure out who the question was about, the goal was to learn about people in the team. [TP 16 CSR/Dev]

The goal was to gain a clear understanding of design intent from both the perspective of employees and organisations, so that identified game-like elements could be considered as sufficiently gamified for further investigation. As succinctly argued by Deterding et al. (2011, p.14)

It is not possible to determine whether a given empirical system is a gamified application or a game without taking recourse to either the designers' intentions or the user experiences and enactments.

6.1.2 Dual System Gamification

Following this line of questioning, the study found that deployed metric systems did not inherently place an explicit focus on the creation of gameful or game-like experiences and, instead an effort was made by managers, team leaders and developers to enhance existing tools with added layers of rewards or game-like structure to meet this end. The distribution of such rewards relied on the use of uniform KPI systems, alongside software developed specifically with gamification in mind. For instance, while contact centres leveraged standardized KPI systems to generate reports of employee performance, the accrual of virtual currencies, vouchers and other rewards were always through solutions developed "in-house". The use of these reports and their role in game-like initiatives is shown per contact centre in Appendix 10.

When questioned about the system nature, managers and developers suggested that this approach was adopted as a pragmatic middle ground.

Ideally, we want to use what we already have. If there's a cost associated with it, we have to figure out how we're going to pay for it, who's going to ask for that money and what we might miss out if we spend it [TP 15 TL]

It would allow the organisations to avoid the significant costs of KPI system redeployment but, also alleviated the difficulties around showing gamification as a justifiable business case, given that few examples of success currently exist within the New Zealand contact centre industry. Reflective of this, one developer suggests that a request for full blown gamification integration into a unified system would be viewed by upper management as “impractical at best” [TP16 Dev/Tech].

The researcher acknowledges that these findings position contact centre gamification within this study as the result of dual systems and, not the explicit end to end deployment of a unified gamification solution. The significance of this is that many of the resulting game-like mechanics possibly appear as iterations of motivational strategies constructed by developers or managers, which, may have only taken KPI reporting tools into consideration after the fact. Equally, while developers and managers were consulted explicitly around the intent behind such game-like mechanics, the lack of unambiguous ownership behind each initiative makes it impossible to discern if the game-like mechanics were the express ideation of the manager or designer spoken to or, whether they themselves had inherited and iterated on previous designs. This significantly separates this study from existing endeavours into KPI based gamification, as many of the commercial applications to date have largely consisted of singular KPI and Gamification integration (Paharia, 2013). It also introduces again the practical reality that within industry, game-like initiatives may have commenced as something other than gamification at the outset and, ‘incidentally’ became gamification in the eyes of developers and managers overtime.

6.1.3 Influence of Perception

This discovery presented a new line of questioning for the researcher, with the focus moving away from individual elements, and towards the system driving their use. KPIs are analytical work systems used to monitor and manage employee performance and are used in conjunction a variety of reward schemes to direct employee behaviour (Parmenter, 2015). KPIs have long existed in the contact centre industry to operationalise business goals, being identified as a potential key component for the long-term success of gamification (Conley & Donaldson, 2015). KPIs are considered part of the broader set of metrics or ‘gamification analytics’ (Heilbrunn & Schill, 2014) in standardised gamification platforms. This perspective

helps understand the use of stand-alone gamification systems, but not for situations that see gamification integrated into pre-existing work management systems.

The relationship between reward initiatives and KPI metrics is the underlying driver behind management efforts to improve employee performance and motivation. The discovery of repurposed KPI systems is significant, as through this lens the similarities between metric-based performance systems and traditional game structures became evident. For instance, within traditional games, the criteria of performance adherence are often framed as the mechanical components of levels or challenges in which reward distribution is to players meeting goals. Within contact centre KPI systems, however, these objectives form targets or milestones to meet and guide reward distribution. The difference between the two though, is that one exists within the scope what employees perceive as the context of a game scenario while the other happens under the pretence of work conditions.

While such initiatives by themselves may hold an outward appearance of gamification, the data illustrates a secondary component that requires equal consideration. Being the ability of agents to manage their cognitive and physical resources to meet adherence levels guiding the reward initiative. Agents suggest that when they are unable to cope with KPI milestones or other obligations concerning their core role, their perception of reward initiatives shifts.

This point became apparent and is evidenced through the questioning of agents about aspects of their role they found the most challenging. Some would cite repetitive processes or difficult customer interactions within KPI based environments as being a challenge capable of shifting perceptions:

As a CSR on the floor being resilient in a situation where things are very, very, regulated. Essentially as a CSR, you are doing the same sort of thing. You do have the options to do other things if you are a good agent through up-skilling and such like. But, essentially taking calls that can wear you down, so that definitely is a challenge.
[TP10 TL/Multi]

Others indicate that the relationships between agents in KPI driven team initiatives were the major perception shifters.

The team is great I would say, but there are some people who would not want to turn up and those kinds of things. So getting the attendance especially when you have to meet the grade of service [KPI]... there are some campaigns where we can only have a certain amount of agents, and if someone doesn't come in from there, then it affects you all across. We have a small team of insurance clients, where we have only 3 or 4 agents. If say we don't have one of those dedicated agents come in, then it affects all the rest of them. [TP13 TL/CSR]

These views eventually built towards a broader perception among agents that reward initiatives and KPI integration can only be game-like or 'fun' if managed appropriately.

If you could make something fun like a game and it was managed properly both, I guess, yeah, it would depend on how you did it though. If you had a horrible manager who was performance managing you, who does not understand the role of the job, then I do not think it will work. Being extremely tight with deadlines for example. I'm not good at sales or referring people but that was the role and you know it wasn't my strength and the role, and if that was a major aspect of the performing of my manager basing my performers on that then I don't think that would have been a good thing [TP17 CSR]

The question of managing game-like initiatives remains an interesting one and provided the catalyst for further investigation. Because, employees view game-like initiatives as a core component of creating gameful experiences, yet, when framed alongside the query of "who is responsible for feelings of gamefulness", the answer is not always clear.

Huotari and Hamari (2012) posit that gamefulness is ultimately a consequence of an individual's perceptions;

[The] value of a game service, be it 'pleasure', 'suspense', 'mastery' or 'gamefulness', is always determined by the player's individual perception. In other words, it is possible that the use of a game service leads to gameful experiences with one user but does not do so with another user. (p. 19)

While McGonigal (2011) states it is a combination of;

[Shifting] mental awareness from the externally applied pressures of real work, or negative stress, to the internally generated pressure of game work, or positive stress.
(p. 62)

Further confounding this question, is that when the core function of a team leader's role is to manage employee performance, it is natural to assume that it serves the interest of a team leader to manage game-like initiatives and feelings of gamefulness towards KPI adherence. Thus, combined, these factors necessitate the investigation of those aspects of an agent's role which remain isolated to the individual, to engender a greater understanding of their ability to influence perceptions of KPI reward initiatives, and the inducement of gamefulness.

6.1.4 Game-like Elements

Unlike semi-informed and unfamiliar users, enthusiasts use traditional video game media that help them identify the segmentation of game mechanics or design principles outside a fully-fledged game. Users in these categories quickly identified components in their work environments that hold game-like characteristics, such as points or badges, and those that are common in the current gamification lexicon. Enthusiasts explained that their familiarity with such mechanics comes from previous exposure to the terminology through interests such as reading gaming news articles, game design or programming experience.

Participants belonging to the semi-informed and unfamiliar categories provided responses that demonstrated their unfamiliarity with gamification terminology but were still able to identify game-like initiatives when probed with appropriate lines of questioning. Semi-informed participants provided most of responses within this study and identified a range of game-like elements, as detailed in Appendix 1.

The identification of the aspects of contact centre work most likely to represent game characteristics and contact centre gamification came from triangulating participant responses, open codes, memos and the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. The process of triangulation commenced with a review of the game elements most frequently cited within the data and the conditions in which they were observed (Appendix 1).

Participants could identify gamification occurring when they became aware of it, especially when the explicit intent was to drive agent behaviour and performance to achieve business

objectives by immediately distributing extrinsic rewards. Contact centre respondents would commonly cite the distribution of rewards such as virtual currencies, vouchers or tangible goods and explain the reason for their use. The reasons included:

- competition among teams or individuals:

There are a few things they recently this year up in like a top performer most improve kind of thing. Whoever it is for the month gets a 50 dollar voucher the other thing they did as well is whichever team gets the highest KPIs gets like a free lunch or afternoon tea or something like that. [TP3 CSR]

- when positive feedback was received from customers:

The thing we have is at the end of every month's we get rewards based primarily on scores, and the feedback we get from customers. You get points, and there's the point system, and you go in, and it's like a – we log into something where you bid for prizes [TP7 CSR]

- as a core component of an agent's role:

KPIs are entirely rewarded by virtual money, which is points in a sort of way. They had very tangible rewards associated with them, so they get pushed a lot during induction when you come onto the floor everything you do KPI wise rewards you. [TP10 CSR/TL]

In competition-based reward initiatives, agents were encouraged to participate in game-like races against peers to meet milestones and receive extrinsic rewards for doing so. These rewards come in a variety of context-specific forms, but range from virtual currencies, vouchers, scores or badges. Short-term goals were also used to direct agents towards performance levels that eventuate in similar rewards. Agents perceive these events as game-like as they foster behaviours and environments akin to traditional games, with easily recognisable mechanics and heuristics such as competition, strife and achievement. As these and other reward initiatives can occur at an individual level or in team-based environments, they also nurture socially driven game-like elements such as cooperation or social recognition.

6.2. Gameful KPI Systems

The analysis of how gamification is used led to the development of a category termed “gameful KPI systems”, which incorporates three subcategories: key performance indicators,

employee real-time resources and reward initiatives (Table 6.1). However, for clarity, this section does not focus on the explicit relationships between contact centre agent motivation, their work environment and monitoring solutions, as these aspects are included in later discussions, but instead aims to outline the mechanical components of key performance indicators and reward initiatives, with a supplementary overview of relevant aspects of employee real-time resources. Within this category, the subcategories of Key performance indicators and reward initiatives refer specifically to the mechanical performance metrics that support game-like reward systems. The third subcategory employee real-time resources considers the physical and emotional resources that frontline agents identified that they must manage while conducting their role. The importance of this distinction is that while the subcategories of Key performance indicators and reward initiatives are outlined throughout the following sections, the researcher has considered their relationship with employee real-time resources as equally built upon the findings outlined in sections 6.4 – 6.8.

Table 6.1: Main Category - Gameful KPI systems

Open Codes	Subcategories	Main Category
<i>KPI Compliance, KPI Quality, KPI Call Duration, KPI Call Quantity, KPI Customer Satisfaction, KPI FCR, KPI Wait Time.</i>	Key Performance Indicators	Gameful KPI systems
<i>Competition, Temporary goals, Temporary team goals, Special Events, Individual monthly performance targets, Team monthly performance targets.</i>	Reward Initiative	Gameful KPI systems
<i>Task Volume, Expertise, Opportunity Cost, Social Support.</i>	Employee real-time Resources	Gameful KPI systems

6.3. Game Elements & Reward Schemes

Study participants were asked to identify what they believed constituted game-like elements within their immediate work environment. An analysis of the responses resulted in a list of perceivable game elements (Appendix 1) and provides some insight into the formation of gamification initiatives. However, these factors do not function in isolation as a definitive indication of the wider gamification of contact centre environments, as many participants indicated that the game elements are often part of broader reward initiatives which direct their use.

Reward initiatives may on the surface appear to constitute a game context, which would remove them from the accepted definition of “game design elements in non-game contexts”. However, since reward initiatives exist primarily as part of a larger work environment in which employees hold contractual obligations to perform the duties of their role, the concept of a ‘game context’ in this instance is somewhat nebulous. A primary criterion of a game context is a participant’s state of gamefulness. Reward initiatives by themselves only provide the foundation for game elements to appear and do not in and of themselves constitute as game contexts.

The researcher also acknowledges that within the accepted definition positioned by Deterding et al. any researcher adopting a strict interpretation of game elements could justifiably limit the investigation to only those previously identified within gamification literature. However, he believes that doing so would risk the generation of theory with a limited capacity for answering the research question of ‘how is gamification used within New Zealand contact centres’.

Many of the reward initiatives identified by participants are related to the use of key performance indicators. The next section briefly summarises the KPIs commonly used to direct agent performance in New Zealand contact centres.

6.3.1. Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators (KPI) is a subcategory that identifies metrics found within *reward initiatives* across a range of contact centre organisations (Parmenter, 2015) as identified by employees. A focus has been placed on the underlying KPI metrics as these are the core

variables guiding supplementary *reward initiatives* and act as a crucial component of the rules or structure for subsequent game-like elements.

In a standard team, there is a certain expectation that an agent will have more productivity in the first couple of months. So my team stats always reflect that. I can pretty much look at my stats on a daily basis or, sorry, a week by week basis and, see that my productivity is logged my first call resolution is very high my quality is about average, and my compliance is really high. What that means is that they are doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing. [TP10 TL/Multi]

While each organisation uses variations of KPIs tailored to specific contexts, the findings of this study indicate that some KPIs hold prominence across the industry. For the sake of clarity, this section discusses briefly each metric and their wider relevance towards emergent theory alongside the generation of the subsequent categories and themes.

6.3.1.1. KPI - Compliance

Compliance is a KPI that encapsulates actions taken by an employee over the course of their roster that may influence their adherence to daily schedules. For most contact centre agents, compliance is the quantification of factors revolving around the time in which they are available to accept inbound calls from an automated call delivery system.

Compliance is basically if you have followed all of the processes and procedures that's how compliance is described [TP13 TL/Multi]

Several actions can influence this performance indicator, such as an agent's ability to finish administrative tasks for calls that have ended or the frequency in which they take unscheduled breaks. Compliance is one of several KPI statistics that contributes to a wider real-time report on agent performance within rigid work schedules.

6.3.1.2. KPI - Call Duration & Call Quantity

Call duration and quantity are KPI metrics that directly represent how proficient an agent is at answering calls in the queuing system and their average time to reach their conclusion. As contact centres are often responsible for providing customer service solutions to thousands of clients, with only a handful of active agents, call duration and quantity are crucial metrics that measure the ability of a contact centre to deliver core services to customers.

[Call quantity] was just an email format. If your calls were in a certain amount of time that was required and it was all good it would be green it was just a list of names essentially and the number of minutes for your average call if it was good it was green if it was a little bit over it was orange if it was really bad it was red [TP17 CSR]

When combined, these 'service level' parameters are closely monitored in real-time by managers and team leaders. Of the many statistics which contribute to the key performance indicators agents are subject to, adherence to call duration and quantity are the ones most heavily emphasised on an individual and, day to day basis. As such, when considered within the context of contact centre reward initiatives, there is often a disproportionate prominence placed on these metrics.

6.3.1.3. KPI - Call Quality

Call quality or customer satisfaction is a set of KPI metrics that measures an agent's ability to provide satisfactory services towards their customers. The specifics of call quality will often be context specific; however, commonality often lies in the reliance on both quantitative and qualitative metrics for its measurement.

Each of the New Zealand contact centres that were studied calculated call quality through a combination of methods involving team leader's reviews of calls, customer satisfaction surveys and adherence to other KPI statistics, such as call time and compliance.

Basically we are wanting you to had the same sort off well not the same type of call but we want you to pretty much have how would you explain it well you have to open your call every time the same way you have to make sure that you are sticking to professional language we want to make sure that you were using the correct whole procedure are you offering further assistance when closing out the call I knew leaving notes before the end of the call, so there is a whole list of things that we look for that makes a good call [TP10 TL/Multi]

The KPIs of call quality is, in most contact centre environments, the area of performance measurement that requires team leaders to exert the highest degree of subjective interpretation. Often because, quality based customer surveys often ask participants to provide text-based reasons for how their service went and, team leaders often review call recordings to get a greater sense of employee proficiency.

6.3.1.4. KPI - First Call Resolution & Call Wait Time

First call resolution (FCR) metric is a KPI that measures an agent's ability to reach a satisfactory solution on the customer's first contact with the company about a given issue. First call resolution is crucial to contact centre operations, as it is a fundamental component of managing customer queues and call wait times.

One of our KPI's is first call resolution so, if they call back from the same number within six days, then you haven't resolved it the first time. Usually, you might send them a text or whatever and you're like "Oh if it's still happening reply on my text and I'll ring you back". [TP3 CSR]

Call wait time is the measurement of how long a call idles in an interactive voice response system (IVR) before connecting a customer with a human agent. As with call duration and call quantity, FCR and wait times contribute to the broader contact centre service level, which, is monitored in real-time by team leaders and managers.

6.3.2. Subcategory – Reward Initiatives

The subcategory of "Reward Initiatives" represents the wider practices and processes in which employees have identified individual game elements occur. Game elements are components that employees perceive as affording a gameful experience and represent mechanics, design patterns and heuristics that are recognisable as those typically found in game systems. However, the subcategory is titled "reward initiatives" in acknowledgement that within participant responses, most of individual game mechanics, design patterns and heuristics were identified with underlying ties to wider reward schemes, which, are subsequently bound by key performance indicators.

These ties are inseparable as it is from the retroactive application of reward initiatives onto KPI systems that game elements are given their rules and structure. This section provides a general overview of compensation initiatives found in this study. Their relationship with specific game elements and the associated behaviours are discussed in more detail in Sections 6.6 to 6.10.

6.3.2.1. Reward Initiative - Competition

Competition based reward initiatives are those which leverage agent rivalry or opposition to afford game-like experiences (Table 6.2), with the most common forms arising from KPI based targets, where agents must compete against each other for a range of desirable rewards. The rules and structure of competition reward initiatives are provided primarily by the deployed KPI solutions. Agents remain bound by the existing KPI metrics monitoring their performance, but have specific targeted KPIs for the duration of play during competitions.

Of the contact centres examined to date, all have deployed KPI metrics to monitor staff performance and distribute rewards. These performance monitoring solutions are quickly identified by staff as containing elements akin to competitions, goal achievement or other ad hoc game-like elements to drive employee behaviour – [Memo 23/9/2015]

Upon the completion of the competition, the distribution of benefits among agents derives from their performance relative to their peers. A typical example of competition-based reward initiatives is when tasking agents with reducing wait times or increasing service levels.

We also do the ad hoc team competitions as well within specific groups like [internal name] and then there is [internal name], they may have their own competitions within their different teams and there are rewards for that, but, it's KPI's mainly. [TP7 CSR/Multi]

Competition-based reward efforts will also sometimes operate at the inter-team or department level. In such instances, agents become segmented into groups where individual KPI performance contributes to a wider team KPI score. The measures of reward distribution often remain the same, with the highest rewards going to those that achieve the highest KPI scores.

So that was fun because I can be quite competitive, and it got everyone more interested as well because we had something to work towards and we can actually see what was happening. [TP10 TL/Multi]

Table 6.2: Competition Reward Initiatives Reported by Participants

Type of Competition	Game Elements	Targeted KPIs
Inter-Individual (Agent vs Agents)	Scores, recognition, leaderboard, conflict, virtual currency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance • Call Quantity • Call Quality • Call Wait Time
Inter-Team	Scores, recognition, team play, cooperation, leaderboards, ranking, virtual currency, vouchers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call Duration • Call Quantity • Call Wait Time • Call Quality
Inter-Department	Leaderboards, team play, cooperation, awards, conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call Quantity • Call Wait Time

6.3.2.2. Reward Initiative - Temporary goals

Temporary goals are reward initiatives that leverage KPI based milestones or targets to increase agent performance (Table 6.3). Temporary goals are different from competition reward initiatives as they do not rely on rivalry or opposition for their conduct. Instead, agents are positioned against unique tasks pertinent to the current business objective. The rules and structure of temporary goals being bound by the standard KPI metrics and any additional requirements mandated by team leaders or managers.

Sometimes I say, you know, you have done the [exam] I will give you 100 [virtual money] if that is part of your one-on-one process. If it is part on what your KPI as an agent and you are motivated that way, then certainly you could do that. I have done that in the past in one on ones where I said to the agent I need you to achieve this, I know that you are motivated by this so let us build the goal like that. [TP10/TL]

Within the observed contact centres, temporary goals are frequently used to reduce minor fluctuations in call volume or to meet short-term service levels. For instance, during peak hours agents may face an influx of calls that result in extended wait times for customers. To overcome this, team leaders and managers leverage KPI based goals over the periods of increased demand, to entice agents towards higher levels of performance.

Sometimes there would just be a high call volume, there wasn't really that much we could do about it because it wasn't always like an outage or something specific the [managers] could address. In those instances, they gave us targets and said we could win [virtual money] if we hit the goals. [TP4 CSR/Tech]

The ability of an agent to meet these goals directly impacts their likelihood of receiving rewards through temporary goal initiatives. Goal-based reward efforts are commonly conducted at an individual level but also leveraged across teams. In such instances, rewards are distributed communally only if the team, not an individual, performance meets the requisite service levels.

Table 6.3: Temporary Goal Reward Initiatives Reported by Participants

Type of Goals	Game Elements Identified	Targeted KPIs
Hourly Goals	Virtual currency, team achievement, social recognition, vouchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance • Call Duration • Call Quantity
Daily Goals	Vouchers, points, team achievement, social recognition, money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance • Call Duration • Call Quantity • Call Wait Time
Weekly Goals	Digital badges, awards, team achievement social recognition, vouchers, money, points,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance • Call Duration • Call Quantity • Call Quality • First call resolution • Call Wait Time

6.3.2.3. Reward Initiative - Special Events

Special event reward initiatives are unique circumstances or scenarios that leverage KPI metrics and game elements to motivate employees (Table 6.4). Highlighted by participants as infrequent or irregular circumstances that justify the use of rewards for the enhancement of agent performance. Such events are often the result of new product launches or major service outages. Unlike Competition and Temporary goals, special events place less emphasis on rules and structure afforded through KPI systems, as team leaders and managers are cognisant of an increased likelihood for short-term discrepancies.

During special events, team leaders and managers leverage reward initiatives to direct agent behaviour towards event-related tasks. In the cases of new product launches agents may be required to increase their expertise around new products as needed, or to deal with imperfect system rollouts that influence their regular role. Special events are often applicable department-wide and, as such, are often tracked by a team-based focus.

It was kind of motivating, because when you're looking at all the calls waiting to come through it's easy to just switch off. The [team leaders] would see us joking around and try to make us productive with specific goals I guess. [TP4 CSR/Tech]

I worked the full range of shifts, oh yes it was pretty rare, but they did on occasion give us food. They would be more likely to give us food in cases where there were large outages and a lot of phone calls and on very rare occasions and particularly for weekend staff you would get, I guess you would just get a reward of some food. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

Table 6.4: Special Event Rewards Reported by Participants

Type of Event	Game Elements Identified	Targeted KPIs
Outages	Recognition, virtual currency, vouchers, food/confectionary, problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call Duration • Call Quantity • Call Wait Time
New Product Launch	Supporting team, virtual currency, vouchers, money, team achievement, food/confectionary, problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call Duration • Call Quantity • Call Wait Time • Call Quality
Miscellaneous	<i>Points, recognition, supporting team, virtual currency, vouchers, money, score, team achievement, food/confectionary rewards, problem-solving.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance • Call Duration • Call Quantity • Call Quality • Call Wait Time

6.3.2.4. Reward Initiative - Performance Targets

Performance target reward initiatives are those that operate on a pre-defined or cyclical schedule and, aim to direct agent behaviour over the long term (Table 6.5). Agents have highlighted the use of performance targets as a common occurrence within their roles and often drawn strong associations with performance objectives and game elements.

I have a team leader and we do have a catch up every week and that is basically about it. The other thing is the way that I work with my team leader, as she gives me feedback if I'm not doing well, she basically just tells me you haven't done this right. If I'm doing well though I can get rewards based on that. [TP2/CSR]

The reason for this strong association is that performance goals have traditionally been the main avenue of reward distribution for team leaders and managers. Monthly performance goals based on KPI metrics act as an easy, low-commitment way of enticing agents to achieve desired levels of work output. However, it is because of this ease, that performance targets have become an ideal testing ground for novelty-driven game elements.

As such, agents highlight a broad range of game elements likely to occur from the use of performance targets and, denote that the rules and structure of such initiatives are based predominantly general KPI adherence.

Table 6.5: Performance Target Reward Initiatives Reported by Participants

Type of Event	Game Elements Identified	Targeted KPIs
Performance Targets	<i>Achievement, metrics, recognition, managing resources, virtual currency, digital badges, progression, team achievement, leaderboards, performance feedback, accumulative prizes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compliance• Call Duration• Call Quantity• Call Quality• First call resolution• Call Wait Time

6.3.3. Summary of Reward Initiatives

Reward initiatives (summarised in Table 6.6) form a crucial part of gamification within New Zealand contact centres. The use of reward initiatives enables KPI metrics to incorporate of

game elements to create gameful scenarios. Team leaders and managers leverage reward initiatives cognisant of their ability to entice agents towards increased work output. Reward initiatives, however, remain beholden to an agent's individual perceptions of what is game-like. Therefore, while the conditions outlined through competition, temporary goal, special event and performance target provide the impetus for game elements within contact centre work, their effectiveness is ultimately the result of individual motivation and willingness to engage with such systems. Thus, the study next examines the factors that influenced the ability of agents to achieve states of gamefulness, while working in KPI-controlled environments that used reward initiatives.

Table 6.6: Summary of Reward Initiatives Reported by Participants

Reward Initiative	KPI Reliance	Common Business Objective	Game Elements Observed
Competition	Competitive KPI adherence to determine winner	Improve quality/Meet service levels	score, recognition, virtual currency, digital badges, leaderboards, conflict, voucher, awards, ranking
Temporary goals	Temporary Goal based KPI adherence to determine achievement	Reduce call queues/Meet service levels.	Virtual currency, digital badges, awards, team achievement, social recognition, vouchers, money, metrics, points
Special Events	Unique event based KPI adherence goals.	Address service outages, new product rollouts or unexpected events.	Points, recognition, supporting team, virtual currency, vouchers, money, score, team achievement, food/confectionary rewards, problem-solving.
Performance targets	Perpetual individual KPI adherence milestones that determine reward level	Measure long-term performance/Improve work output	Achievement, metrics, recognition, managing resources, virtual currency, digital badges, progression, team achievement, leaderboards, performance feedback, accumulative prizes

6.3.4. Subcategory – Employee real-time resources

This subcategory represents the physical and emotional resources that frontline agents identified that they must manage while conducting their role. Agents consider their ability to manage these resources as holding significant influence over their ability to engage with game-like systems and by extension, the ability of such systems to induce states of gamefulness. As discussed previously, the findings outlined throughout the subcategory of employee real-time resources should be considered alongside their contextual conditions discussed further in sections 6.4-6.8 and, the primary purpose of this section is to provide a description of their role in what has been identified as ‘Gameful KPI Systems’, so that contextualized evidence can residing through sections 6.4-6.8. As with section 6.1.1 the concepts of games and gamefulness are recognized as being innately subjective, however, significant effort has been taken by the researcher to triangulate emerging codes and concepts with observations and theoretical memos to produce a comprehensible understanding of factors likely to influence agent perceptions of gamification within their work roles.

From the responses, the following open codes emerged, *task volume*, *expertise*, *opportunity cost* and *social support* (Figure 6.3).

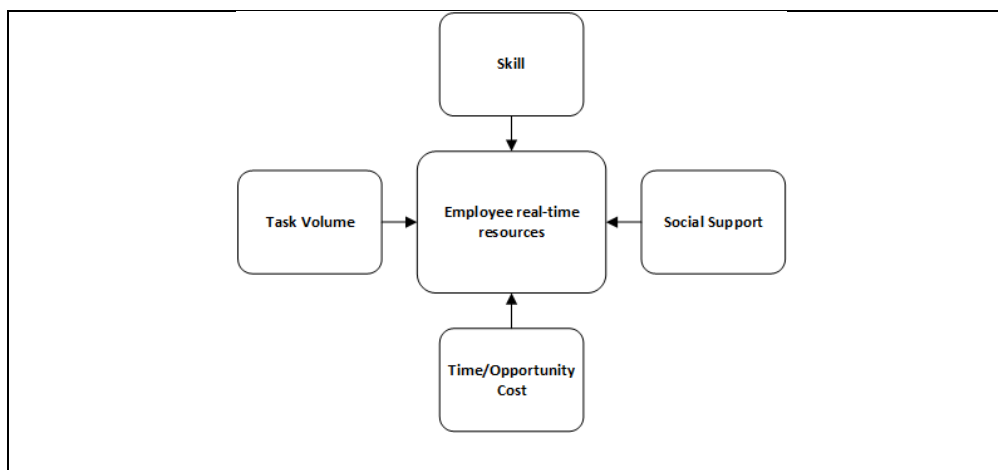


Figure 6.1: Employee Real-time Resources

“Task volume” frequently appeared among agent responses. These responses indicate that core functions of an agent’s role rely on the management of a constant stream of responsibilities including but, not limited to, troubleshooting, complaint resolution, emails

and general customer queries. Agents are quick to highlight the intensity of their work environments as they cannot at any given time choose the assignment of tasks.

There was no quiet day during all of the time that I worked there the phone did not stop because incoming calls you were expected to take calls as soon as the call came through you had a couple of seconds before the next call [TP21 CSR/Tech]

Instead, a focus is placed directly on their ability to meet mandated levels of task volume. It is unsurprising then that agents indicate their capacity to meet task volume as a significant contributory factor to states of gamefulness. That is, gamefulness as an experiential and behavioural quality, in which employees are willing to engage with systems designed to produce gameful interactions. Gamefulness within this context denotes a desire to engage with systems providing structure to interactions, as opposed to uncertain, unstructured and entirely free activities which are likely to denote acts of playfulness.

One agent succinctly illustrates how call volumes change the mood of employees and, decrease the likelihood or willingness to engage with gameful systems.

It is definitely call volume and then other agents. How they feel and act. If it is like a medium busy day and then a few people are in a good mood, then that will help if it is a busy day and it is a few people are really bad mood and, you can hear them arguing with customers and stuff that will spread.[TP 18 TL/CSR]

The agent goes on to highlight the perceivable discrepancy between states of gamefulness during on-peak hours and off-peak. In which the absences of authority figures, such as operations managers, can induce more relaxed work environments conducive to explicitly states of playfulness and, as a result directed gameful engagements with reward systems.

When it gets to be seven or eight o'clock there are way less people (calls in queue) and, it's much more chill, and that's really good I think. They get, well, I think people get treated the same throughout the day, maybe a bit stricter in terms of taking brakes on time and that sort of stuff. During the off-peak hours, people definitely mess around more on night shifts. [TP18 TL/CSR]

Expertise is an open code that highlights an agent's ability to be knowledgeable and proficient within the expected boundaries of their role. Interviewees indicated that in instances where they are unable to address situations due to experiential or knowledge deficiencies, they are unlikely to enter states of gamefulness. This is because states of gamefulness, and to some degree playfulness, significantly benefits from a sense of competency and mastery over an agents choice of actions. For instance, if an agent engages with a game-like system which rewarded their knowledge of products but, those products remained outside the scope of that agent's role preventing them from accruing that knowledge, then any sense of gamefulness is quickly overshadowed by an agent's inability to engage with the system.

Within contact centres this notion manifests through the distribution of KPI based rewards, reliant on an agent's ability to sufficiently answer customer queries, which, may often fall outside the scope of their knowledge. Agents reasoned that because of their inability to manage customers, this would result in what they perceived to be as 'bad calls', which, held the potential to negatively influence their mood and subsequent inducement of states of gamefulness.

And that was the worst part because I was terrible at it. So the phone calls often didn't go very well. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

While also signifying that deficiencies in the expertise of those around them introduced increased task volume, removing their ability to find intervals where gamefulness was possible.

Having everybody else be terrible meant more work for me. If they would take too long on the phone calls, it would mean the next phone call would come to me. If they did a terrible job of troubleshooting, it would mean a call would go back into the queue, and it would be another call I would have to deal with. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

The open code of opportunity cost illustrates the considerations agents make around their physical and cognitive actions that have foreseen or unforeseen expenses. These contemplations contribute to a sense of cautiousness around KPI metrics and limit agent willingness to engage with reward systems, for fear of missing out on alternate and, potentially more appealing circumstances. Such aversion has a demonstrable influence over

states of gamefulness within work environments, as agents are consistently shown to take into consideration an array of situational, experiential and environmental factors alongside considerations of how they best maximize the utility of their time at work for extrinsic benefits. Employment in its purest form after all, is innately an agreed social contract between agent and organisation for the exchange of tangible benefits.

One agent highlights this deliberation of opportunity cost, specifically around engaging with upskilling reward initiatives before senior role vacancies becoming available.

If you do them when they're not really looking for anyone it's just going to go under the carpet. They will be like cool you're showing initiative and enthusiasm, but we're not looking. And they'll forget about you for next time it rolls around, people will say they do the [progression exams], and you won't even be considered. [TP20 TL/Tech]

While also illustrating the increasing difficulty of leveraging KPI reward recognition in the pursuit of continuous career advancement opportunities.

I am still looking to progress further up I just really have to look for opportunities any opportunity that I know is going to benefit me in the future and will help the progression then I will go for it. But since I have been in the [new] role the extra work that I am doing isn't recognised as much. [TP20 TL/Tech]

The final open code of social support encapsulates how agents rely on the continuous support of their peers, to overcome challenging aspects of their role. These challenges can range from complex customer issues through to emotional support after difficult calls. Agents perceive the benefits of social support as affording greater opportunities to meet adherence levels within KPI reward systems while simultaneously, concealing areas of weakness from those directly responsible for reward distribution.

I personally found that the colleagues wouldn't go to the supervisors or the team leaders to tell them how they felt about the calls in case it was looked upon [TP21 CSR/Tech]

Social support also acts as an innate driver of states of gamefulness, as agents view their own performance through a lens of relatedness with their peers. Social support enables agents to

feel a sense of relatedness towards their peers which, influences their receptiveness towards KPI reward initiatives leveraging social recognition. Some agents perceive this recognition as significant towards states of gamefulness, especially when combined with extrinsic rewards designed to maximise achievement signifiers among peers.

It did motivate them because they wanted the kudos at the end in a team meeting and to be given a certificate [TP21 CSR/Tech]

They were more meaningful if they got a laugh out of us. Sometimes they just give you these rewards and they're not...like, we use to have inside jokes and if we were given a reward that played on that it was great. If someone who performed bad all the time got given a performance reward you know, it was good but not just for the real reason. [TP17/CSR]

Overall, the “employee real-time resources” subcategory outlines the cognitive and physical resources agents must manage while performing their role and how these states influence ones ability to become gameful. These resources, however, are intrinsically tied to their observable context, and it is for this reason that this subcategory acts only as a descriptive introduction to their influence on states of agent ‘gamefulness’. Therefore, this subcategory is only part of a wider examination concerning the components of an agent’s role that influence ‘gamefulness’ and, for a full understanding, must viewed within the context of the four main conditions categories presented in the following sections.

6.3.5. Summary of gamification in New Zealand Contact Centres

This section commenced by identifying the subjective nature of terminology surrounding gamification, and by discussing how its use. Subsequently this led to the identification of game-like initiatives from the perspective of employees and, an investigation of perceptions and relationships between game-like elements within contact centre information systems. The result of this examination was the identification of two subcategories: employee resources and key performance indicators.

The discussion then centred on each subcategory to outline the core components of what constitutes as gamification within contact centres, the result of which is the main category of ‘gameful KPI systems’. This category represents the amalgamation of pertinent factors around

management driven KPI reward initiatives and the ability of employees to manage core functions of their role.

6.4. Conditions - Introduction

The “conditions” are the behaviours and situational circumstances that influence agent motivations and perceptions of gamefulness within work environments positioned as gamified. They are the direct result of the grounded theory coding and analysis process and, as such, have been presented in a way that emphasises their bottom-up construction. Each main category is presented alongside its constitutive sub-categories and open codes. As these categories represent the common findings among each of the organisations, their presentation is such that it promotes their underlying meaning over organisational specificity. The rationale being to provide clarity when elevating the concepts to higher levels of abstraction. Nonetheless, wherever necessary discourse highlights unique and relevant concepts that have emerged independently. Equally, while some concepts are subsumed into categories, they should not be considered as existing independently from each other. Because many of the concepts and contextual situations are inseparable by nature but, would be challenging to define if not displayed as segmented. Therefore, the following section discusses the four main categories that emerge from the inductive theorising process shown in Figure 6.4, *Obstructed Gamefulness*, *Career Mastery*, *Fundamental Teamplay* and *Superimposed Benefits*.

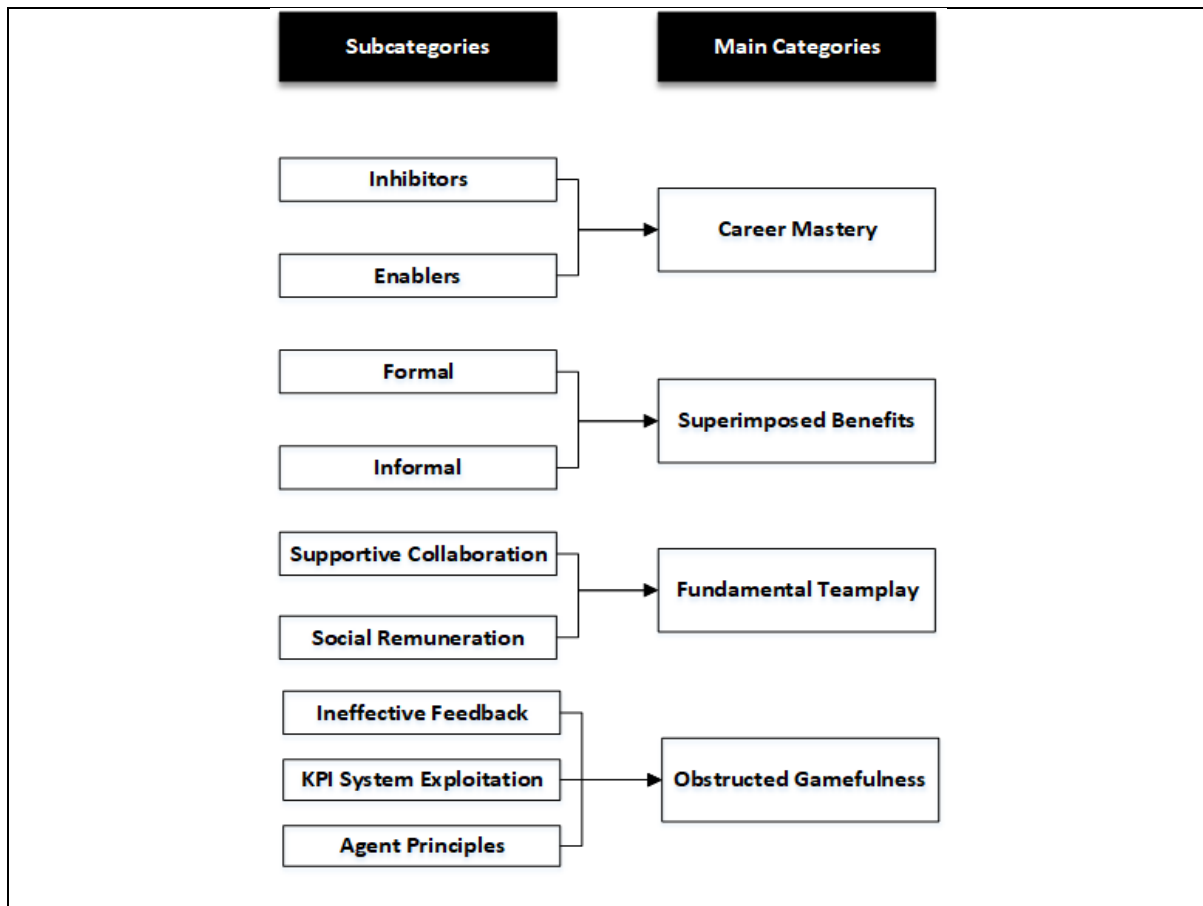


Figure 6.2: Conditions Category Construction

6.5. Category - Obstructed Gamefulness

Obstructed gamefulness describes the factors that impede gameful affordances in the agents' roles in New Zealand contact centres. These factors exist in combination with employee requirements to manage real-time resources outlined in section 6.3.4 and, adds to this understanding by illuminating aspects of gameful KPI systems which employees and managers identify as failing to achieve their intended game-like purpose. Obstructed Gamefulness therefore provides the contextual grounding through the synthesis of three sub-categories: *ineffective feedback*, *KPI system exploitation* and *agent beliefs*.

KPI system exploitation comprises conditions that lead to or encourage the exploitation of deployed KPI systems, often in an unintended manner. Often leading to undesirable consequences, such as advantage-driven behaviour and performance exploitation. *Ineffective feedback* refers to the factors that hinder responses throughout the various facets of an agent's daily role. These can range from limited feedback channels, limited resolutions and

feedback futility. *Agent beliefs* refer to the conditional factors that influence an agent's perceptions of gamification initiatives and the information systems supporting them, which result in the formation of strongly-held personal beliefs. Factors that contribute to the formation of such beliefs are dissatisfaction with KPI systems, behaviour and task conflicts and contentment with existing systems. Together, these three subcategories form the basis for understanding obstructed gamefulness. Table 6.7 presents the construction of this category through its open codes and resulting subcategories.

Table 6.7: Main Category - Obstructed Gamefulness

Open Codes	Subcategories	Main Category
<i>Performance exploitation, catchall solution, exploit to achieve, advantage driven behaviour, ignoring system faults, resource sacrifices, KPI manipulation, unintended KPI consequences, unintended benefits, adjusted KPI expectations, abusing queue system, skewed performance, influenced intrinsic drive on KPI, employee expectation, indifference with KPI systems, rejecting KPI accuracy, KPI driven frustration, KPI avoidance, sacrificial KPIs, KPI interdependence.</i>	<i>KPI System Exploitation</i>	Obstructed Gamefulness
<i>Feedback heard but not actioned, limited feedback channels, identifies problems not solutions, feedback futility, casual feedback system, formal feedback system, limited resolution feedback, manual process required, repetitive feedback, delayed feedback system, overreliance on quantitative metrics in feedback.</i>	<i>Ineffective feedback Systems</i>	

<i>Management indifference ignores KPI systems, underestimates own ability with KPI, dissatisfaction with KPI systems, diminished motivation, behaviour and task conflict, positive view of reward initiatives, self-imposed KPI rules, KPI systems skew performance, content with existing KPI systems.</i>	Agent beliefs	
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6.5.1. Subcategory - KPI System Exploitation

This subcategory denotes how the use of KPI metrics for gamification initiatives can be abused or obfuscated in ways unintended by organisations. Through this obfuscation and exploitation, KPI metrics that are meant to be used as reward initiatives end up negatively influencing perceptions of KPI systems and affect aspects of an employee's daily activities, such as their ability to manage real-time resources or reach cognitive states of 'gamefulness'.

At a mechanical level, KPI exploitation occurs in a variety of context-specific situations. For example, some employees or managers may attempt to circumvent KPI metrics to gain advantages within KPI reward initiatives, such as accruing extrinsic benefits like virtual currencies, wage increases, or virtual badges, and tangible elements, such as career opportunities or moments of respite. Sections 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10 discusses the importance of attaining these benefits in more detail.

Agents and team leaders viewed such rewards as being highly desirable. For some, this desire led to a belief that increasing one's chances to acquire them is worth a certain degree of risk. This risk can take the form of agent actions or behaviours that directly contradict company policies, and are designed explicitly to maximise reported KPIs. To illustrate this point, one employee outlines the extreme lengths they were prepared to go to in pursuit of exploited extrinsic benefits:

In order to achieve my time metrics, I would hang up on a client. I would do what is called the double tap; it is when you would pick up the phone and accidentally drop

again making yourself a zero second phone call and, cancelling out the one-hour phone call, you took before. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

While organisations have long been aware of the potential impacts of system exploitation and have policies in place to dissuade such actions, the analysis revealed that within KPI reward systems, such exploitation exists in forms that are obscured by the managers and employees best positioned to facilitate their identification. The reason for this obscuration is that it is often not in the interest of the employee or their immediate manager to identify and report policy-breaching behaviour because both have interdependent KPIs tied directly to the acquisition of benefits. But is nevertheless demonstrable through the chain of events that lead to KPI reward accrual, in which employees receive goods or perceived progression opportunities by meeting individual and group-based KPI adherence levels that directly influence the KPI adherence levels of their immediate supervisor. Similarly, the same KPIs subsequently impact their team leader's ability to achieve bonuses and promotion opportunities.

Exploitative behaviour is concealed through the reliance on KPI metrics and processes that target quality assurance practices. Within the observed contact centre environments, many of the tracked KPIs exist in a state of automation and are immediately quantifiable. Statistics such as call quality, however, require team leaders to manually assess each call, often alongside quantitative surveys or quality scores, to determine if an agent is meeting mandated levels of performance. Nevertheless, within such environments, it is impractical for team leaders to assess every single call, and instead, a small sample is chosen to be representative of an agent's overall performance. This process typically requires a team leader to select calls to monitor and score according to the company's quality guidelines. However, the selection of these calls is ordinarily at the discretion of the team leader. The exploitative behaviour then manifests in fashions akin to the following:

One of our team leaders would pick the one that was the right amount of time about eight minutes, which would typically be the phone calls you troubleshoot and completed successfully and the client was happy, and if they were too unhappy, he would ignore that one and find a new one. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

Similarly, numerous agents expressed an explicit interest in exploiting KPI systems to avoid diminished performance metrics when seeking additional moments of respite. The catalyst to this behaviour comes from the dynamic nature of call queue management systems and, the unpredictable nature of increases in call volume.

For example, in circumstances such as service outages where call volume can immediately spike, agents, are often encouraged by team leaders to reschedule breaks for periods where the call queue systems were less populated with waiting customers. While most agents reported that they were typically happy to reschedule breaks to accommodate, in instances where an agent was feeling fatigued or demotivated some would conspire to exploit the system:

So for instance, one break specific experience that I had was two people were actually calling a queue that was closed to be able not to receive calls to be able to take their breaks on time. It became so prevailing that it became noticeable. It was not obvious at the beginning. [TP9 TL/Multi]

Also, agents manipulate the KPI system states to reject calls for their benefit:

There are cases where they put themselves on different states. For example, when they are in here you are supposed to be on the phone and, you are supposed to follow your roster as close as you can. So, they change their system state to allow breaks/lunch. [TP9 TL/Multi]

However, the ability to identify this exploitative behaviour in real time is often obscured for those supervising queue management systems, as staff are sporadically afforded legitimate time outside the automated call queueing system “if they had a difficult call and they had to do a little more work afterwards”. As such, this makes it difficult to identify if the time away from a call queue is legitimate or not and, other tasks such as supporting agents or conducting one on one performance meetings take a natural priority.

At the same time, such systems also unwittingly encourage staff to pursue a level of KPI achievement that is perceivably detrimental to their health and safety. For instance, within contact centres that have ambitious sales targets, it was found that employees would often forgo scheduled breaks to spend more time in a call queue in pursuit of higher KPIs.

If we passed our appointment to somebody else, that would be a sale off our own target that we would not get. And when it came to pay rise time you had to meet your targets to get a pay rise, so if you had worked really hard but, didn't hit targets because of the backlog of paperwork, you would forfeit your pay rise. So, it was pretty difficult, and I would say 99% of us would have gone in early and skipped breaks or, all ate lunch at the table while we were typing and trying to do our work. [TP21 CSR/Tech]

Further, some employees mentioned that their natural desire to help customers could negatively influence their ability to achieve gamified KPI targets. Such behaviour materialises in instances where the agent becomes committed to assisting the client irrespective of how long it may take to reach a solution. In these circumstances, customers are often unable to resolve several previous calls or have unique circumstances, which require an agent to assert an unplanned level of ownership to address the problem. In turn, this creates environments where agents who value helping customers more than reaching KPIs targets, come to view systems as imbalanced or, increasingly beneficial to those who focused disproportionately on quantity based KPIs.

Sometimes people with problems would go for the easy solution and get rid of the customer because they want to meet the KPIs. I do not work like that. If I were given a role or a long haul, I would explain to my team leader that it took me this long because of these reasons and that is why it does not match my KPIs[TP11 CSR/Tech]

As with other means of KPI exploitation, this practice is one that team leaders and immediate supervisors are often aware of. However, they often overlook it, as it remains mutually beneficial in the pursuit of KPI-based extrinsic rewards. After all, in KPI systems that encourage quantity and the appearance of small call queues, any extended assistance provided on a repeated basis to individual clients can negatively influence averaged metric scores.

When questioning agents about processes to amend their KPIs, it eventuates that the majority of organisations instruct staff to request amendments on a case by case basis. Equally, such situations usually require employees to vacate their desk and approach a team leader while still active on the call queue. There is thus a degree of risk for an agent wishing to pursue exceptions while conducting their regular role, as the denial of any request can result in

further KPI based penalties. From the organisation's perspective, KPIs however, still represent what is believed to be accurate depictions of employee performance. As such, KPIs continue to act as the primary guiding tools when reviewing an employee's worth and subsequent reward. While analysis revealed that employees under certain circumstances are willing to exploit KPI metrics for personal gain, many of the inherent problems appear to be the result of a lack of proper consideration of the application of universal KPIs and role nuances.

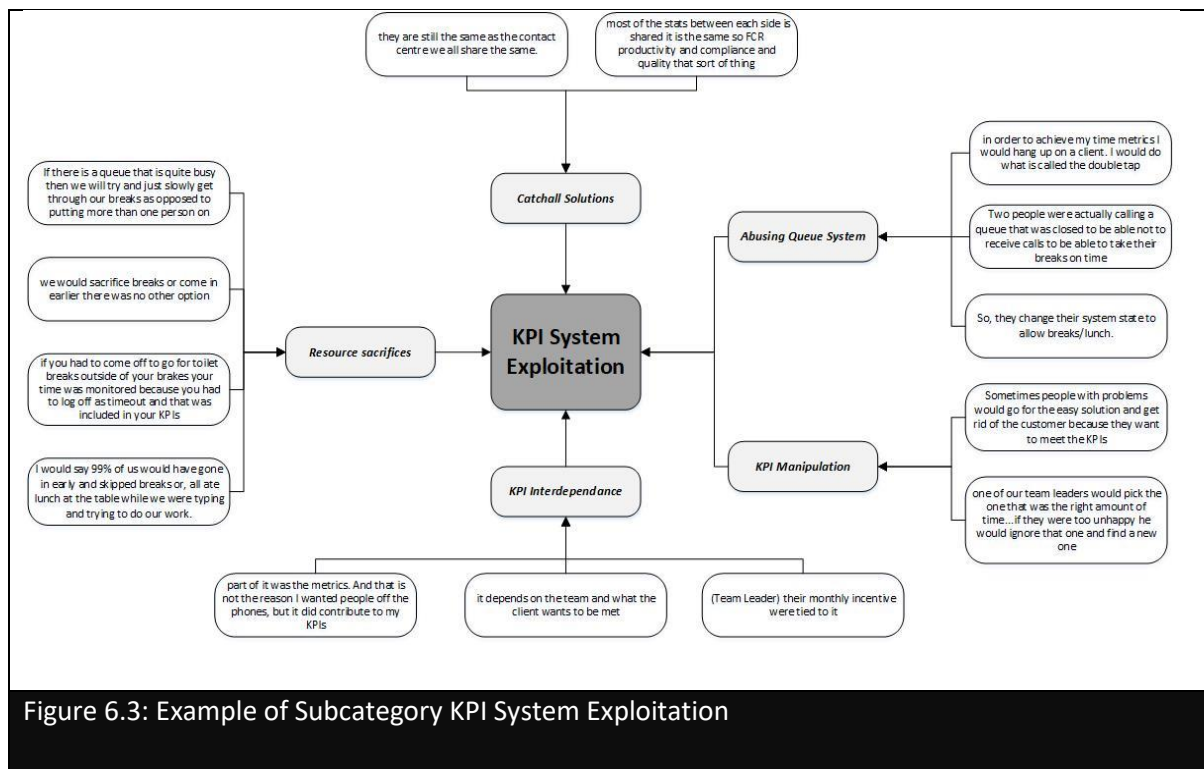


Figure 6.3: Example of Subcategory KPI System Exploitation

In summary, KPI system exploitation is a sub-category of obstructed gamefulness that highlights areas of weakness within existing gameful KPI systems. Such deficiencies can lead employees to take risks within their role to gain pecuniary or opportunity advantages that are unintended in the design of the reward systems. Immediate managers or team leaders often benefit from such practices as their performance metrics are tied directly to those of their subordinates and, qualitative quality assurance practices make concealment of certain aspects of KPI manipulation difficult to detect. While the sub-category of KPI system exploitation forms only a component of obstructed gamefulness, it is notable that the consequences outlined within this category are rarely limited to their immediate environment. They are also inherently related to associated categories that are contingent on the distribution of rewards or perceptions of fair play and communal support.

6.5.2. Subcategory - Ineffective Feedback

Ineffective feedback is a component of *obstructed Gamefulness* that categorises how feedback influences employee perceptions of gameful KPI systems. Feedback plays an innate role in driving employee motivation and engagement initiatives and, is pivotal in shaping an employee's ability to manage gameful KPI system. Therefore, when faced with ineffective feedback employees are presented with an array of obstacles that limit their ability to remain motivated and achieve states of 'gamefulness'. Furthermore, areas of operational weakness are more obfuscated and, propagate an over-reliance on ineffective solutions that contribute to a diminished desire to pursue otherwise desirable extrinsic or intrinsic rewards.

Within the contact centres observed, frontline staff are required to prioritise and manage resources that contribute to their individual KPIs. In many cases, these KPIs are contingent on an agent's ability to adhere to automated call delivery systems or rigid work processes. Deviations from these systems result in the reduction of KPI metrics, which, dictate how an agent's performance and competency is perceived.

Feedback on agent's performance is provided through two primary channels, formal and informal feedback initiatives. Formal feedback is instances of feedback given by team leaders or managers that have been pre-planned and subsequently delivered through a structured feedback process. Informal feedback is such that it is provided in a manner consistent with the normal day-to-day interactions of staff and, is usually conversational and unstructured.

Across organisations, the forum for formal feedback is usually regular one-on-one meetings. There is an expectation among teams that team leaders find time at least once a month to sit down with each agent and conduct a formal performance meeting. Within these meetings, management suggests that agents often have an opportunity to receive feedback on their ability to meet KPI's and, identify areas of their performance that it can be improved. Moreover, at times agents are also provided with an opportunity to comment on areas of weakness within the organisation and, make suggestions as to how they could be mitigated and overcome.

While these opportunities to both receive and give feedback are viewed positively by those staff in team leader and management positions, the analysis revealed that in general, agents hold contrary, negative perceptions of such reviews. In fact, a shared belief exists between

agents that any feedback communicated in these meetings holds limited value for either the company or the agent.

Participants provide a range of reasons for this perception, with some stating that performance reviews compel them to attempt to justify discrepancies in their KPI based performance, even when they believe their actions are justifiable. For some, this scenario is one that leads to significant anxiety in the days leading up to the formal meetings:

I used to dread them every month. I used to dread that particular day or two days because I knew going into the team room would be a nightmare because you would have people in tears, you would have people worried about their job, it just wasn't a pleasant experience[TP21 CSR/Tech]

However, for others, these meetings act as moments of reflection that highlight a disconnect between the reality of their role as a frontline agent and those monitoring their performance.

They say do not take it personally, but they do not feel what us agents feel. You can say do not take it personally but it is in your head you hear the screaming, you hear the swearing, and at the end of the day it is you that is feeling it. [TP11 CSR/Tech]

When pressed further during interviews, agents would frequently express that while formal meetings provided a theoretical opportunity to air concerns about practices or weakness, the responses they receive often leave them anxious and unconvinced that their manager acknowledges their grievances. Some suggested that their complaints are often 'noted' but never adequately resolved. Inevitably this leads staff to a sense of futility concerning such feedback systems and deeper feelings of resentment.

I sit there and think, well I know I have been hired to take these calls, and that is what I am doing. I'm trying to sort of come up with ideas to help us out because there's only so much we can really take before it drives us nuts and drives our heads in. And I get resentful when I give feedback, if I ever have a chance to say something or get to mention something and nothing gets done about it and you don't hear anything about it either, it just gets left on the backboard, and you sit there thinking they're still working on that or they just disregarded what I said.[TP20 TL/Tech]

Consequently, agents often have no clear responses to suggestions or queries involving work processes surrounding KPI systems and, as a result, many instead elect to rely exclusively on informal feedback initiatives or, avoid raising and dealing with problematic issues altogether. A natural consequence of this behaviour is that issues can sometimes compound into problems of a more serious nature and further detach staff from KPI based feedback.

One staff member explained that in the face of ineffective feedback, KPI based reward initiatives devolve into inconsequential targets to hit, and insinuated that punishments for failing to meet performance standards during formal meetings had become an accepted reality.

It's almost like if you're not going to help me or provide where I'm at, I'll just do whatever. But, I mean you still try and hit what your KPI's are, but if they say, "Oh, you didn't do well on these two weeks." It's like, "Well I asked you for that feedback or what I need to work on." If you're not going to work with me, you can just give me a smack on the hand at the end of the month, but didn't help me throughout the month itself. [TP2 CSR/Tech]

This sentiment was born out of frustration, with the breakdown of meaningful feedback being at its core. This feeling is one that presents itself consistently throughout the role of front-line agents, as they often face problems that have no immediately accessible solution and, attempts to seek formal resolutions meet with unaccommodating or delayed responses.

Because of this, agents and team leaders often hold a firm belief that approaching issues in a casual manner enables both parties to receive more immediate feedback and reduces negative connotations around areas of weakness. In some cases, agents take this relaxed relationship a step further insinuating that their team operate more akin to an extended family dynamic;

I think in our team particularly, it's very much it is a family, so that sort of how the company is run you are there not only to support each other in work but support each other outside of work and in family life and that sort of thing[TP15 TL]

In such instances, agents propose that feedback is more sincere or reciprocal when presented in the form of broad suggestions instead of direct orders or outright complaints. They also

believe that KPI metrics take a position of lesser importance as each agent is of the mind that, if required their circumstances are taken into consideration.

It's not really a formal sit down its just suggestions. It is pretty relaxed the feedback is normally not formal unless it comes down to an investigation. I think everyone prefers that type of feedback rather than putting on paper. [TP13 TL/CSR]

However, informal feedback is not without its drawbacks. In situations where agents believe they are detecting the early stages of a service outage or widespread issue, often apparent through repeated calls of a similar nature, casual recommendations to superiors are often 'noted' in the same way as feedback made in formal meetings. The reason for this is the inherent disconnect between agent intuition and, the data-driven approach to call queue management taken by team leaders. Team leaders are often reluctant to act to mitigate call flows until a legitimate argument, supported by quantifiable metrics is made that demonstrates increased wait times and call volumes. While on the other hand, agents who contend they have provided ample warning to managers with possible resolutions are left to deal with increased workloads using limited or ineffective solutions.

They ask us what do you think driving calls or what do you think causing them, and that's it, they don't really take any feedback from us. We say could we try this or try that and maybe send a bulk email out. They don't ask us for that they leave us high and dry and expect us to just keep going. [TP20 TL/Tech]

Such instances left agents feeling abandoned and disconnected from KPI systems, as they often felt little control over their ability to resolve calls in adherence with their KPI targets.

In brief, confounding many aspects of an agent's daily role is an inability to receive adequate, meaningful and timely feedback within gameful KPI systems. Analysis has revealed that ineffective feedback contributes to feelings of resentment, futility and anxiety. While in some instances candid feedback encourages the development of reciprocal relationships between agents and team leaders, such relationships are no assurance of ongoing feedback.

Ineffective feedback is merely one component of obstructed gamefulness. However, it demonstrates the need for organisations to account for the adverse effects of ineffective

feedback systems and shows how if left unaddressed it has the power to obstruct states of gamefulness and overall gamification solutions.

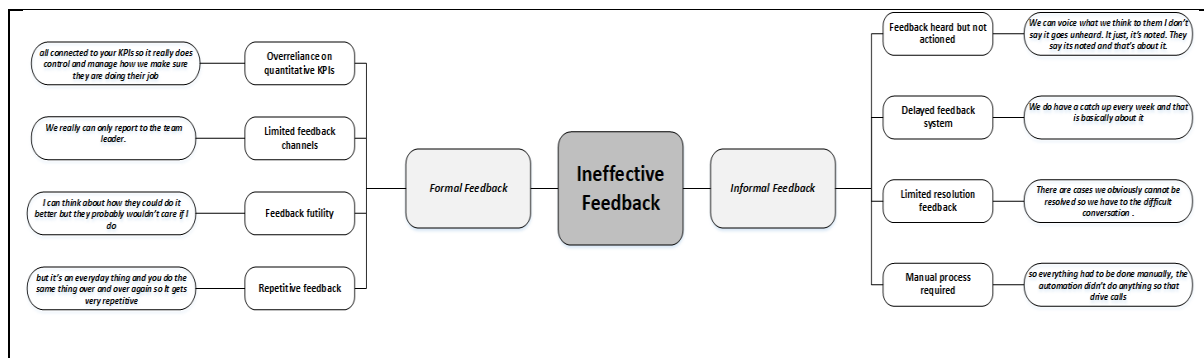


Figure 6.4: Example of Subcategory Ineffective feedback

6.5.3. Subcategory - Agent Beliefs

Agent beliefs capture how agents' views or beliefs influence perceptions of gamification initiatives. Opinions relating to a deployed information system and associated reward systems are critical in shaping and influencing the ability of an employee to achieve states of gamefulness or sustainable engagement, (support this statement better), and therefore play an instrumental role in the overall success of gamification initiatives. Agent beliefs rarely exist in isolation; it is a concept that considerably overlaps with, and is related to other characteristics of *obstructed gamefulness*.

Interview questions asked participants to outline their perceptions of the term 'gamification' and, the general practice of using game characteristics to maintain their motivation at work. Naturally, the questions received a variety of responses, as detailed in Sections 5.4.1 – 5.4.2. However, subsequent analysis of the data synthesised responses into three categories: *enthusiast*, *semi-informed* and *unfamiliar*.

When questioned, the participants categorised as *enthusiast* or *semi-informed* drew a direct connection between 'gamification' and their video game playing hobby. In many cases, they contended that, whenever possible, they would play games at their workstation through web browsers or on their cell phones. While not directly related to their experiences with gameful KPI systems, these insights provided additional calibration around employee perceptions of 'play' and necessitated additional questioning. Such instances also acted as an opportune

moment to gauge employee perceptions around whether it was “right” to ‘play’ at ‘work’. When queried about the appropriateness of engaging in such activities during work hours, agents are often in a state of dissonance concerning whether the practice is problematic or not. Some agents would freely admit that while the company forbid such actions, there was a degree of freedom afforded to them by their team leaders if they continued to be productive while playing games. Subsequent interviews with those in team leader positions confirmed this belief, as analysis identified that team leaders often act indifferently providing agents achieve KPI’s. This view exists at various levels within organisations, as even those outside of immediate team leader positions hold similar views;

When I was at Overseas Company, it was complete lockdown. You couldn’t even really chat with each other but, yes here it is very laid-back. So especially on weekends when it is quiet they are just free to be on the Internet. I’m not really sure of any way that it might be distracting because it is well maybe, just because I’m so used to being laid-back I’m not really concerned with it being detrimental to their KPIs and such. Certainly, I mean if they are doing these things on the call which they shouldn’t be they should be 100% focused but, outside of that I think if they have access it should be okay. [TP16 Dev/Tech] (*a pseudonym)*

Further, some agents believe that using games and game-like activities during work is the result of established social norms. There is a strong belief that if colleagues, especially those within their immediate vicinity, can engage in such activities without consequence, then the behaviour is deemed to be permissible. However, agents confirm that the use of games or other forms of entertainment comes with degrees of self-regulation, wherein KPI based performance quotas act as a moderating medium.

If I see everyone around me like working hard, I would feel bad if I was just browsing webpages or something. But if I see other people around me doing the same thing, I would feel less bad. Because I would think, it was a bit of a norm. Which is actually what I think now, it is the norm. But if I personally know it’s affecting my performance which I guess what a team leader would say to me if they see it as, then I would definitely stop it. [TP22 CSR/Tech]

The analysis also revealed that agents within the enthusiast and semi-informed categories are often willing to engage with games and game-like systems to reduce the monotony of repetitive calls. As a result, some perceive the use of games and game-like activities as containing only positive benefits and, hold a firm belief that they are not detrimental to their ability meet KPI targets. Agents do however acknowledge that when calls require more attention, they will disengage from any extraneous game-like activity to focus on the call.

Conversely, within the *unfamiliar* category, participants express disinterest in the use of game-like initiatives to perpetuate work, citing that even the notion of introducing game elements can negatively influence their motivation. Such perceptions are fuelled typically by a belief that feedback relating to such systems will likely go unnoticed, and participants believe the focus will disproportionately benefit the company's interest and not those subject to such regimes.

It would probably be dread it would be, if it's in my current role, it would be this is going to be terrible, maybe I can think about how they could do it better, but they probably wouldn't care if I do, yeah that's pretty much it. It's going to be terrible that's the main thought is going to be meaningless points to pit each other against each other [TP19 CSR/Tech]

One organisation has attempted to introduce a rotating roster of mandatory games, in which each week different teams from within their contact centre are responsible for creating and hosting a game or game-like initiative based on existing KPI systems. The results of this effort have been mixed as a variety of practical realities either prohibit or afford time to engage with any created game system. For instance, one participant highlights that the discrepancies in roles play a significant part in their ability to allocate downtime to such initiatives.

We had six teams doing all types of different things. So they were working at different paces on different things. The inbound team found it frustrating. However, they said they sometimes felt they had a little bit more downtime because sometimes they had to wait for a call to come in they could have a lazy day. Whereas in my team our calendar was full all the time, so we didn't have any time to play really. We were just stressed that we were late at the end of the night. But, if it was your teams is weak you had to accommodate. [TP21 CSR/Tech]

At the core of this agent, is an understanding by participants that any willingness to be involved in each game-like initiative is often circumstantial. Most participants accept that not all employees will be willing or capable of engaging in games or game-like activities all the time. Equally, those agreeable to committing to such initiatives hold a preference for activities that they can terminate at any point with little or no consequence.

To achieve the goal of sustainable engagement, organisations in this study rely on round-the-clock KPI systems and corresponding intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to induce states of gamefulness. However, in their current form, these systems currently fail to consider the dynamic nature of motivation alongside the influence of ever-fluctuating workloads.

In summary, agent beliefs illustrate the current views and values of employees, based on empirical interactions, with game and game-like initiatives within contact centre environments. These principles directly influence how users perceive such initiatives and their likeliness to engage with them positively. While users come into gamified environments with varying levels of familiarity, few contest that the roles within such environments require dynamic considerations when wishing to illicit gameful experiences. Of the organisations observed, these needs garner little attention and reflects in fragmented attitudes towards current gamification initiatives.

6.5.4. Summary of Obstructed Gamefulness Category

Analysis has revealed that *obstructed gamefulness* comprises of three sub-categories, these sub-categories being *KPI system exploitation*, *ineffective feedback* and *agent beliefs*. *Obstructed gamefulness* is a multifaceted category that illustrates an array of behaviours, perceptions and realities associated with current implementations of gamification within New Zealand contact centres. The consequences of obstructed gamefulness are witnessed through the resulting actions related to each subcategory but, also their inter-relatedness with other main categories discussed later in the chapter.

The subcategory of KPI system exploitation manifests in users through their perceptions and actions involving deployed KPI systems designed to facilitate states of sustainable engagement. Within such systems, quantifiable employee performance is often at the forefront, wherein employees are encouraged to focus on the acquisition of tangible extrinsic

rewards as the primary benefit. In doing so, the emphasis is less on facets of contact centre roles which employees find intrinsically motivating. For example, within gameful KPI systems, employees who value high levels of customer care over call volume and quantity are unlikely to receive maximum extrinsic rewards. Instead, agents in such systems are more likely to be demotivated by perceptions of unfairness and inequality. Equally, employees who believe such systems to be vulnerable may also coordinate their efforts to ensure the acquisition of maximum rewards. Further, within this category such exploitation may not always adversely affect managers and team leaders and, as a result, is unlikely to inspire heavier regulation and monitoring.

The sub-category of ineffective feedback is characterised by how fragmented feedback systems and processes influence employee perceptions around gamification initiatives. The nature of this feedback is a synthesis of two strands, *formal* and *informal*. The findings from *formal* feedback illustrate that during instances of official, structured feedback sessions agents are often left feeling as if their concerns have gone unheard or are of little importance. Agents also believe that during formal feedback sessions they will be required to retrospectively justify KPI discrepancies, even in instances where they have faithfully conducted their role. In turn, this generates feelings of anxiety or resentment within employees as formal feedback sessions become associated with demonstrating defensive ability over providing mutually beneficial dialogue. *Informal feedback* acts as a contrast to this, in which agents are free to offer criticism or advice candidly. However, this advice is often limited to immediate supervisors, and there is little or no obligation to follow up or provide resolution. As a consequence, this leads to agents perceiving their feedback is limited in its ability to influence positive change and, contributes to a sense of futility and meaninglessness around KPI based reward systems.

6.6. Category - Career Mastery

Career mastery is a concept that informs our understanding of the multifaceted drives that motivate New Zealand contact centre agents on a daily basis to perform their roles and responsibilities. Career mastery represents factors that are pertinent to agent's pursuit of aptitude in intrinsically fulfilling task, specifically those related to the advancement or increased proficiency of their employment role. Career mastery is not limited to the pursuit

of expertise in any single task but, instead refers directly to the individual capacity of agents to achieve expertise in aspects of their role that they view internally as motivating. Moreover, It is the consolidation of factors that innately encourage employees to become proficient at a given task or to progress within their role, being the synthesis of two subcategories, *Inhibitors* and *Enablers*.

Inhibitors are the factors at play within contact centre work that either erode or obfuscate agent's attempts to pursue career mastery. Such factors can range from social influence and unscripted career paths to a wider perception of worth from managers and team members. *Enablers* are the opposing factors that aid and propagate career mastery. Factors which can range from a positive perception of worth among peers and a strong desire to progress. Table 6.8 presents the construction of this category through its open codes and resulting subcategories.

Table 6.8: Construction of Career Mastery Category

Open Codes	Subcategories	Main Category
<i>Need to go above and beyond, communal under-performance, negative perception of worth, skill & social conflict, comfort in role, resource limitations, social influence, untrained for progression, unscripted career path, lack of opportunity, limited visibility, information deficiency, desire for long-term stability.</i>	<i>Inhibitors</i>	Career Mastery
<i>Physical recognition, social interaction, positive perception of worth, desire to progress, seeking additional responsibility, management recommendation, upskilling certification, broadcasting progression desire, KPI adherence.</i>	<i>Enablers</i>	

6.6.1. Subcategory - Inhibitors

Inhibitors explain how employees respond to interactions, processes or perceptions that limit their ability to pursue progress and mastery within their role. Analysis indicates that with inhibitors in play, workers face challenges that directly affect their ability to meet the demands of their role and their willingness to do so. In turn, this influences the effectiveness of deployed reward systems, particularly those aimed at driving long-term employee engagement through concepts of gamefulness.

Within New Zealand, contact centre environments many employees naturally hold long-term aspirations towards career progression, but often view them as being unattainable within the foreseeable future. These employees perceive their ongoing efforts, as ‘stepping stones’ or a means of ‘getting their foot in the door’. Albeit for career prospects that they are often unable to define with any degree of specificity. Agents can struggle to articulate a career path as many perceive the contact centre industry as a logical starting point for a general career in Information Technology and not any one position. In part, this perception comes from a belief that, unlike retail or similar industries, contact centre work is not subject to limited growth potential, but rather, fostered environments where, as one employee states would be continuously “rewarded according to the merits of their work” [TP12 CSR/TL]. As a result, employees that enter the contact centre industry frequently become comfortable within their positions but continue to view their circumstances as moments of temporary career respite, until a more clearly defined path of progression becomes available. One employee discusses his inadvertent career advancement;

When I got here, I worked my ass off to try and somehow progress further up the company. And I moved to tech, and, then I helped with support, and then I moved to connect, and then core connect, and I sort of thought I’m comfortable now, so I’ll have a little pause and breather to work out what my possibilities are and where I’m going to go. [TP20 TL/Tech]

While another illustrates the open-ended nature of entering the contact centre industry;

My main goal or the reason I wanted to work here was so that I can get my foot in the door for a potential IT role down the track. [TP4 CSR/Tech]

However, juxtaposed with this view are conflicting opinions of how progression within the contact centre industry occurs. Numerous participants, across a variety of front-line roles, found it difficult to articulate their career progression. In these instances, agents often elect to refer to their progress as luck or as the consequence of serendipitous circumstances. This finding is of significance within the context of gamefulness, as participants who expressed this sentiment had been subject to what they believed to be game-like systems or gamification, many of which were positioned as progression and mastery aiding tools.

We want to give staff more motivation in their roles. We use the [virtual currency] and other rewards to try and stimulate an interest in being the best they can be. Even if that fails, at the very least they get something out of it which is cool. [TP20 TL/Tech]

From the perspective of those in Team Leader positions the consensus is that progression and mastery occur “naturally” and are the result of showing that one has “grown within a role” but, with caveats such as “if our agent is trained in everything then they can’t just progress unless there is a space”. The deployed game-like elements however, make no effort to introduce to agents that growth in role proficiency does not necessarily equate to role advancement. Instead they focus only on driving behavioural change through rewards that team leaders perceive as valuable. This is often at odds with how agents view such rewards and, significantly influences how agents frame competency within their role. As a result, those in non-management roles tend to attribute their career progression to a arbitrary rules of thumb such as a general need to go “above and beyond”.

One employee outlines their experience as:

Asking who wanted to do extra work, or, ways of showing interested and I just always used those tools that I had. I use to ask support always, I use to always bug support and say hey, do you need any extra work done? So I use to bother them with that. I guess they saw my enthusiasm. [TP 20 TL/Tech]

For some, however, the juxtaposition of rewards in game-like systems and, uncertainty around how this aids one to progress within their role, can create significant frustration.:

You literally should throw a hammer at your computer to stand out. [TP8 TL/Multi]

This last sentiment reflects not only the difficulty faced by agents to stand out to ‘naturally’ progress but, also highlights deeper held beliefs concerning their *perception of worth* to the company. Perception of worth holds value for states of gamefulness within contact centre environments as it acts in combination with social support and feedback to create a cognitive state conducive to having gameful interactions. For instance, agents who believe they are perceived as low value, are less likely to seek assistance from peers or team leaders and instead attempt to resolve complex problems beyond their competency level alone. In combination with the limited support channels available and, the structure of contact centre organisations requiring agents to support each other, agents become significantly dissuaded in their daily activities and their perception or framing of “what is a game” shifts.

This shift is demonstrable in one particularly frustrated employee, in which they cited their reason for leaving the contact centre industry as:

There was a huge lack of respect for anyone. They just, they just saw you as numbers, and those numbers were tuned into other numbers, and then you would leave. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

The notion of numbers refers directly to the use of KPI metrics and their associated rewards. This employee’s perceptions of the reward systems had shifted from one deployed to create positive gameful experiences, to one in which employees were inconsequential numerical values in a system.

Echoing this sentiment is a senior agent who has previously operated in a team leader role stating:

There is no visibility of how an agent progresses, so they get frustrated and leave. If we put a structure in there, if we put real visibility, such as these are the steps that you need to get to this position agents are more willing to engage. [TP10 TL/Multi]

The team leader in this instance positioned real visibility as that beyond what is currently available through deployed KPI systems and, one that reflects the actual probability with which agents are likely to progress within their role once they have become proficient.

The influence of such perception extends further than the self-interests of the individual though. In several instances, employees and team leaders agreed that the low visibility of competent agents holds the potential to demoralise those working near them. Demoralisation appears because of how agents derive value from perceptions of worth among their peers and, the reality that low visibility of otherwise commendable performances prohibits its accrual. Such prohibition prevents agents from framing deployed reward systems in a positive light and, thus they perceive their interactions with them limited or nothing more than numerical values in a system.

This demoralisation equally occurs for team leaders as well. When the demoralised and unrecognised agent eventually departs the company, their departure leads to a consequence of feeling that the time vested into training the staff member is a waste or that they will have to “get another one and move on”. It is this mentality however, that contributes to the agent’s belief that they are easily replaceable and that KPI based reward systems should be engaged with only for their tangible and transactional rewards, in a machine-like fashion.

For some frontline employees, this demoralisation also results in collective or unspoken agreements between peers to reduce work output. As the perceptions towards KPI systems shifts away from gameful and towards transactional, the rationale for this reduction is one that orients around the team-based nature of most frontline contact centre roles. While monitoring performance in both team and individual statistics, employees hold the belief that metrics of agent performance are relative concepts.

I would say a large number of us decreased our performance overall and just sort of, got less work got done. If we worked harder and, we did not all work harder, then someone else was just doing all the work, and everyone else was cruising or at least that’s how it felt on the hardest worker. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

Further, agents who take part in such behaviour understand that while relying on KPI systems as the primary means of measuring performance or role adherence, during a monthly performance meetings skewed performance is rationalised by referring to the performance levels of peers, KPI system inadequacies or limitations around feedback. Therefore, agents justify agreements of *communal under-performance* through a combination of inferences

concerning the barriers for ‘natural progression’, in conjunction with a desire to normalise their work output with peers.

In summary, analysis has revealed the unstructured nature of contact centre role mastery and subsequent progression which further, highlights the discontentment of employees concerning their perceptions of worth. Their perceptions, in turn, influence the behaviours of peers and contribute towards the normalisation of behaviours viewed as detrimental to general business performance, but, more importantly contribute to a sense of dissuasion towards reward systems designed to induce states of gamefulness. This discontentment within an agent’s role influences adjacent factors such as their willingness to adhere KPI systems and, indirectly impacts perceptions around behavioural adjustment initiatives such as extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivators.

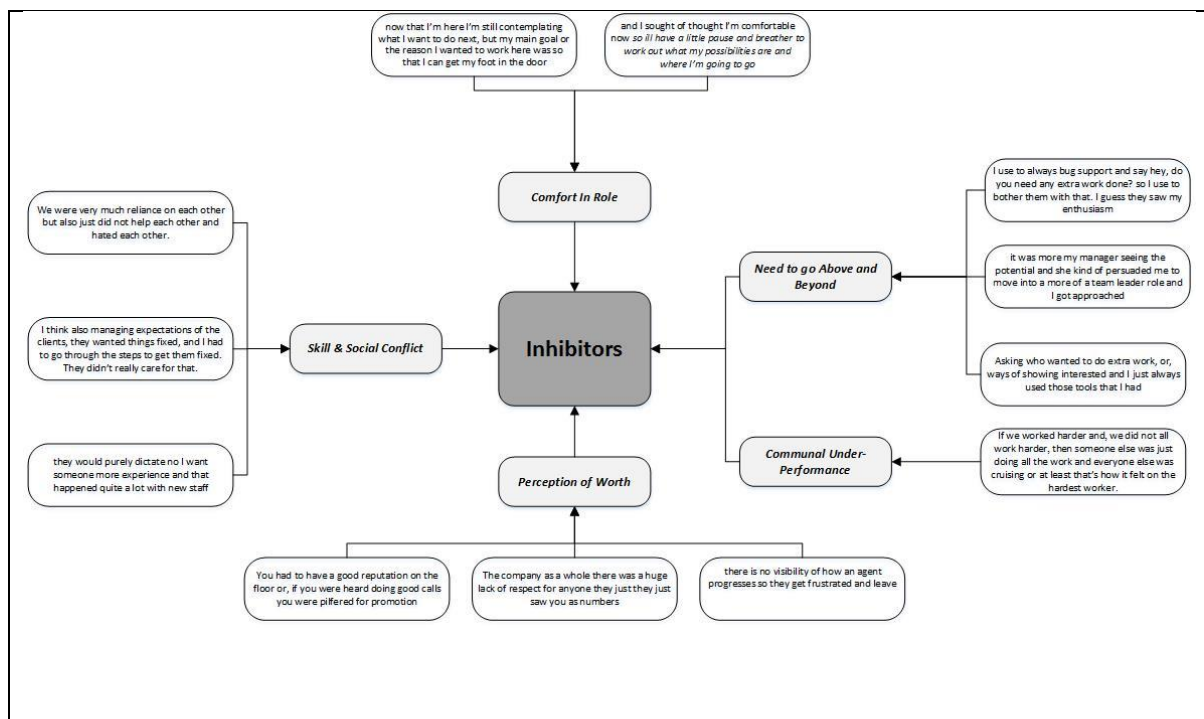


Figure 6.5: Example of Subcategory Inhibitors

6.6.2. Subcategory - Enablers

Enablers explain how employees are empowered to pursue *career mastery* will conducting innate components of their daily roles. *Enablers* is the result of analysis of the roles of frontline agents and capture positive characteristics of the workplace and working environment that serve to influence agent progression or pursuits of mastery positively.

As previously discussed, many participants contend that their entry into the contact centre industry was a decision defined by the prospect of unknown future career progression opportunities. Furthermore, in many instances, their progress is at times halted by an array of inhibiting factors, such as a lack of structure, recognition and perception of worth. Some participants remain unable to overcome these obstacles, and therefore job satisfaction erodes, while they become frustrated with the associated remuneration. These factors hold significant value for a greater understanding of gamified environments. As previously identified, to garner any long-term commitment to gamification, organisations must focus on the cultivation of employee intrinsic motivation. The antecedents of which are a sense of purpose and pursuit of proficiency in one's daily role. Further, as gameful KPI systems aim at generating sustainable engagement, agents must be continuously encouraged to engage with these systems in the long term, at times when the nascent novelty value has diminished.

Analysis alluded to a distinct lack of structure surrounding operational elements that hold the potential to enable or assist with the career progression of agents. One of the most prominent elements identified is the belief amongst agents that the active pursuit of forms of recognition is a useful mechanism to assist their career development. It is viewed this way because agents have come to both recognise and accept that without the acknowledgement of their team leaders or managers, opportunities for further growth will not become available to them. Agents who have commenced in low-level positions and subsequently progressed to move either between departments or to other levels of seniority often attribute their ability to do so, to a willingness to broadcast their value to their peers and managers.

I would constantly leave my desk and ask questions. So instead of messaging someone I would get up and go and talk to them, I was always on my desk asking for advice or letting them know what the story is or if I was doing something for a manager I would sort of write down what I did go over and tell them ok this x amount of people that's all sorted. This one I think is almost done. We probably just need to do this, and this is still to do so I sort of just summed up what I did and informed them of what I had done so that people would actually see me. [TP20 TL/Tech]

This finding builds upon those presented earlier, in which, states of gamefulness within contact centres are contingent on an agent's ability to achieve sufficient positive social

interaction. This is because without such social interaction agents contributions, desires to learn or upskill may go unnoticed, leading to a dissuasion around KPI systems said to accurately reflect their performance value.

Team leaders ratified this belief as they often assert they give opportunities to those agents who appear to be proactive and conducive to the responsibility a new position entails. One team leader views this as a process of passive agent observation concerning their performance and willingness to encourage others to increase performance.

Well, we are not going to tell them you are now a senior and you now assist people. Instead, it is watching them and how they interact on our chat app which is a floor chat for our campaigns and how they step up pushing other agents to meet a team goal and things like that. [TP15 TL]

It is through such observations that the category of physical recognition emerges. Team leaders and agents repeatedly stated that the optimal way to express a desire to learn or upskill was through increasing one's visibility in a physical capacity.

If no one knows you exist, then they'll just forget you work here [TP2 CSR]

However, the requirement of physical recognition was not communicated through KPI based metrics, nor was it used to further incentives staff, leading some to believe KPI based rewards misdirected agent's efforts towards gameful activities unlikely to help fulfil long intrinsic desires.

I think I got the maximum amount of [virtual money] you could each month. But no one ever mentioned it as anything special. It was kind of expected and I got to spend the money on stuff I wanted so I guess they didn't feel the need to bring it up.

For the most part, however, team leaders believed they are aware of which agents wish to upskill or seek progression opportunities, and when permitted forwarded recommendations for those agents they deemed to hold the requisite skill set. From the perspective of employees though, this process was one of arbitrary reward. Further, in instances where agents engaged with KPI systems at a minimal level, the perception of those not receiving progression or upskilling opportunities shifted to one of unfairness and deception.

Sometimes it made no sense who got to go [to training]. We would look at their stats and say well that doesn't really make sense. Why would you give this person an opportunity to be better than everyone else when they're clearly not putting in any effort now. That was always frustrating. [TP3 CSR]

These beliefs hold significant domain over an agent's ability to enter states of gamefulness, as they successfully removed the sense of agency individuals held over their ability to influence career mastery and role progression.

However, despite agents alluding to raised performance awareness as a significant positive contributor, many agents who eventually receive progression recommendations are unsure why they are selected.

It kind of just happened. I guess they thought I was performing well and they approached me about it during my monthly 1 on 1. But they never really went into detail, it was more, hey this positions open you should apply for it. [TP12 CSR/TL]

Instead, agents tend to view the new opportunity as being the result of being pushed into scenarios they otherwise wouldn't have actively sought.

Definitely, if my team leader didn't mention it during the 1 on 1 I wouldn't have even known about it. [TP12 CSR/TL]

Even though agents would often pursue such opportunities through maintaining KPI levels or by taking available upskilling certifications, the apparent serendipitous promotions afforded to some and not others, only further confounded agent's perceptions of ideal performance and, as a result their views around career mastery.

Inevitably, the result of such perceptions for those not recommended for positions is often a belief that some individual agents are favoured over others and, that opportunities are concealed intentionally.

You don't really get told of opportunities if any are open out there unless you have a manager who's determined to help you move out of the space itself, you have to go find it and look for the job opportunities. [TP2 CSR/Tech]

Once ingrained, these beliefs transitioned into an agents perception around reward systems and, consequently influenced their ability to engage with such systems in a gameful capacity. This was particularly demonstrable when there was a strong belief that KPI based metrics hold limited usefulness and achievability.

They would give you a list of objectives to these other criteria. These are your KPIs; this is what you need to do to reach 100% to achieve that particular area of your KPI..., and within a month you felt deflated because you could see they were unachievable. [TP21 CSR/Tech]

Therefore, it could be said that once agent's perceptions shifted to this state of dissuasion, gameful KPI systems leveraging extrinsic benefits to motivate became significantly less appealing and influential.

Team leaders who have progressed through various roles provided some insight into how such systems could be improved. They suggest that to tackle these problems, the structure of KPI systems and potential career paths must become more visible, to ensure staff remain positively engaged.

The idea should be to show team members what they need to do to be considered good at their role. Not everyone wants to progress into management but our KPIs should still reflect excellence. [TP13 TL/CSR]

Both agents and team leaders assert that when using KPI reward systems that demonstrate clear, accurate depictions of work output, they are more likely to feel a sense of accomplishment or fulfilment within their role. Equally, some agents believe that accurate representations of work output reduce the exploitation within such systems, thus reducing senses of futility and discontent.

Agents who have exited the industry, however, hold a slightly more jaded view, citing an overall lack of respect as the primary factor that needs addressing.

With the individual team leaders, there was a little bit of respect. And because of that, I would try a little bit harder for them. But from the company as a whole, there was a huge lack of respect for anyone. They just saw you as numbers and, those numbers

were toned into other numbers and, then you would leave. You are a head count, and once you leave, they just have to replace you. You are literally replaceable by anyone. By anyone off the street. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

Among those that have left the industry, there is a strong belief that even if their team leaders recognise an agent, the agent adheres to KPIs and meets any additional task with enthusiasm; there is still no guarantee of career progress.

When I was looking to go into one of those positions, I was advised that no, there is no extra money and it is just the Kudos of the fact that you are seen to be management material, and eventually you could become a manager. But in all of the time that I worked in the contact centre not one of the people that did those jobs ever became a manager or a team leader. And in fact, when the roles did come up they weren't even really considered. It felt more like those people were just used, they were used and yea, it just felt they were used in my opinion. They did not get extra pay and they personally just thought they would get a better shot at a team leader or manager role, but in fact, in the time I worked there, it never happened. [TP21 CSR/Tech]

At which point, gameful KPI systems hold limited value outside of their economic transactional reward.

I didn't care about the rewards in the end. I was just frustrated all of the time.[TP21 CSR/Tech]

Some organisations have attempted to bridge these problems by leveraging industry-specific certifications or exam processes. These initiatives intend to provide a clear path to knowledge acquisition, competency and progression to agents who otherwise may find the process difficult to navigate. While most organisations have relied on third party certifications with only loose connections to the contexts of their roles, one organisation attempted to integrate a proprietary examination process directly with their developing gamification effort and distributed virtual badges signifying completion alongside additional virtual currency rewards. The reactions to the initiative from agents were mixed, with some finding the examination and certification process to be an enabling factor, while others concluded that the effort failed to enable progression or mastery, and, instead acted as an additional barrier. When

confronted with these perceptions, the developer of the initiative concurred with the latter belief stating:

Well, it does control how they can advance within the company quite a lot. Like I mentioned it is not really being used the way it was originally intended for. So it is really, yeah, it's not really improving in the way that I think it was intended. But, it certainly is showing who is capable in the workplace. So yeah I think it really needs a review and we can make some changes for that one. [TP16 Dev/Tech]

In summary, while *career mastery* remains a largely unstructured process agents and team leaders agree that increased visibility of employee willingness, performance and skills are beneficial to its pursuit. Agents have identified that within current contact centre environments recognition from their immediate team leaders is paramount to receiving opportunities for growth, however, when selected for such opportunities agents remain unaware of the specific contributory factors. Within KPI systems, agents must maintain a positive perception of reward systems which, is aided by career mastery opportunities. The juxtaposition, however, is that career mastery opportunities are often obfuscated and, can easily lead to a perception that gameful KPI systems have limited meaning outside of their immediate extrinsic benefits. Both agents and team leaders agree that initiatives require focused attention towards meaningful criteria. Despite this, agents who have exited the industry cite underlying perceptions of worth as equally valuable to a process which is innately serendipitous.

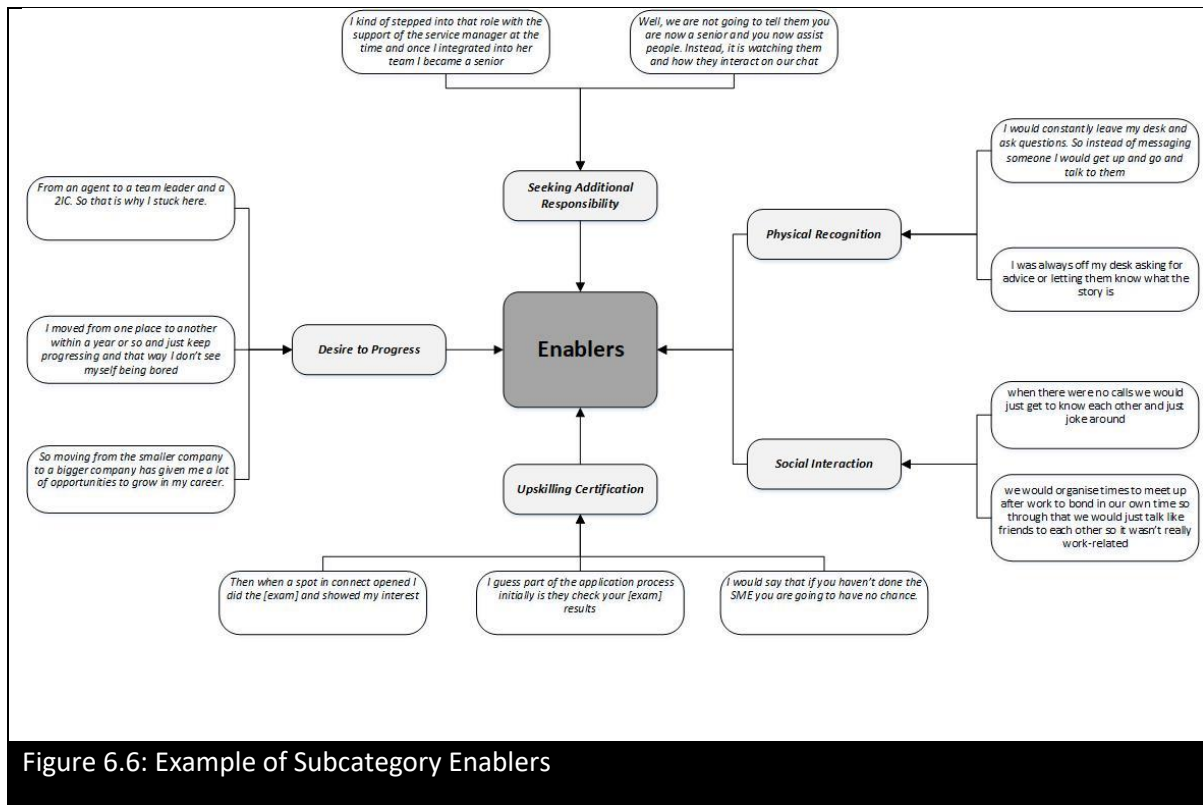


Figure 6.6: Example of Subcategory Enablers

6.7. Category - Fundamental Teamplay

Fundamental Teamplay, a synthesis of two subcategories, *supportive collaboration* and *social remuneration*, captures and illustrates the drivers of team cohesion within contact centre environments subject to KPI based gamification initiatives. It is an examination of factors associated with support in team environments, and the social reward garnered through becoming an active member of the team.

Supportive collaboration is an amalgamation of social factors that aid or restrict agents in their team-based role. Factors range from positive communication, reliance on co-worker support and limitations around available support channels. *Social remuneration* is the rewarding aspects of social interactions that agents value within their roles. These rewarding aspects further direct behaviours towards members of their team and have a direct relationship to an agents willingness to act in a supportive manner. Table 6.9 presents the construction of this category through its open codes and resulting subcategories.

Table 6.9: Construction of Fundamental Teamplay

Open Codes	Subcategories	Main Category
<i>Physical communication, dependent on call complexity, dependant on workload, limited social exposure, positive communication, performance signaling, limited support channels, support information obfuscated, limited support databases, reliance on co-worker competence, inadequate support resources, self-support focus, informal support systems.</i>	Supportive Collaboration	Fundamental Teamplay
<i>Social obligation towards peers, sporadic social reward events, peer recognition value, peer competition value, communal performance reward, social responsibility as reward, customer as rewards, conflict de-escalation reward, problem avoidance recognition.</i>	Social Remuneration	

6.7.1. Subcategory - Supportive collaboration

Supportive collaboration is a sub-category of fundamental teamwork that illustrates how agents rely on social support mechanisms when conducting their role. The behaviours and perceptions captured within this category elucidate how agents place reliance on systems, managers and co-worker support as a fundamental component of their daily role.

Analysis revealed that within the observed contact centres, support systems played an important role in an agent's ability to meet and adhere to KPI based targets. Because contact centres represent a point of problem resolution for customers and, organisations expect that

agents provide clients with solutions regardless of issue complexity. For this reason, contact centres establish an array of support systems to assist agents and, actively monitor their ability to adhere to KPI metrics such as first call resolution.

While contact centre support systems come in a variety of forms, ranging from digital databases through to managerial escalation, the analysis revealed that a disproportionate reliance is placed on the individual skill of agents and, coworker support mechanisms to overcome most obstacles. Because the structure of frontline agent roles is such that scripted resolution processes limit the requirement of extramural support systems. Therefore, instances, where additional support systems are required, are outliers and, can be addressed through less structured processes. Instances, where emergent problems persist, are then retroactively accounted for within training materials or scripted solutions.

In the interim, however, reliance is placed on agent's ability and cooperation with peers to overcome unique problems. In recognition of this need, organisations encourage the formation of team-based environments from the initial induction phase of new agent recruitment. The purpose of this is to encourage new or inexperienced employees to seek assistance from peers, should all other applicable steps fail. Equally, this encouragement comes in recognition that the range of skills taught within short induction training periods is insufficient to conduct all aspects of an agent's role proficiently from day one. Consequently, there also exists an expectation from organisations that senior employees be immediately receptive to new staff, while at the same time adhering to individual and team-based KPIs performance metrics. As a result, the relationships formed between co-workers around support systems are complex and, often reliant on inherent trade-offs between one's performance and their wider social responsibilities.

This trade-off, personified through the actions of senior agents who, are frequently required to place customers on hold while they assist new or uninformed staff. While this system is an effective solution for routine customer queries, it introduces several obstacles when the call is of a more complex nature. Firstly, analysis revealed that staff are operating on limited time frames with any support they give; this is the natural consequence of being subject to time-based KPIs and placing active calls on hold. Furthermore, new agents will often seek support

from peers who may not have been adequately trained to handle such calls. One agent highlights the challenging nature of such requests

The times that I found the most difficult was when we had new staff start and, they were working evenings with us. You had to leave your job to go and supervise, and you were not adequately trained really, for it to be escalated to you. It was very difficult but how could you ignore the person. [TP18 TL/CSR]

Additionally, the quality of peer's support given can vary greatly if the call is of a complex nature, or when experienced are under significant time constraints. In such cases, supporting agents will often be hesitant to provide a full-fledged solution, instead deferring to options that are likely to encourage the customer to call back later.

When questioned further about the dissonance between roles, one agent illustrated

If I am on a complex call where you know, I cannot really place them on hold and, I'm listening to them rant or giving an in-depth explanation. That would prevent me from replying instantly. More often than not I would say hold on give me a couple of minutes. Other than that if I'm already doing manual work or if I've already been given a task to do something that would prevent me from replying. But more often than not if I get an opportunity to place the customer on hold while doing the customers query I would do a quick support reply. [TP20 TL/Tech]

Equally, in instances where the senior agent is unable to provide a solution, the troubled agent is often left without an avenue of recourse and, must keep the customer in a state of suspense until one becomes available. At this point, the agent faces a decision of keeping the customer occupied with full knowledge that they are unable to provide a solution or attempt to overcome the problem with makeshift solutions. And often results in the sense of frustration from both the agent and customer and eventuates in escalated complaints or repeated calls.

customers expect you to at least have the information on hand within that call, but if you haven't got a team leader or anybody there that can lock these things up while you are writing, then come back within that period of time, then that is frustrating for

customers. They would purely dictate, no I want someone more experience and, that happened quite a lot with new staff. [TP20 TL/Tech]

Participants who have since left the contact centre industry illustrate the influences these conditions have on motivation, through responses that emphasise senses of futility and mental depletion before exiting their role.

That is probably one of the main reasons that I left as well. Because it gets to a point, where you are frustrated with the process that they are doing and, they are not really looking after the people that are sitting there taking the calls. [TP11 CSR/Tech]

The effects of which are widespread, as agents highlighted the influence that co-workers departing could have directly on employees who elected to stay within their role. These sentiments would contribute to a sense of dissuasion around their role but, also feelings of isolation, abandonment and limited career progress.

At the time that I was leaving, I was the last man standing in the group. There were ten people in the group, and I was the last one. Most of them moved to a competitor or other companies or other roles, and I felt like why am I still here I need to move on. [TP11 CSR/Tech]

The analysis also revealed that select users who display supportive collaboration behaviour would exhibit a sense of frustration around the ever-present co-worker dependency. This frustration is generated through reoccurring conflicts involving individual or communal KPI metrics. In such instances, agents feel unjustifiably punished for the poor performances of their inexperienced peers. Veteran agents often believe that their own ability to overcome obstacles enabled them to conduct their role in isolation and, as a result, they would view the addition of team-based metrics as burdensome.

If I was reaching my target, I would have to say to myself, why have you taken this particular person on they are not performing why are you not training why are you not helping and if you know that they are dragging us down. [TP21 CSR/Tech]

For this reason, proficient staff would place less of an emphasis on KPI metrics, while others would elect to ignore them entirely. These agents would still meet their month-to-month

KPI obligations, but it would be through the passive accrual of KPIs enabled by expertise and, not the active pursuit of precise performance standards.

In summary, the analysis has revealed that relationships governing social collaboration within frontline agent roles are complex and, sometimes conflicting. There is a requisite within the current structure of New Zealand contact centres for experienced agents to offer support to new entrants, particularly when faced with unique problems. This support, however, is offered at the expense of experienced agents ability to achieve KPIs. Thus, experienced agents are not always willing, or able, to provide resolution paths for those new to the industry, and as a result, both parties foster a degree of frustration around this codependence. Analysis has also indicated, that the many of these problems stem from the strict requirements of KPI systems, in which agents feel punished for adhering to social requirements while at the same time attempting meet performance metrics.

6.7.2. Subcategory - Social Remuneration

Social Remuneration is a subcategory of fundamental teamplay that explores how agents repay each other with accumulative social recognition. As illustrated in the previous subcategory social collaboration is a crucial component of front-line agent work, specifically where agents are reliant on reciprocal relationships to conduct their role. It is through this reliance, and the complex relationships formed therewithin, that agents derive satisfaction and recognition from their peers. In turn, this influences their motivation to perform and extend mutual support to surrounding co-workers and customers. As the purpose of gameful KPI systems is to motivate agents in perpetuity, there is an innate association between social remuneration and how gameful KPI systems influence employees. These associations are categorised throughout the coding process as social resources.

Social resources within the context of a New Zealand contact centres are the communal interactions encompassing employee relationships around gameful KPI systems, such as trust, cooperation and reciprocity. These interactions act as principal factors guiding agent behaviour in the face of co-worker dependent roles and are viewed by socially driven agents as a primary incentive mechanism. The reason for this is that it is through these resources that agents can demonstrate their competency within a role, be recognised for their ability and ultimately benefit from that recognition.

When questioned about the gratifying aspects of their role, analysis revealed that agents highlighted social recognition as equal to, or more important than quantifiable KPI metrics in most instances.

Being acknowledged for the extra effort that was quite important and being acknowledged by the entire team if I'd gone beyond the role to help customers out, I think that was quite important. Even though it may or may not be included in your review, your KPIs it still is quite important. Personally, I think. [TP17 CSR]

This position was consistent throughout data analysis as there was a strong belief amongst agents that such recognition not only facilitated career progression but also fulfilled intrinsic desires to act in an altruistic manner. One employee expressed that altruism provided the opportunity to help someone in need and, elevated moments where their expertise could be disseminated to the benefit of others.

Being able to solve other people's problems I guess. So people asking for general help and if they couldn't do something we could help them out. And I guess that was really nice it was a nice feeling that we were able to help. For example, you see maybe an old lady, and she may not have been able to figure out how, I don't know, if her Password worked or what to do with her cheques. I liked giving people advice I think that was more rewarding [TP17 CSR]

The reason for which, was identified as creating a deeper sense of purpose within their role beyond the quantifiable metrics captured in KPI systems. Employees indicated that such purpose enabled them to connect with those they were helping in a way that broke up the monotony of repetitive high-density calls.

If all the calls are like I have no DSL, I am like you have to do isolation testing. But if you have one that is like, a woman calling saying my Internet isn't working and, my kids are home from school holidays and, then you can sort it out on that call and, she is super appreciative. Then it feels like you are actually helping someone as opposed to going through the motions. [TP18 TL/CSR]

In some instances, team leaders and managers attempted to leverage the utility of social recognition by implementing initiatives that explicitly elevated co-worker awareness.

Normally done through a combination of existing KPI systems and other context specific resources. For example, customer compliments directed towards agents were isolated by team leaders or managers and broadcast for all employees to see. In many cases, these compliments are submitted through retroactive feedback surveys or, instances where the customers had taken extra steps to contact an appropriate team leader to pass on their regards. In virtually all instances, however, team leaders and managers would compile the feedback into an email or other highly visible initiative and ensure they were delivered department-wide. The thought process behind this was that to maximise the social value an employee could receive from the customer's recognition, there needed to be a raised level of social awareness around the employee's actions.

On the surface, such initiatives appear to be congruent with employee's desire to receive social recognition. However, analysis revealed that despite the good intentions behind the initiatives many felt ambivalent about their effectiveness. Much of this ambivalence was ultimately, due to an overreliance on visibility increasing methods which unintentionally created a perception among employees that such social recognition was another routine component of their daily role.

Well, I personally just treat it like it's just another email. Like you know when every day they send out an email saying breaks have been readjusted, it just feels like that. [TP22 CSR/Tech]

Employees indicated that the use of mass emails had lost their effectiveness when their reporting and frequency felt almost automated in nature.

It was just an email format. If your calls were in a certain amount of time that was required and, it was all good, it would be green. [TP17 CSR]

These emails also tended to shift the focus away from the customer-driven qualitative feedback and instead emphasised adherence to KPI metrics. The unintended consequence being staff who had been underperforming would sometimes become a victim of disingenuous social recognition when correcting performance abnormalities.

They would let everyone know you got a sale and sometimes the whole contact centre depending on who the person was you would hear everybody stop and start to clap. I

think the other staff were sending a message you know great for this person but is this really necessary. [TP21 CSR/Tech]

Equally, other employees felt that the ambivalence was because elevating customer compliments increased the number of employees actively seeking them, which in turn, devalued their validity and subsequent worth.

I feel like it is pretty whatever. When I get them I am pretty happy to get them but, I found that a lot of people go fishing for compliments. So the customer will be like oh you did a really good job, and they will be like how about you tell my manager. So when I see it for other people, I am like yeah whatever. [TP18 TL/CSR]

In summary, the subcategory of social remuneration illustrates the complex nature of social rewards within frontline agent work and, highlights the reliance on cooperation and reciprocity among staff members. The subcategory also emphasises the benefits of social recognition in the pursuit of career mastery, as employee's foster deeper sense of purpose within their roles. Equally, analysis has also uncovered the unintentional ineffectiveness of current social recognition initiatives propagated by management and, their ability to generate inadvertent behaviours among staff.

6.8. Category - Superimposed Benefits

Superimposed benefits describe the empirical understanding of the types of rewards agents receive within their frontline roles. Superimposed benefits is the examination of factors surrounding extrinsic rewards and, tasks designed to be intrinsically motivating. These factors are the synthesis of two subcategories based on their methods of distribution: formal rewards and informal rewards.

Formal rewards are benefits that given to agents in an official, recorded and mandated fashion. As well as being distributed in a prescribed capacity, formal rewards also contain a range of factors that govern their effectiveness and perception among employees. These factors range from blanket rewards, motivator augmentation focus or team driven initiatives. Conversely, informal rewards are extrinsic and intrinsic benefits distributed to agents in a non-prescribed manner. As with formal rewards, informal rewards hold the capacity to influence the perceptions of agents through factors such as compensation beyond their

conventional role, additional responsibility and as unintentional benefits. Together, these subcategories form the empirical understanding of Superimposed Benefits applied to frontline agent roles. Table 6.10 presents the construction of this category through its open codes and resulting subcategories.

Table 6.10: Construction of Superimposed Benefits

Open Codes	Subcategories	Main Category
<i>Tangible formal rewards, virtual currency, blanket reward system, goal driven, motivator augmentation focus, team driven reward initiatives, management curation, reward metric reliance, preference for extrinsic rewards.</i>	Formal Rewards	Superimposed Benefits
<i>Tangible Informal rewards, Client driven rewards, beyond role compensation, undesirable task mitigation, intrinsically valued rewards, additional responsibility, progression opportunities, unintentional rewards, resolutions as rewards</i>	Informal Rewards	

6.8.1. Subcategory - Formal Rewards

Formal rewards is a subcategory of *superimposed benefits* that outlines how rewards issued in an official capacity are utilised within contact centre environments to influence agent motivation. Typically, participants receive *formal rewards* for reaching KPI based milestones or achieving individual targets set by team leaders or managers. The rewards themselves come in a variety of forms, including, badges, virtual leaderboards, physical goods and monetary compensation. However, within KPI based reward systems, the most common formal reward is the use of virtual currencies.

Virtual currencies are a digital representation of accrued value exchangeable within digital economies, for goods and services. Unlike traditional cash systems, virtual currencies within contact centre environments operate on a self-regulated goodwill system, curated at the organisational level. These currencies issued independently of remuneration mandated by employee contractual agreements, act as additional incentives that an employee can earn in addition to their normal salary. In some situations, business partners or client's agents organisations operate virtual currencies, but regardless, functionally they operate similarly.

Organisations that elect to use virtual currencies tend to rely on them as the primary extrinsic reward within KPI focused initiatives. Each month these systems distribute set amounts of virtual currency to each agent achieving individual KPI targets.

Within this environment, team leaders have the discretionary authority to distribute additional monetary amounts to reward or incentivise staff if necessary.

A team will be given a set balance each month, which, will not be towards KPIs. So let's say if they have ten it would be fifty virtual money per that team member. So they would get 500, and that would give them a balance they can use for the team, to reward them for compliments or extra work or things like that. [TP16 Dev/Tech]

Incentivisation mechanisms such as this are primarily relied upon when more undesirable tasks need undertaking. Such as increasing staff performance during service outages, or during periods of high call volumes. Alternatively, experienced staff may be encouraged to solve unique or long-standing problems with customers through follow-up calls. Which are often argumentative scenarios that have a high probability of escalating to a complaint.

One team leader stated during their interview that the exercise is less about incentivising tasks, rather more about rewarding agents who are willing to carry out the least desirable aspects of the role. The belief holds that by doing so, agents will be dissuaded from exploitative behaviour and, accept all aspects of the role as being within the scope of their responsibilities.

I wouldn't call it an incentive. I would say it is a reward for doing the ugly stuff. So it is basically like the toilet is blocked we need someone to fix it. We will compensate you for going through the hassle of doing that. Rather than saying, hey let us block of the

toilets so that I can get some many money. So by in large, I think that is where things like walk-in customers or any odd bits that might need to be done, Yes that is where virtual money kind of place for us. But it is not so much an incentive but more an outcome of doing something outside of our round of responsibility. [TP12 CSR/TL]

Despite efforts of organisations to explain that virtual currencies are additional rewards, many agents nonetheless invariably view the use of virtual currencies as an extension of their salary. Consequently, some agents plan how to acquire more currency, and project future spends. Others calculate the equivalent real-world dollar exchange rate and determine how much virtual currency a single customer compliment brings.

The implementation of existing virtual currency schemes often allows agents to see how much currency is, or is not, awarded to their peers.

Whether they were on your team or one of the other teams, we would know if you were a person that did not get anything that day or that week or that month. [TP21 CSR/Tech]

This degree of transparency increases expectations concerning entitlement to virtual currency and engenders competition between peers. It is arguable therefore that there is some disconnect between how agents view and utilise such systems, with how team leaders envisage and desire agents to see them.

The developers of reward initiatives share a degree of congruence with both employees and team leaders, as they often have the first-hand experience of being an agent themselves.

When I was taking calls, I did. I thought of wanting to get items on the Virtual Mart. I am going to make sure I can keep working hard, and afford them. Because say if you are 300 points away from something and, you know you will only get those points once a month when that time comes around for next month, you are going to want to make sure if you can get that. You've got to make sure that you can get those points you know. So, you are going to work hard or as hard as you can to reach them in a minimum amount of time. [TP16 Dev/Tech]

While developers empathise with agents, they also understand that the objective of virtual currencies is to act as a compelling extrinsic motivator outside of standard compensation schemes. Such extrinsic motivators require the freedom to be applied to individual or undesirable tasks, while, at the same time retaining an elevated sense of worth to highlight positive employee behaviour and accomplishments.

Virtual currencies often accompany the formal reward of badges. Badges are proprietary digital or physical assets that act as proficiency signifiers by representing achievements within the workplace. They are awarded to staff upon reaching milestones, and broadcast agent competency for other team members to see. The specific use of badges varies between organisations. However, they are principally used to signify when agents have completed training modules, adhered to KPIs or have few absentees within set timeframes.

While employees indicate that receiving badges, is at least initially, a rewarding experience, team leaders will often elect to supplement badge rewards with additional virtual currency. When questioned about whether this practice negatively influences the perception of badges, one developer said:

I think that is where we really would not have to worry about it because they want to meet these KPIs and get these badges in the future. If we add them just because it is going to give them more money, really, it's sort of like a sales agent getting a commission in a way. So I think you are going to work harder if you will get more money for it hopefully. [TP16 Dev/Tech]

Developers and team leaders believe that badges are calibrated to carry an innate worth. Further, an expectation exists for agents to be driven by the completion of tasks, with their motivation enhanced by the use of social signifiers. The inclusion of virtual currency recognises that some jobs are inherently harder to achieve or are less desirable; therefore, agents are encouraged to pursue the completion of such tasks for their own worth, in conjunction with the potential reward of virtual currency.

Agents, however, have a less optimistic perspective of badges, with many agents contending that badges and awards produce a diminished sense of value over time due to their inherently repetitive nature.

It's a bit odd, It's nice I guess when you get a compliment and stuff but, after a while, it just sort of gets like oh ok, ticking the boxes kind of thing. [TP22 CSR/Tech]

This view is congruent with the belief many agents hold of the repetitive nature of contact centre work, and the need to be resilient to monotony to be successful.

Resilience I guess would probably be a key one I would say that both as a team leader. And, as a CSR I found that on the floor being resilient in a situation where things are very regulated. Essentially as a CSR, you are doing the same sort of thing, taking calls that can wear you down, so that definitely is a challenge. [TP10 TL/Multi]

This theme is significant as, once agents reach a point of dissuasion, the emphasis on badge based rewards quickly diverts to what the associated monetary value is, as opposed to the intrinsic value that team leaders and developers plan for them to hold.

It's an ego boost and the fact that you do get many money rewards with it is already worth it. it's mostly because of the many money that makes it worth I guess. [TP22 CSR/Tech]

In summary, the opinions of agents and managers with regards to the rigid application of formal rewards are often asynchronous. Because, while managers attempt to leverage extrinsic benefits as a catch-all motivation solution, they remain largely unaware of the diminishing influence their use has on the completion of undesirable tasks. Further, while managers and team leaders view the use of extrinsic rewards as supplements to roles that are innately motivating, employees recognise their repetitive nature and begin to consider their acquisition as a routine part of their standardised role. This discovery is significant, as extrinsic benefits through formal initiatives are relied upon to spur agents towards a state of sustainable engagement, yet this disconnect indicates agents perceive such rewards as superficial or of limited value.

6.8.2. Subcategory - Informal Rewards

Informal rewards are a subcategory of *superimposed benefits* that represents how rewards, which fall outside of organisations structured compensation processes, influence the motivation of frontline agents. It is by Informal rewards that team leaders and managers attempt to alleviate agent stress, promote teamwork and afford career progression

opportunities. The distribution of *informal rewards* is independent of *formal rewards*, and as such, they are not subject to the imposition of the same rigid organisational restrictions. As a result, team leaders and managers take more responsibility when considering how *informal rewards* interact with staff and, how they influence those rewards of a formal nature. Balancing this are cognisant employees who remain aware that *informal rewards* are of a temporary and sporadic nature, the effect of which limits any long-term motivational power.

Typically, *informal rewards* are benefits given to staff in an impromptu fashion and fall outside of heavily regulated reward systems based on KPIs or training initiatives. Unlike *formal rewards*, *informal rewards* are diverse and flexible, conceived ordinarily at an individual team leader or manager level. Because of this, *informal rewards* are inherently less structured, yet still relied upon to improve staff motivation or engagement.

It is standard practice to use *informal rewards* as a tool to help alleviate stress and demonstrate empathy towards staff during unexpected service outages. Because such outages ordinarily fall outside a supervisor's ability to provide a resolution and consequentially may limit the escalation and problem-solving options available to frontline staff. Disruptions of a serious nature can result in extended wait times for customers due to increasingly high call volumes, and continue until the necessary departments have coordinated a suitable resolution process. Given the external nature of most faults, this procedure is frequently a function that operates independently from team leaders or frontline staff.

The ramifications of outages are apparent through the shifting attitudes and opinions of agents, with many front-line employees harbouring a sense of diminished purpose and motivation towards their role. This change in staff perception comes as the result of a realisation that within service outages the ability of agents to affect positive change is significantly diminished. Rather, agent asserts that during such periods their role devolves into something more akin to a live customer notification process, as opposed to a stimulating problem-solving scenario.

Recognising this, managers often attempt to mitigate the erosion of motivation by organising *informal rewards* schemes. The goal of this goodwill gesture is to redirect the focus of agents

away from the monotony of repetitive high volume calls, and towards potential rewards which may come in the form of food or beverages for consumption in between calls

It was pretty rare, but they did on occasion give us food. They would be more likely to give us food in cases where there were large outages and a lot of phone calls. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

In some circumstances, managers will frame an outage as an opportunity to hold on-the-fly competitions where staff can compete for a range of extrinsic rewards

The team would get for example a movie ticket each or something along the lines of vouchers or something [TP10 TL/Multi]

This second initiative can meet with varying degrees of success. As the introduction of game-like states can at times encounter unforeseen problems, which serve to highlight the difficulty of promoting states of playfulness in scenarios where job demands are potentially at odds with the agent resources available;

There is not much room for playfulness in my experience. There is not much room for playfulness outside of me and the people sitting in my immediate vicinity. Like I enjoy clowning around with the people I sit right next to and stuff but, that is as far as that energy will go everybody else will still be getting slammed by calls [TP18 TL/CSR]

However, in instances wherein agents may have resigned themselves to believing that seeking to achieve unattainable job demands is a futile exercise, the use of external or informal traditional games provides a much-needed boon to overcome boredom.

I would say the first time I got there I wanted to do the job well and things seemed to matter. So, I didn't play games at that point. Once I knew I could get away with it and I could continue to do my job to an adequate degree while doing that, then I saw no reason not to. The job was not stimulating just to sit there and focus on what the customer was saying. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

The perception among agents is one that, providing they can demonstrate an ability to conduct their role to an adequate degree during outages, team leaders view the use of

traditional third-party games as another type of *informal reward*. The short-term goal, after all, is to alleviate stress and monotony during periods in which they are unavoidable.

I've seen people playing League of legends with their own computer while they're on the call. They will just type something up and just start playing again. [TP22 CSR/Tech]

Not all agents view the use of such *informal rewards* as occurring without consequence though. One agent highlights their propensity to miss minute details when attempting to multitask between informal rewards and core functions of their role.

Definitely, there would be times where a client would say something that mattered, and I would miss it because I was focusing on the game and then I would ask them to repeat herself. [TP19 CSR/Tech]

Informal rewards are also relied upon during times where agents have excessive amounts of downtime. These occurrences are similar to outages in that they are rare events. However, agents indicate that they commonly happen around important public holidays such as Christmas and New Years.

The lowest [amount of calls] was during Christmas I think. It just went to maybe ten calls in that day. Because I remember just sitting at work and finishing two movies and managing to finish to two movies just pausing them whenever I was on a call. It was good! It was good times. [TP11 CSR/Tech]

During these times agents are afforded more freedom with how they conduct their role, as the requirements of KPI systems are easily met.

In summary, *informal rewards* are sporadic incentive initiatives designed to reactively combat fluctuations in agent job demands, recognised as being detrimental to employee motivation. *Informal reward* initiatives rely on reward systems that are available on demand and, place little focus on longevity. Instead, the purpose of *informal reward* initiatives is to provide agents with a motivational boon to overcome short-term stressful scenarios. The consequence of this, however, is that agents view *informal rewards* as affording limited value outside of any extrinsic rewards immediately accrued. Some agents also elect to their own brand of informal rewards, through the use of traditional third-party games.

6.9. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter commenced by identifying how gamification is currently utilised within New Zealand contact centres and, discussed the two core components of KPI reward initiatives and employee resources. Discourse highlighted that applications of gamification must consider the subjective interpretations of gameful experiences from the perspective of employees. Because the nature of what constitutes a game is transient and, thus any associated game design elements or component 'characteristics' are equally so. The chapter also examined the conditions surrounding the use of KPI reward initiatives intended to motivate employees by creating game-like experiences. This examination resulted in 117 open codes that, form the basis of the four main categories of *career mastery*, *superimposed benefits*, *fundamental team play* and *obstructed gamefulness*.

Chapter 7. Discussion

7.1. Introduction - Building Theory

Central to the grounded theory process is the premise of elevating findings above the level of rich descriptions and thus identify and extract salient concepts from within the data that explain the phenomena under investigation. Chapter five details and describes the process followed to achieve robust conceptualisation. The process commenced at the low-level open coding phase with the iterative and continuing application of constant comparative analysis, through to the advanced development of focused categories and subcategories at a higher level of abstraction. The formation of these categories was the result of conceptual connections and similarities within the data, which once viewed holistically offer a sophisticated insight into the underlying explanation of the phenomena.

The following sections commence by introducing the resultant emergent substantive theory, and discourse explaining the theoretical themes that construct and support its development, while exploring respective associations among the leading coding categories.

7.1.1. Serendipity of GTM and Theory Building

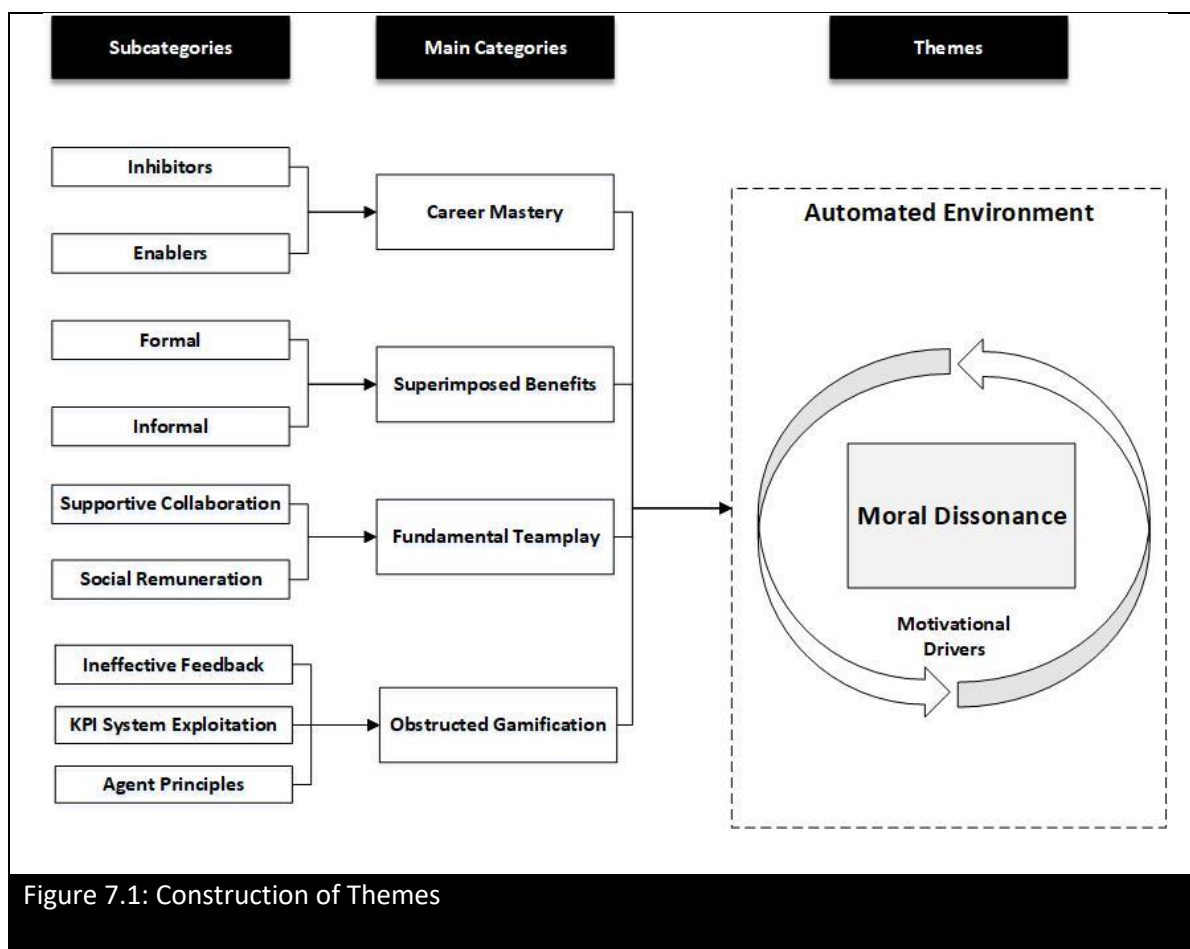
This study commenced with a broadly defined research objective, that being to generate a greater understanding of gamification initiatives within the New Zealand contact centre industry. In pursuit of this goal, interviewing commenced with questions firstly directed towards the discovery of gamification techniques, and secondly at the experiences of those subject to them. Through these questions and subsequent analysis, initial categories and themes emerged concerning established game-like mechanics, particularly the use of virtual currencies. At this juncture, virtual currencies were the most prominent gamification techniques to appear, and it seemed that they would become the central focus of further conceptual interest. However, in early 2016, through the constant comparison process, multiple themes and concepts came to the fore, which held a minimal resemblance to the explicit use of virtual currencies but still held significant explanatory power about their use. What followed was a process of re-evaluation of early developing models and the eventual realisation that virtual currencies acted as a single component of the wider gamification of contact centre work processes. This discovery came through the continuous development of

theoretical memos, and ongoing reflections of what the researcher believed constituted gamification. To the researcher, this realisation was undoubtedly the 'eureka' moment, in which codes and categories began to hold much more significance towards each other than previously thought. Equally, this moment marked a point of recognition that much of the data necessitated re-analysing through the new theoretical lens.

Bryant et al. (2010 p23) describe such events through their assertion that GTM is "all about serendipity", and although utilising a GTM does not ensure incidental findings, within this study, its use undoubtedly acted as a catalyst for the recalibration of the findings presented. The researcher acknowledges the role serendipity has played in the production of these findings and appreciates that without the conscious decision to remain theoretically sensitive and mindful of an unknown destination, the respective outcome, the theory of Apathetic Engagement would not have been possible.

7.2. Themes, Relationships and Research Objectives

Informed by the four main *conditions categories* and their relationship with *gameful KPI system* discussed throughout Chapter 6, the analytical process elevates to a higher level of abstraction as relationships, patterns and underlying meanings are considered for their explanatory power around the core phenomena. While this process marks a notable milestone in the analytical development, it remains, nonetheless a continuation of the data interrogation methods utilised from the commencement of this study. Because, while data is segmented throughout the process of open coding and focused coding, concepts remain innately linked. These linkages converge in the identification of sub-categories that provide a platform to evaluate theoretical connections and continue an inductive thinking process that raises the abstraction of observed theoretical relationships. Because of this process, key concepts emerge which demonstrate the nature of the relationships between the main categories and the emergent themes. It is through these relationships that the study produces a substantive theory capable of explaining the researcher's questions of 'How is gamification used within New Zealand Contact Centres?' Figure 7.1 provides an overview of the emerging themes;



The first emergent theme, moral dissonance reflects the conflicting views that employees hold around the use of gamification elements in contact centre environments. Further, moral dissonance holds that these views are symptomatic of wider conflicted aspects of front-line agent roles guided predominantly by the use and reliance on KPI based systems. Moral dissonance is a theme that is pervasive throughout all the four main categories discussed in Chapter 6. These attendant categories then come together to become a core theme contributing to the broader understanding of gamification in New Zealand contact centres. For clarity, each of the constituent categories are briefly reiterated below.

Career Mastery: Career mastery describes the factors within frontline agent work that enable or inhibit the wider goals and aspirations held by employees. In some cases, positive interactions with team leaders, managers or KPI adherence systems enable these goals. However, in others, these or similar factors may act as inhibitors depending on the agent's

ability to manage the resources available to support core functions of their role such as social influence.

Superimposed Benefits: Superimposed benefits are those characterised as elements within an agent's function, imposed as rewards designed to motivate or direct agent behaviour. These benefits are prescribed in formal and informal capacities, disseminated at the direction of team leaders, guided by gamified KPI systems. Superimposed benefits encompass the use of extrinsic rewards as well as the explicit use of tasks or opportunities perceived to be intrinsically motivating, suffice to influence employee behaviour positively.

Fundamental Teamplay: Fundamental Teamplay describes factors within agent roles that dictate and drive agent relationships on the frontline. These factors include supportive collaboration, wherein agents rely on the reciprocal support of their peers to conduct their roles, and social remuneration, whereby agents reward or repay each other with accumulative social recognition. Fundamental team play captures the complex team-based relationships evident within gamified KPI systems.

Obstructed Gamefulness: Obstructed Gamefulness describes the factors that impede gameful affordances throughout an agent's role when engaging with KPI based gamification initiatives. These factors include the nature of ineffective feedback systems, wherein feedback addressing the performance of agents is at times obfuscated or limited. KPI system exploitation, in which the implementation of KPI system and reliance on metrics affords opportunities for exploitation, and, agent beliefs, agents' views and beliefs towards KPI based gamification efforts.

The second emergent theme, automated environment continues to build on the understanding afforded through these four categories, by highlighting underlying contextual conditions within frontline agent roles, and the wider contact centre industry that contributes to states of moral dissonance. Automated environment is broken down into three key elements, that accounts for the nature of autonomy from the perspective of agents, team-based groups and managers.

Automation of the individual: Automation of the individual comprises of three strongly linked conceptual main categories, *career mastery*, *obstructed gamefulness* and *superimposed*

benefits. The conditions presented in the main categories illustrates the shaping of agent's views surrounding career mastery via the use of KPI based reward systems and ineffective feedback systems.

Automation of the group: Automation of the group builds on automation of the individual through a wider examination of agent reliance on team cohesion via the category of fundamental team play. Moreover, it explains how this team play intersects with a teams ability to receive extrinsic rewards using superimposed benefits while attempting to manage employee real-time resources to achieve KPI adherence.

Automation of management: Automation of management illustrates the disproportionate reliance team leaders place on KPI systems to measure the performance of staff within their team. Such dependence often occurs while cognisant of ineffective feedback systems, which managers frequently elect to work around rather than address directly, the consequence of these decisions impacts upon agents' ability to manage their real-time resources successfully.

The third emergent theme, **Motivational drivers** draws together existing motivational theories in combination with the observable actions of agents and their managers, to illustrate the driving forces behind those subject to Gameful KPI systems and Automated environments. This theme focuses explicitly on the understandings gained through the studies empirical investigation of contact centres and, how these findings intersect with relevant motivational theories such as Ryan and Deci (2000) Self-Determination Theory and Csikszentmihalyi (1991) Flow Theory. This examination illuminate's areas of motivational deficiency within agent roles and, these deficiencies are then considered alongside Bakker et al. (2014) model of burnout constituting Job demands and resources.

The next section examines the cyclical nature of the relationships between the four main categories and the themes. This examination delineates the emerging substantive theory, especially by discussing how it integrates with the existing gamification literature.

7.3. Theme - Moral dissonance

In this study, gamification is defined as “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding et al., 2011), a definition triangulated through data analysis as the category of gameful KPI systems. Within New Zealand contact centres, gameful KPI system implementation holds the intent of propagating employee engagement while simultaneously directing behaviour towards the completion of organisational objectives. Industry practitioners believe that by using gamification in such a way, organisations have more control over employee behaviour and, that this control better serves the interests of agents and business alike. Analysis has revealed, however, that this belief does not reflect the use of gamification initiatives in the New Zealand contact centre industry; at worst, it propagates a misleading sense of security around the proficiency of KPI-based gamification methods. At the centre of these findings is the substantive theme of moral dissonance.

Moral dissonance constitutes the practices, behaviours and system structures that influence employee views around KPI based reward systems. The concept of moral dissonance is grounded explicitly within the observed data but, also built upon preceding discussions around the theory of cognitive dissonance. According to Festinger (1957), the state of cognitive dissonance represents inconsistencies or contradictions between an individual’s thoughts, ideations or actions. Festinger (1957) states that when faced with states of cognitive dissonance, individuals become uncomfortable and to eliminate this discomfort must take action to remove or mitigate the source of contradiction. The moral component of this theme constitutes those actions which are in conflict with an individual’s moral values (Lowell, 2012).

Therefore, the theme of Moral dissonance takes into consideration the conflicting aspects of front-line agent contact centre work and illuminates the discrepancies between what managers believe directs employee behaviour and, how agents behave. From the organisational perspective, this starts with a view that KPI systems represent the primary guiding factor in employee performance and, the distribution of rewards. As such, managers and team leaders place a disproportionate reliance on the use of KPI systems which, directly influences how they interact with employees when attempting to motivate them. Conversely, from the perspective of employees, the ability to meet KPIs and receive rewards is reliant on their capacity to manage *employee real-time resources* such as expertise, task volume,

opportunity cost and social support. Their ability to do so often being prohibited by the conditions of KPI systems and the weight attributed to the accrual of extrinsic rewards.

The subsequent sections expand on these points of conflict, by highlighting the perspective of the employees and summarising the thematic relationships between the four primary categories that produce the states of dissonance. For clarity, the four main categories of *career mastery*, *superimposed benefits*, *ineffective feedback* and *obstructed gamefulness* are italicised when discussing their interrelationships contributing towards the overarching theme of moral dissonance.

7.3.1. Misguided Mastery

As previously outlined within the findings (Section 6.7) on *career mastery*, frontline contact centre agents frequently enter the industry with long-term career aspirations built on a desire for personal growth and achievement. This finding mirrors several aspects of those found in Wallace et al. (2000), but, predominantly that employees are motivated to serve customers and to be effective service providers. However, their goals are often undefined, but they nevertheless view contact centres as a launching point for attempts to upskill and acquire experience. From which agents anticipate a future transition into more valuable and intrinsically fulfilled employees will materialise.

Few workers enter the contact centre industry comprehending that the pursuit of *career mastery* within such environments is a complex task and, even fewer consider such progression explicitly through the lenses of established models such as human capital theory (Lepak & Snell, 1999). Because of this, agents give little thought to or are likely unaware of the relationships that exist between *fundamental team play*, *obstructed gamefulness* and *career mastery*. Rather, the attention of agents is often focused on established KPI systems and associated *superimposed benefits* to direct efforts to attain *career mastery*. Because of this, front-line agents may work several months before realising that KPI based reward cycles will not inherently afford greater *career mastery* opportunities, and in some instances, may serve only to undermine the motivation of agents through *obstructed gamefulness*.

The discovery of this disconnect often comes with the realisation that to progress agents must evaluate the opportunities they believe enhance *career mastery* and those implied as such by

the organisation. Who commonly espouse via team leaders that KPIs are the primary indicator of how well an employee performs within their role.

Organisations act in this manner to direct agent behaviour towards an ongoing state of KPI adherence (Wallace et al., 2000), ensuring the sustainable achievement of essential business objectives. Underscoring this intent are monthly feedback sessions that centre on metric adherence, and the strict tracking of actions an agent takes while managing a call. Also, many companies rely on tools such as projectors, digital displays and announcements, to manage employee perceptions towards the importance of KPI adherence (Dwyer & Fox, 2006). *Superimposed benefits* are then subsequently used to reinforce and support the notion that to be a valuable agent one must, above all else be KPI compliant. Employees therefore understandably believe that the route to achieving aspirations of progression and *career mastery* is meeting KPI adherence.

The reality, however, is that for many participants, *career mastery* opportunities are the results of serendipitous circumstance. In general, enabling pathways are the non-mandatory extensions of an agent's role, which typically contradict and confound adherence to KPI metrics. For instance, agents who successfully increase their perception of worth by accepting further responsibility, contend that their *career mastery* is enhanced by regularly disregarding strict KPI adherence (Figure 7.2).

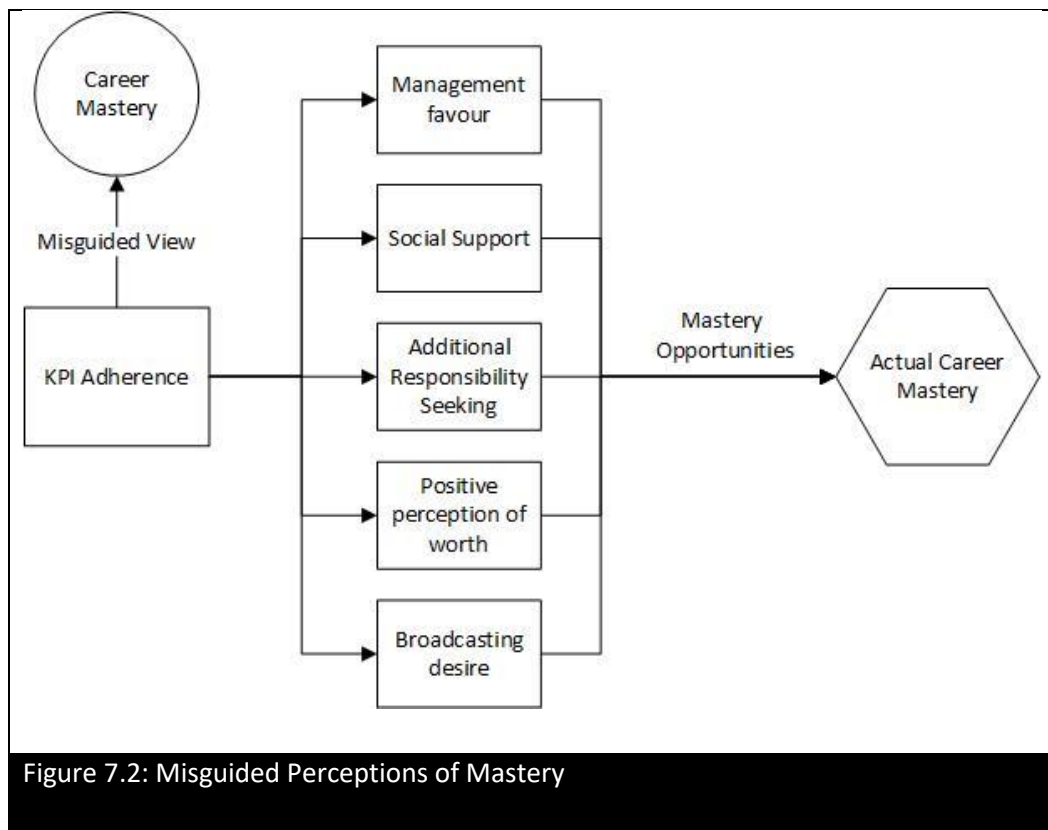


Figure 7.2: Misguided Perceptions of Mastery

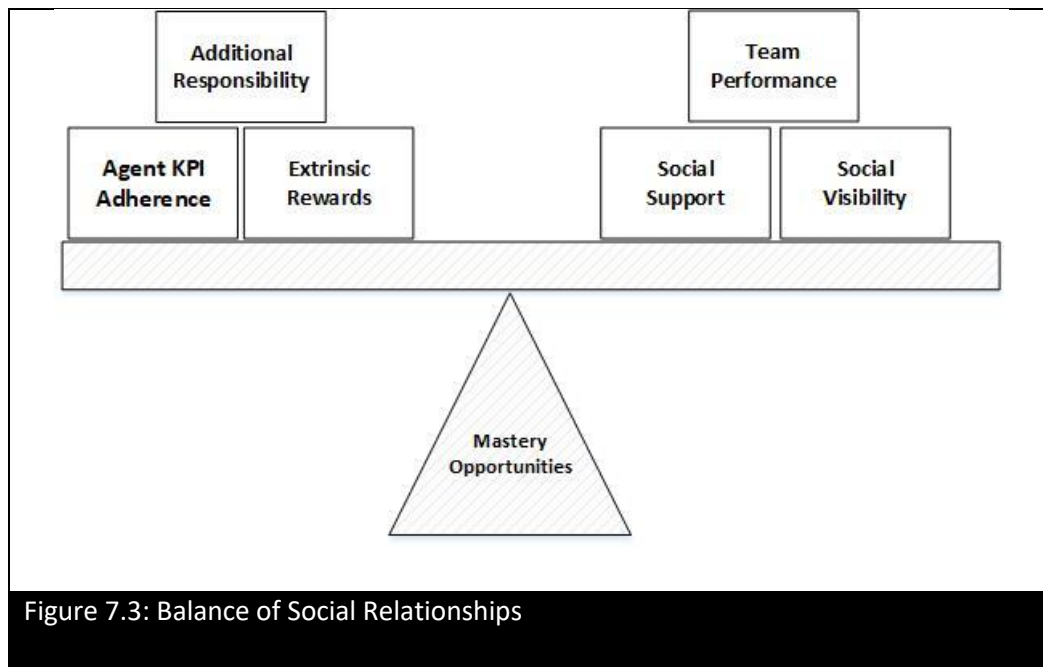
When examined further, it is also apparent that the receipt of many of these serendipitous opportunities is by agents who have advanced understandings of *Ineffective feedback* processes, which enable them to leverage informal relationships or manual KPI adherence exceptions during the pursuit of *career mastery*. The benefits of informal performance feedback have been discussed within existing literature for some time (Larson, 1984), however, agents who remain unaware of these opportunities continue to believe that strict KPI adherence predicates *career mastery*.

When examining how agents view gameful KPI systems, these conflicting opportunities are an important consideration. Primarily, this is because the sense of worth an agent holds towards a gameful KPI systems is somewhat dependent on their ability in the first instance to derive value from the system. These findings overlap with widely accepted models of technology acceptance, such as Davis (1989) technology acceptance model (TAM), in that the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use towards such systems can hold significant domain over an individual's attitude towards or intention to use. Initially, though, this may occur through the use of extrinsic benefits for KPI compliance, but as agents pursue intrinsically motivating tasks, enabled through *career mastery*, they inevitably encounter

scenarios wherein they are forced to consider decisions that perhaps feel counterintuitive to previous beliefs.

The result is that agents are placed in a state of *moral dissonance*, as those wishing to progress or upskill must make a necessary trade-off between their ability to receive rewards afforded through strict KPI compliance or seek out of *career mastery* opportunities. Such cognitive states contribute to an employee perception that extrinsic benefits, and, by extension gameful KPI systems, exist only to propel the completion of undesirable tasks and not those which carry any innate worth.

7.3.2. Balance of Social Relationships



Social support within contact centres has long been recognized as a potential contributor to employee performance (Castilla, 2005) and, as such analysis has also revealed that to achieve *career mastery* agents will often be required to foster socially beneficial relationships through *fundamental teamplay*. To do so, however, requires agents to maintain a positive perception of worth among their peers, enabled by their ability to act as a cohesive support mechanism for others when required. This prerequisite necessitates that agents manage their *real-time resources* in a way that acts of *fundamental teamplay*, such as social support, take priority over elements that are isolated such as personal *expertise* or time management. Agents,

therefore, must strike a balance between their ability to meet KPI quotas and communal obligations.

The challenging aspects of this task though become evident when considering the role that KPI adherence has on an agent's perception of worth among their peers. When an agent acts as a support mechanism, it is often to the immediate benefit of their co-worker but, to the future detriment of their own KPIs. KPIs are tracked at both the individual and team level and, when an agent fails to perform effects are felt team-wide. The consequence of this is that any positive perception of worth garnered from peers through acts of *social support* is then undermined. This finding is not dissimilar to our evolving understanding between social norms and market norms, in which Ariely (2008) argues that value of social exchanges hold a wide range of influences previously unconsidered and, are vastly more complex and influential than once thought. *Ineffective feedback* processes then obstruct the ability of agents to demonstrate that monthly KPI discrepancies are due to conducting contradictory, yet, core functions of their role. Creating a scenario where agents who elect to perform poorly out of disinterest or fatigue become indistinguishable from those who have been simply performing their role but, captured within incomplete reporting systems.

This shift in perception is significant as team-based KPIs influence an agent's abilities to receive team-based *superimposed benefits* that, for some hold an elevated state of importance akin to salary-based compensation. Therefore, failing to perform in a team based KPI environment not only prohibits team members from receiving *superimposed benefits* but also contribute to feelings of resent, inaccuracy and unfairness against KPI centric reward mechanics within the individual. These findings fall in-line with existing studies on social identity in contact centres (Wegge, Van Dick, Fisher, Wecking, & Moltzen, 2006) in that when such feelings contribute to a diminished sense of job satisfaction employees are more likely to hold increased turnover intentions or lower perceptions of well-being. Within this study, these sentiments eventuate within agents from the realisation that complete adherence is unachievable, as acts of *fundamental teamwork* are often placed in direct opposition to strict KPI adherence.

Further confounding this issue, team-based KPIs are a predominant metric used for assessing a team leader's ability to perform their managerial role competently and, often extend

directly to monetary bonuses or future career progression opportunities. The negative consequences of abandoning KPIs in favour of offering additional social support, therefore, can be deceptively wide-reaching.

These social and system-based requirements also place agents seeking *career mastery* in a significant position of conflict. On the one hand, acts of *fundamental teamplay* must be performed to increase visibility as a socially supportive agent yet, on the other, they must manage the role requirements of KPI systems designed to maximise work output and reduce agent downtime (Figure 7.3). Undoubtedly, this conflict plays a significant role in agent perceptions around gameful KPI systems, as agents come to realise the substantial costs of electing to either pursue extrinsic rewards or intrinsically motivating tasks.

It is unsurprising then, that when faced with these trade-off agents are naturally induced into a state of *moral dissonance* and, that some agents elect to pursue more desirable outcomes through exploitative behaviours. Such behaviours can occur at an individual level or through more coordinated communal efforts but are justified by agents as acts that balance out imperfections within reward systems or their role. Consequently, agents pursuing rewards through exploitation rarely consider aspects beyond their immediate interests and, as a result, other agents who remain unaware tend to suffer.

7.3.3. Opportunistic Agents

Opportunism plays a significant role in determining how and why agents resort to exploitative behaviours in contact centre environments. Opportunists within contact centres conduct their role cognisant that *gameful KPI systems* and *career mastery* processes are not intrinsically balanced and, that to overcome these obstacles they must take actions based on self-interest or chance while paying little regard to the consequences of doing so.

Much of the initial focus around gamification exploitation has been from a perspective that organisations hold significant power over employees and, thus, have the greatest potential for exploitative behaviours (Rey, 2012). However, the findings of this study indicate that within New Zealand contact centres the most common form of opportunism is evident through a combination of agent and organisational actions found within *KPI system exploitation*. The findings indicate that fundamentally, agents seek out exploitations when

they perceive their ability to meet adherence quotas as unachievable or unrealistic. This decision is one in which agents actively reflect on their ability to manage available *real-time resources* against mandated KPI quotas and, select a course of action that they perceive as the most beneficial, or most likely to remove cognitive loads introduced by states of dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

What is beneficial, however, will often depend on the unique circumstances presented to the individual agent at the time. In some instances, this involves agents abandoning the interests of their co-workers through a justification of acceptable collateral damage yet, in others it appears through the coordination of co-worker behaviours towards a set of self-beneficial goals (Wallace et al., 2000). For example, agents who have been unable to meet KPI adherence levels through fatigue or role dissuasion may willfully act on instances of self-serving KPI exploitation to correct temporary performance anomalies. Equally, however, agents who are pursuing the accrual of extrinsic rewards reliant on team performance may recruit the help of others to reduce baseline performance expectations. These findings coincide and, provide substantive context for the use of gameful KPI systems when viewed through the lens of existing theories of job demands and individual characteristic match, such as person-environment fit theory and neighbouring social exchange theory (Janssen, 2000).

Analysis revealed that in instances of team performance exploitation, *opportunistic agents* leverage what they perceived to be as communal senses of demoralisation around disparities in job demands and available *real-time resources*. *Opportunistic agents* identify others who have become disengaged with limited *career mastery* opportunities or *ineffective feedback systems* and begin a normalisation process of reduced baseline work output. This problem is not entirely detached from those faced within the traditional games industry, in which, it is estimated that around 1% of game players create or facilitate followings around exploitative behaviours, both for personal and social gain (Consalvo, 2009). For contact centre agents the thought process behind this is that during performance reviews the reduced output of *opportunistic agents* will become defensible as they are in-line with the overall performance of other team members. Once secure, *opportunistic agents* hold a belief that team leaders and managers will continue to distribute rewards designed to motivate but, with a lowered ceiling of accrual.

Additionally, the onboarding of peers towards such exploitative efforts does not always require verbalisation. Agents often remain cognisant of their obligations towards normalised performance levels through *fundamental teamplay* and understand tacitly that *social remuneration* is contingent on being a cohesive team member. Such scenarios then induce a sense of *moral dissonance*, as it becomes increasingly difficult for agents to weigh up the benefits of conforming to the performance of their peers, and, the pursuit of individualised *superimposed benefits* or perceived *career mastery* opportunities offered through gameful KPI systems.

Another noteworthy behaviour is that *opportunistic agents* also rarely make decisions that introduced significant risk to their employment status and, instead differ to opportunities that are existing in the grey zone of acceptability or, those that would result in minor disciplinary action at worst. Enabled through the understanding *opportunistic agents* have of *ineffective feedback processes*, allowing them to explain sporadic discrepancies in KPIs as moments of fatigue or mental depletion. In doing so, *opportunistic agents* understand that their actions may be even further concealed or unintentionally abetted, as they receive the support of concerned team leaders through KPI based exceptions.

It could be argued then, that in contact centre environments reliant on gameful KPI systems, *opportunistic agents* benefit from an ability to exploit processes with little likelihood of ever being penalised. This evasiveness is aided through *ineffective feedback systems* where *opportunistic agents* can rely on repetitive processes overly dependent on quantitative metrics.

7.3.4. The Influence of restricting Goodwill

As has previously been established within the category of Obstructed Gamefulness, front-line agents have few options available when it comes to giving or receiving feedback, and many of these options undoubtedly lead to ineffective outcomes. In an environment where social collaboration plays a crucial role, this proves to be a substantial barrier for employees, particularly those wishing to amend obvious system faults or who may miss calibrations within KPI systems for the sake of improved team cohesion.

Because of this, agent's goodwill towards such systems often juxtaposes with their desire to improve work conditions, and the likelihood of obtaining extrinsic rewards and greater career mastery opportunities, should they elect to remain silent. As a result, agents are often conflicted regarding the course of action they should take, with many fostering a view of indifference towards the organisation that restricts their ability to act in goodwill. This understanding is reflected through existing studies such as cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which suggests that external factors which limit an agent's autonomy hold the potential to gradually diminish one's intrinsic drive.

Restricted goodwill within contact centres, however, is fundamentally a problem that originates with *ineffective feedback* processes. Within gameful KPI systems, guiding feedback processes is the quantification of performance metrics, which, frequently fail to consider all relevant aspects of an agents role. Organisations recognise that on their own KPIs do not give a full view of performance, and, supplement their use with regular feedback sessions or informal feedback opportunities, albeit agents hold strong beliefs about utilisation and effectiveness of feedback. This observation is noteworthy because the beliefs of agents influence their ability to remain motivated and engaged in both work processes and associated reward initiatives.

When employees discern the nature of these restrictions, they become dissuaded from engaging with compensation mechanisms designed to motivate. For compensation efforts centred on the deployment of extrinsic benefits, this behaviour manifests through a perception of unfairness or biased distribution and results in an overall lowered drive to pursue their acquisition. Equally, in the cases of opportunistic agents, such attitudes serve to invite exploitation attempts and normalise exploitative behaviour among peers. For initiatives designed around the sustainability of intrinsic motivation, employees become openly cognisant of the trade-offs they are forced to make within their role and, express further detachment from gameful KPI solutions.

The outcomes of restricted goodwill result is a reduced commitment to organisational driven motivation initiatives and an enhanced focus on personal benefit. When feedback systems are not aligned to address sporadically occurring concerns or complaints, employees subsequently see attempts at motivating the management of their real-time resources as

superficial or ill-conceived. Agents view such feedback systems as a core component of their role and value any dialogue with line management. The reciprocity of this belief, however, is not always apparent to agents, as team leaders are often unable to provide the requisite levels of feedback or disregard doing so. Agents subsequently believe that management not actively participating within the frontline environment hold a view of indifference for the difficulties of day-to-day agent requirements. Of note is that employees who have been subject to such indifference over an extended period, hold strong opinions of resentment, which, they continue to retain long after exiting an organisation.

7.3.5. Perceptions of Novelty & Challenge

The contact centre industry is widely known for maintaining a rigid work structure with limited associated novelty. Within this environment, reward systems are a solution to the resulting monotony, and a means for employees to challenge themselves when faced with repetitive limited-skill tasks consistently.

Organisations included in this study suggest that the secondary objective of their KPI reward systems is to induce sustainable contest for employees to ensure the core functions of their role are engaging. The implementation of such challenge is through monthly targeted driven KPIs; wherein those employees who achieve their goals receive additional extrinsic rewards such as virtual currencies or tangible goods. This practice exists because managers perceive the opportunity to accrue rewards as a benefit of working on the front line. However, employees signify contradictory views of the use such initiatives and rejected any notion of them holding long-term motivational appeal. These findings complement existing studies which have highlighted long-term effectiveness as a potential result of a novelty effect and warned that they may not hold real long-term credibility in the workforce (Hamari, Koivisto, & Sarsa, 2014).

Fundamentally, employees propose that the lack of appeal of such efforts is the result of them holding limited meaning outside of the accumulation of minor extrinsic benefits. Employees see such targets as maintaining little long-term importance and view them as blatant attempts to reinvigorate inherently mundane tasks. This effort falls in-line with Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) descriptors of the optimal experience, in which tasks that are perceived as not matching ones skill can quickly result in states of boredom or dissuasion.

Similarly, employees who consider the ability to achieve KPIs as intrinsically motivating, propose that *ineffective feedback* channels obfuscate the broader impact of their achievements.

Viewed through the lens of gameful KPI systems, the disconnect between the intent of managers and perception of employees becomes more transparent. Managers implement focused KPI targets as a way of spurring engagement when key business objectives require focused attention. A belief exists that chasing focused KPI targets in the pursuit of extrinsic benefits is characteristically game-like and thus engaging for employees to experience. The longevity of such initiatives garners little thought, with the focus instead on the ability to meet month-to-month team based KPI quotas, as a direct result of the opposing goals of providing high quantity service levels and excellent customer care (Wallace, Eagleson, & Waldersee, 2000).

Employees, however, often consider the use of such reward initiatives as potential impediments to their ability to effectively manage *real-time resource*. Because the pursuit of isolated KPI rewards is seen to be detrimental to their capacity to conduct the core functions of their role not adequately accounted for within the KPI systems, particularly those of social support. Consequently, agents who wish to pursue such extrinsic benefits must first consider the trade-off between *fundamental teamplay*, *superimposed benefits* and *career mastery*. It is because they consider this that agents are confronted with states of *moral dissonance* as the objectives propagated through KPI based reward initiatives are frequently placed counter to functions of their role less recognised.

7.4. Theme - Automated Environment

The numerous factors that constitute contact centre gamification through gameful KPI systems and the perceptions of dissonance this entails contribute to the understanding of gained from this study. Nevertheless, it is remiss to consider these elements in isolation from the wider cultural settings of the contact centre industry.

Unfortunately, it is a reality that contact centre work has acquired what many would describe as a poor public reputation (Garson, 1988). One based on a range of assumptions about the nature of contact centre work, and inferences that the industry comprises predominantly low

skilled, highly scripted and uncaring workers (Warhurst & Thompson, 1998). This study does not attempt to defend or refute such assertions but does indirectly offer explanations supportive of why these opinions may exist. It also seeks to inform current understanding of how emerging gamification practices can affect further propagation.

Desires for self-direction within the contact centre industry play a contributory role in how agents conduct their daily duties. Further, it is apparent that influencing agent behaviour is the practices of their immediate manager, and the use of performance monitoring technologies. However, it is evident that this structure purposefully leads to the development of an automated environment (Alder, 1998; Chalykoff & Kochan, 1989; Holman, Chissick, & Totterdell, 2002).

Automated environment within the context of contact centre industry is the tailoring of roles through controlled processes and reduced self-direction, to increase business efficiency. And is achieved through the implementation of predefined responses, automated solutions and scripted scenarios to optimise human resources to reduce operational costs. Within the New Zealand contact centre industry, this automation occurs in a variety of ways.

One of which is automation of the individual. Agents are to a degree allowed some self-direction within their role, but only to maintain within the threshold of prescribed adherence levels of KPI monitoring solutions. Within the organisations observed for this study, routinely directing agent's responsibilities are sales scripts, troubleshooting guides and complaint resolution processes. These processes also form the basis of their training initiatives, and agents are expected to adhere to them within their roles strictly (Stanton, 2000).

While the specifics of each resolution process varies depending on the environment of each contact centre, their purpose is to reduce errors and streamline consistent interactions with clients. Agents are however allowed at times to deviate from automated processes, to resolve instances of unique or novel problems (Koole & Mandelbaum, 2002). For example, observed technical support agents may rely heavily on their expertise to identify an appropriate resolution when all pre-defined solutions are exhausted. While team leaders often allow agents to pursue a resolution for a client, the reality of KPI monitoring solutions is such that in doing so agents are likely to fall outside of mandated performance requirements. Therefore, this may not only influence their ability to meet individual KPI adherence but also

may impact on consolidated group adherence targets. Therefore, agents wishing to deviate from the scripted solutions or specific training methodologies risk penalties for doing so, as found in this and other studies, financial rewards and tangible benefits are afforded for strict KPI adherence (Herzberg, 1966; Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983; Mottaz, 1988).

The use of KPI systems to regulate agent downtime contributes towards the automation of individuals. Because KPI systems form part of an automated call delivery system, in which agents have no control over when they receive their next call. Therefore, it is a prescribed that employees identify when they may take breaks, regardless of their nature. Inevitably this results in scenarios whereby an employee may be finishing leftover work, or be on a scheduled lunch break, but is still penalised through KPI metrics if team leaders or managers forego documenting exceptions for time away from the call queue.

Regulating the average front-line agent's role are KPI adherence levels and scripted processes. Moreover, there remains little room for deviation from or questioning of their calibration. As addressed within the concept of moral dissonance, when agents successfully question calibrations, ineffective feedback processes almost certainly ensure that no immediate changes or adjustments are likely to be perceivable.

Automation of the group is also a contributory factor to the automated environment within frontline agent roles. Automation of the group is apparent within the practices and policies directed towards team-based cohesion, in which, individual employees serve as single components of self-managed units designed to increase performance through group utility. Leveraging group- or team-based work is a long-standing practice within the contact centre industry and is also very popular in other white-collar work environments (Bain et al., 2002). However, the findings of this study indicate that within the contact centre industry, automation of the group is propagated primarily by the interrelatedness of agents KPI metrics, and the core role function of social support.

From the time an agent exits the safety of the pre-commencement training period, they are allocated to a team-based environment revolving around the skill or service they have agreed to provide within their employment contract. Such team environments can vary in their diversity of skill sets as some offer a multitude of products or services while others are limited

to individual tasks. With some roles distinguished as being technical support and others of an administrative nature.

Regardless of specific functions, monitoring agents' performance is through the accrual of KPI metrics, which are collated by a designated team leader to provide an overview of group performance. As has been found in other contact centres (Parmenter, 2015) these comparative metrics bind an agent to the performances of their peers, and, thus affect ensuring their KPI adherence.

Team-based performance metrics act as the focal point for monthly feedback sessions and are the predominant markers for additional, team-centric incentivisation schemes. The purpose of this is to foster an environment where agents work independently but have an interdependent relationship with those in their immediate surroundings towards the achievement of business objectives. Within contact centre environments, this is particularly relevant to front-line agents, as the performance of a group directly influences employee resources and their ability to handle task volume, new skill acquisition, time management and social support.

Of these resources though, social support is the most prevalent to an automated environment as agents are charged indirectly with ensuring the success of those around them. Not only because KPI metrics are co-dependent, but also because other support resources are limited. Agents at any given time have access to knowledge databases and in some instances the wider internet, however, these solutions are often unspecific and ultimately impractical when considering the time-sensitive nature of an agent's role. Agents are, therefore, encouraged to seek support and utilise the expertise of peers to offer timely and efficient resolutions to problems.

Automation of management also contributes towards an automated environment. Whereby team leaders are dependent upon numerous routine functions and processes to conduct their role. Team leaders not only overtly rely on KPI metrics to assess employee performance but also accept that within such KPI systems, faults or discrepancies are an unavoidable reality. Often this leads to scenarios wherein team leaders are cognisant of underlying issues within KPI systems that influence metric outputs, but regardless choose to work with them. For

employees, the consequence is that KPIs are misaligned and impede their ability to manage the available resources successfully.

Team leaders, however, adopt such a process not out of malice or negligence, but rather with the understanding that they have the authority to correct any KPI discrepancies through metric-based exceptions. Little consideration is given though, to the additional steps required by an agent to correct such discrepancies and the potential impact that doing so may have on their ability to fulfil other obligations of their role such as social support and upskilling opportunities. For instance, agents who consistently seek KPI exceptions may be viewed as underperformers, unable to deal with the volume of tasks, which contributes to perceptions they are unfit for progression opportunities. For team leaders, this oversight is one of minor concern as the benefits of relying on automated KPI metrics outweigh any apparent consequences, however, for agents, this reliance contributes to a wider problem of misalignment between role requirements and career mastery.

7.5. Theme - Motivational Drivers

Within this study, the actions of agents were examined alongside the context of their roles, the environments in which they operate and the mandates of those presiding over them. These insights provide a rich understanding of the contextual challenges contact centre workers face and, further, allow for a deeper awareness of why agents make many of the decisions they do. This is most apparent when considering how agents address opportunities that allow them to receive rewards through *superimposed benefits* and *Gameful KPI systems*. In many instances, agents act against what might be considered as conventional wisdom within the contact centre industry and, ignored immediate tangible benefits in pursuit of alternate, subjective or constantly shifting goals. These goals are identified as *career mastery* opportunities or, as becoming proficient in given tasks but, equally extended to areas of social value creation through communal endeavours of *fundamental teamplay*. While these empirical findings underline the contextual reasons that agents make many of the decisions they do, it is apparent from the nature of participant responses that this understanding extends beyond the context of contact centres or *Gameful KPI systems* and, further through to the underlying motivational drivers innate to the human experience.

Therefore, to develop a complete understanding the emerging substantive findings are now contextualized alongside existing motivational theories. This contextualization acts as yet another point of qualitative triangulation, further grounding the findings as credible, original and resonant (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010)

7.5.1. Motivational Drivers – Self-Determination Theory

While many theories attempt to explain motivational drivers, this study draws primarily on the works of Ryan and Deci (2000) and their examination of self-determination theory.

Self-determination theory, as discussed in detail in Section 3.5.3.2, is a useful representation of the factors found to influence agent decisions. These factors are intrinsic motivation, or the desire to complete a task for the value of itself, and extrinsic rewards, the inducement of motivation using external forces.

It is evident from the responses of participants within this study that agents view motivation through a lens congruent with self-determination theory. They frequently draw lines of distinction between rewards distributed as external forces and denote scenarios in which the task itself is the reward. It is through the continual inducement of intrinsic motivators that jobs are said to be sustainable engaging (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). To induce such states, Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that a given environment must be conducive to the three psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness.

Competency within contact centre environments comes through the facilitation of meaningful growth within a role or *career mastery*. Agents in this study indicate many factors which contribute to their sense of competency ranging from positive perceptions of worth, to the accrual of upskilling certifications or management recommendations. For many agents, determining competency is through an internalised assessment of peer recognition, and the value provided through key performance indicator systems. As discussed previously, KPIs represent the primary means of monitoring performance in the *automated environment* of contact centres. Consequentially managers and team leaders locate a high level of importance on their use. Due to the stress placed on such systems, it is a natural consequence that reward initiatives containing game-like elements also similarly transition towards metrically based structures.

Through the use of gameful KPI systems, continuously reinforcing agent perceptions of competency is the belief that KPI adherence is the only measure of their performance and value. At times this conflicts with their views towards competency, their intrinsic motivation and those of the organisation. Agents continually facing such personal conflict often find themselves within scenarios requiring compromise, or *moral dissonance*. At times this may be because of choices between extrinsic rewards distributed through gameful KPI systems, or tasks which an agent may find intrinsically motivating, such as providing high levels of customer service or additional care for co-worker well-being. Because of this, agents enter a state of apathy towards engagement initiatives that may have been positioned initially with the intent of supplementing notions of competency.

Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that autonomy is a crucial part of fulfilling one's intrinsic motivation towards a given task. Within contact centre environments autonomy could be surmised as the ability of the agent to express a sense of control, personal preference or choice during their role. Such decision is said to further enable a state of optimal performance and a deeper sense of engagement. Agents in this study indicate that while there is a degree of choice within their roles, obstructing the meaningfulness of outcomes are *ineffective feedback* channels. Ordinarily, the distribution of feedback to agents is through real-time KPI reports or monthly meetings with team leaders and managers. While meetings are said to facilitate an environment where agents can express concerns, the focus is typically on their ability to meet adherence metrics. Therefore, agents cognisant of this practice tailor their work styles around KPI adherence instead of individual decisions designed to offer the best solutions possible. The benefits for agents over the short-term is an increased ability to receive rewards through *gameful KPI systems*. The motivational advantages of such rewards though are often short-lived, as agents realise that the accrual of benefits is at the expense of their sense of freedom or autonomy within their role. Agents facing this reality, find themselves in a position of *moral dissonance* between their internal motivations and the factors their organisation view to be important.

Relatedness is another element of self-determination ever-present throughout the findings of this study. Relatedness is the degree of mutual dependence placed on tasks and rewards between peers. For an activity or benefit to maintain a significant intrinsic value, it must retain meaningful connections to those involved. *Fundamental teamplay* is a reoccurring series of

findings that lends itself to the interdependence of agents during their daily roles. It is through the relationships presented in *fundamental teamplay* that non-tangible rewards are said to act as *social remuneration*. Agents are again, however, faced with decisions that lead to *moral dissonance* as it is through such social relationships in conjunction with the findings of *obstructed gamefulness* that agents must actively evaluate the extent of acceptable social collateral damage, in pursuit of extrinsic reward or their intrinsic motivation.

The findings are therefore positioned as congruent with existing literature on self-determination theory. With decisions about an agents three psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness undoubtedly affecting frontline agents perceptions towards KPI based gamification initiatives and, their ability to make decisions throughout their standard employment role that assist in the fulfilment of internal motivational drivers.

7.5.2. Motivational Drivers – Flow Theory

When considered through the lens of Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), the findings also offer expanded insight into how agents can arrive at the point of ‘optimal experience’ within contact centre gamification. Csikszentmihalyi (1991) contends that to achieve flow or the optimal experience, one must be able to induce eight characteristics of autotelic experiences. These are immediate feedback, clear goals, ability to concentrate on the task at hand, skill and challenge balance, control, effortlessness, altered state of time and merge consciousness and action.

Immediate feedback in contact centre work is a characteristic that is both simultaneously fulfilled and obscured in gameful KPI systems. On the one hand, KPI systems innately provide direct insight into aspects of an agent’s role that are relevant to their ability to handle routine or mechanical components of the job. The findings of this study indicate that such feedback is often insufficient to capture all relevant aspects of an agent’s role, and thus, provides a skewed perspective that introduces unforeseen problems such as *opportunistic agents* and *career mastery inhibitors*.

Ineffective feedback undoubtedly then contributes to the obfuscation of clear goals within gameful KPI systems, as agents are consistently challenged to choose between aspects of the role they view as critical such as *fundamental teamplay* and those mandated through strict

KPI adherence. Such states of *moral dissonance* thus prohibit agents from concentrating on the task at hand and, lower their sense of control over core aspects of their job. Gameful KPI systems also fail to consider many aspects of an agent's role that would contribute to an elevated sense of fair play, or balance between skills and challenges. Such failure is demonstrable through the disparity in *employee real-time resources* and the limited spectrum of quantified KPI metrics, which, fail to capture crucial role functions such as *fundamental teamplay*.

This study has limited findings of the final flow characteristics of effortlessness, altered states of time and merging with one's consciousness. It is nevertheless, however, reasonable to assume that this is due to a lack of harmony between the existing components of immediate feedback, clear goals, concertation, skill and balance challenges, which, are pre-requisites for their inducement.

7.5.3. Motivational Drivers and Burnout

The findings presented through also offer new insight concerning how agents manage available skills alongside role requirements (Figure 7.6). The JD-R model is a useful representation of these factors in that it segments work conditions into two primary categories, job demands and job resources (Bakker et al., 2014).

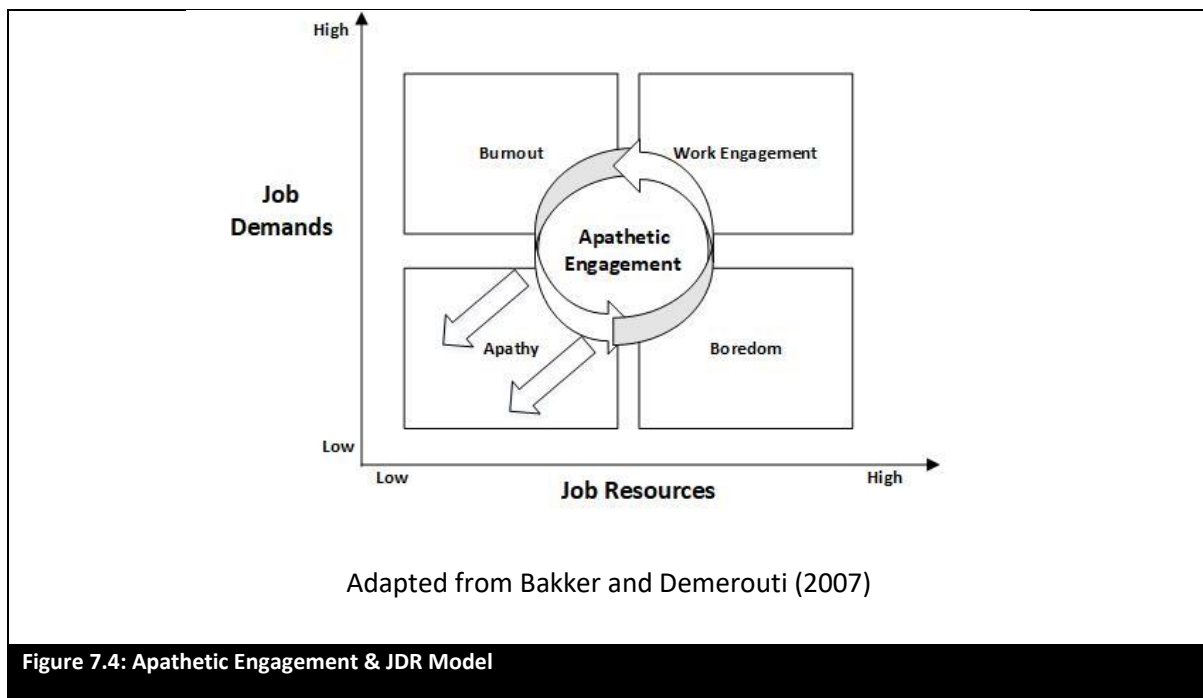
Job demands represent all aspects of a role that induces strain in each context, such as physical labour, mental exertion or social action. Job resources are all relevant factors which reduce the stress or impairment induced by such factors. For instance, a physically demanding job may require the lifting of heavy equipment, yet, aided by the resource of a forklift the demands of this job significantly reduce. The objective of the job demands and resources categories is to capture contributory factors to two psychological conditions called health impairment and positive motivational processes. Health impairment is the result of high job demands which exhaust employees, eventually leading to burnout or ill-health. While positive motivational processes are those job resources that foster engagement and organisational commitment. Within this study, these psychological conditions and their contributory factors appear through observations surrounding *gameful KPI systems*, and the four primary categories of *obstructed gamefulness*, *fundamental teamplay*, *KPI system exploitation* and *career mastery*.

Gameful KPI systems is a category that highlights the use of gamification techniques within front-line roles but, one that also holds significant explanatory power for demands and resources related to agent work. From the organisational perspective, the subcategory of *Key Performance Indicators* alongside their resulting relationships with the four main *conditions categories*, illustrate the levels of expectation or demands, set by the organisation. Managers and team leaders openly rely on KPI metrics to guide agents, set milestones and provide performance-related boundaries. Conversely, the subcategory of *employee real-time resources* represents the physical, cognitive and social ability available to agents when dealing with KPI systems and other core facets of their role.

How these factors interrelate with each other is witnessed through the theme of *moral dissonance*. Which is the direct result of the demands of KPI systems and, the realities of agent roles extending to obligations not accounted for within such regimes. When viewed through the lens of the JD-R model, *moral dissonance* is the explanatory force supporting agents beliefs that some tasks exhaust their mental and physical resources, while other aspects of their role provide positive motivational responses and encourage engagement.

Figure 7.6 positions the substantive findings of this study at the centre of Apathy, Boredom, Work Engagement and Burnout, in recognition that employees enter into contact centre gamification systems at various stages of *moral dissonance* cycle but, will naturally gravitate towards a state of apathy as they are constantly faced with cyclical trade-offs.

The core category of this study, discussed in detail throughout the preceding sections, takes this notion one step further, by underlining the compromises agents make between exhaustive tasks, and those designed to alleviate stress within an *automated environment*. While illustrating the influences of gameful KPI systems through the primary categories *fundamental teamplay*, *superimposed benefits*, *obstructed gamefulness* and *KPI system exploitation*, their interactions with the theme of *automated environment* illustrates the direction of agent resources towards a wider organisational goal of sustainable compliance.



7.6. Cyclical Nature of Moral Dissonance

Those working within the contact centre industry have long identified the unavoidable reality of repetitive tasks and monotony within their core roles. Driving this belief is the repetitive nature of essential functions and the diminishing effectiveness of reward schemes (Figure 7.4).

A considerable focus in this study is on the deployment of gamification initiatives directed towards reducing workplace monotony to increase staff engagement and factors that contribute towards its use and their relationships to each other. The findings of this study indicate that the nature of agent perceptions towards gamification is one of significant conflict, in which, agents are consistently required to calculate the value of engaging with processes designed to drive motivation and limit monotony. It is through this constant reassessment that the cyclical nature of *moral dissonance* emerges, and its relevance with regards to existing literature. Figure 7.4 provides an overview of this recurring theme.

Upon immediate commencement of roles within contact centre environments, agents must integrate with existing KPI systems and quickly learn to overcome the challenges of KPI adherence and the management of employee real-time resources. It is while managing these factors that frontline agents are required to make a series of trade-off decisions about the

relationship between the core functions of their role and KPI adherence. Such trade-offs are not merely arbitrary decisions between multiple viable options, but rather represent a complex series of assessments wherein agents are required to actively calculate their ability to conduct mandated tasks, unscripted obligations and balance their internal desires for intrinsic personal fulfilment.

Frontline staff are subject to brief induction periods, in which they receive training and instruction detailing the basic tenets of their role and the KPI metrics that guide mandated performance levels. Management then installs agents into real world call queues cognisant of their limited experience and provide a range of static support materials to assist them. However, support materials are often insufficient for the dynamic nature of complex calls. Thus agents are obligated to rely on more established colleagues to overcome shortcomings in experience and knowledge. However, this reliance comes with an associated cost to both agents as seeking and providing support impacts on their ability to meet KPI adherence levels.

KPI adherence within frontline work is viewed by agents as paramount for several reasons. One is that line manager consistently advise agents that KPI metrics are the primary indicator of role performance. Ordinarily by monthly performance review meetings based on KPIs and ever-present real-time digital displays. There is also a mutual understanding that KPI adherence is a consideration for any role progression opportunities that may emerge. Moreover, KPIs are the underlying mechanism of reward initiatives designed explicitly to direct agent behaviour. Failing to receive rewards through non-compliance indirectly reinforces any views that may question the competency of a representative.

It is through reward initiatives that contact centre environments engage with game-like elements while attempting to encourage behaviorally transformative work conditions. KPI reward initiatives employ a range of game-like characteristics with the intent of inducing agents into states of 'gamefulness', to increase work output and role engagement.

Mindful of KPI incentives, agents are often placed within call scenarios wherein they are required to discern a beneficial approach. However, choosing this approach can be problematic because how the agent should discern the optimal approach is not always clear. Primarily, this is because agents must first reconcile their internal motivation while considering how this interconnects with the realities of their role and any extrinsic

incentivisation. For instance, it may not always be practical to pursue their desires if doing so is detrimental to the employment relationship, or, at the cost of tangible goods. This moment of reconciliation is the concept of *moral dissonance*.

The degree of *moral dissonance* an agent faces inevitably depends on their exposure to scenarios which require cognitive compromise. However, for most agents, *moral dissonance* first appears when commencing their role and while becoming acquainted with the conflict and inevitable compromise between KPI adherence and position responsibilities. In the first instance, the impacts of *moral dissonance* may be limited, viewed by agents as calibration errors in KPI systems or their inability to comprehend the functions of the role. Despite this, further instances of *moral dissonance* invariably continue to present themselves as agents seek to master their role.

The recognition of *moral dissonance* is one that comes through an examination of employee decisions in the face of task-related compromise. However, elements outside of an employee's immediate control also play a part in the formation of these decisions. Specifically, the structure of processes within a contact centre environment encourage an *automated environment*. This control comes about through the adoption of policies and training regimes that mandate the use of sales scripts and troubleshooting trees. The purpose of these systems is to operate in conjunction with KPI metrics and automated call delivery systems to compel agents towards performance adherence. Integrating these systems with a team-based metric which aggregates responsibility for performance only strengthens the importance of the systems and erodes individuals ability to personally and solely influence their success. Similarly, a team leader's performance and associated compensation are also directly related to the overall performance of their team.

When considering *moral dissonance* in an *automated environment*, the implications are profound. Agents view these two concepts as factors that limit their ability to inflict positive change within their organisations, which operate under conditions that necessitate agents balance social team relationships with the responsibility to complete the tasks dictated by their position. Findings have shown that under such circumstances agents are predicated on adopting self-serving actions leading to opportunistic behaviours that undermine rewards systems and the integrity of KPI measuring tools.

Moral dissonance is therefore related to the reward mechanisms underpinning gameful KPI systems, as the pursuit of rewards frequently impinges upon an agent's ability to complete the specific responsibilities attached to their position successfully. The resultant consequence is agents become dissuaded against gameful KPI systems, as they often perceive ongoing unaddressed system faults and exploitation as affording other team members unfair or biased advantages. Repeatedly this leads to a lowered sense of commitment towards the organisation and a decreased willingness to enter states of 'gamefulness' within reward initiatives aimed at driving agent motivation. In some instances, agents also view extrinsic and intrinsic rewards as holding less value or innate meaning, this, in turn, influences their disposition towards reward initiatives designed to improve engagement.

The findings presented through *moral dissonance* also illustrate that within the *automated environment* agents are nonetheless bound to the cyclical process of conflicting choices and their associated rewards. Because gamified KPI systems, founded upon the metrics of performance monitoring that, facilitate the core functions of an agents role. Therefore, agents who reach a point of dissuasion with such systems have limited avenues of recourse if they wish to engage no longer. Even if such an option was possible though, agents remain cognisant that social obligations towards their peers required through *fundamental teamplay* and *social remuneration* would make this impractical at best. Therefore, agents must face the reality that cyclical *moral dissonance* is an inescapable facet of frontline contact centre work. The eventuating result of these factors are identified in this study, as the core category of Apathetic Engagement.

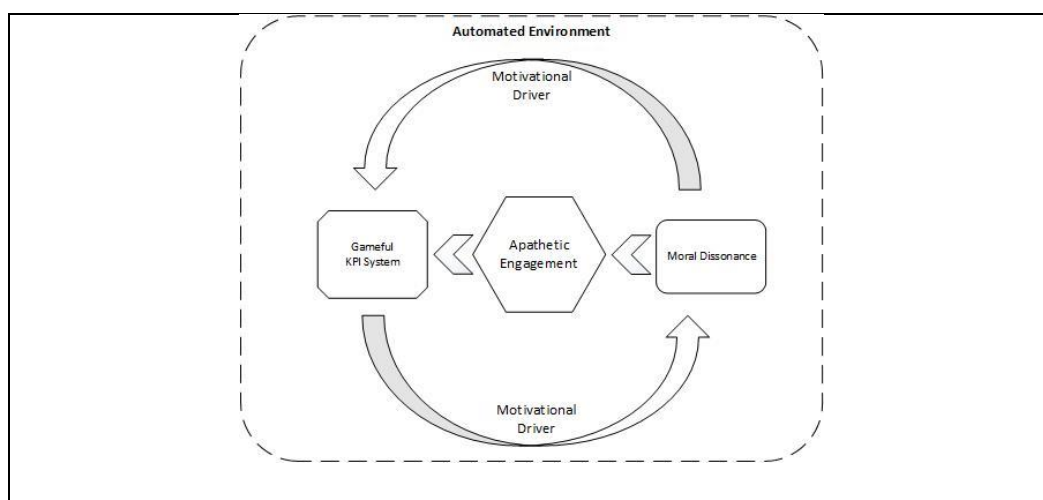


Figure 7.5: Cyclical Nature of Apathetic Engagement

7.7. The Substantive Grounded Theory of Apathetic Engagement

Apathetic Engagement (AE) is the core variable to emerge from a six-month data collection and analysis process directed towards achieving a greater understanding of 'what is happening' within gamified contact centre environments (Figure 7.5). AE is a precursor to the development of a generalisable formal theory and acts as an emergent substantive context specific theory with an explanatory scope limited only to the New Zealand contact centre environment in which it was discovered.

The purpose of AE is to offer a greater understanding of the behaviours occurring within the New Zealand contact centre industry, specifically those of employee's subject to new instances of gamified work environments. These reactions illustrate aspects of agent roles within the sector that preclude them from achieving desired levels of career progression, impede their ability to offer quality service and impinge on their capacity to remain motivated within the workforce. The decisions agents are influenced to make when confronted with AE afford opportunities to act outside the bounds of what is deemed to be as morally acceptable by many, and hold the potential to influence public perceptions, of positions some already view negatively. Moreover, the discovery of AE gives businesses utilising emergent methods of gamification the opportunity to examine their effectiveness and acts as a guide to assist calibration efforts to avoid engaging in performance initiatives that likely hold conflicting stakeholder objectives.

The selection of the term Apathetic Engagement was with the express intent to convey intuitively the nature of the concepts it serves to describe. The foremost of which is a dissuasion by employees towards those current applications of gamification initiatives deployed within the contact centre industry, which, are relied on to increase employee engagement. The terminology does not infer, indifference from industry towards employee engagement, but rather emphasises key behaviours resultant from monitoring solutions and new technologies designed to improve motivational practices through game-like initiatives.

Therefore, this study presents the theory of Apathetic Engagement as:

Apathetic Engagement is the cyclical process of dissipating emotional, cognitive and behavioural connections resulting from the trade-offs between the core functions of a frontline contact centre agent's role and KPI based gamification solutions. Inherent motivational drivers propagate agent

compromises that result in a cognitive state of moral dissonance subsumed within an environment of automated KPI compliance. As a consequence, KPI based gamification solutions do not achieve their intended motivational goals and instead, contribute towards the depleting effectiveness of game-like reward initiatives for motivational purposes.

Apathetic engagement is, therefore, an emergent substantive theory grounded in empirical data. The theory is positioned as emergent because it is the direct result of an inductive theorising process enabled by the methodological process of data collection, coding and analysis through grounded theory. It is substantive as the inductive grounded theory process “generates theory that fits the real world, works in predications and explanations, is relevant to the people concerned and is readily modifiable” (Glaser, 1978, p. 142).

The following sections discuss the emergent substantive theory of apathetic engagement (Figure 7.5) alongside theoretical findings from within the literature. These insights contribute to an expanded understanding of gamification processes within contact centre environments and, further develop the relationships between agent motivational drivers, cognitive and psychological resources, and contact centre gamification practices. Following this discussion, the practical and theoretical contributions of apathetic engagement are examined alongside the limitations and challenges presented throughout the conduct of this study. The study then concludes by discussing areas of further research that hold the potential to build upon the findings of apathetic engagement.

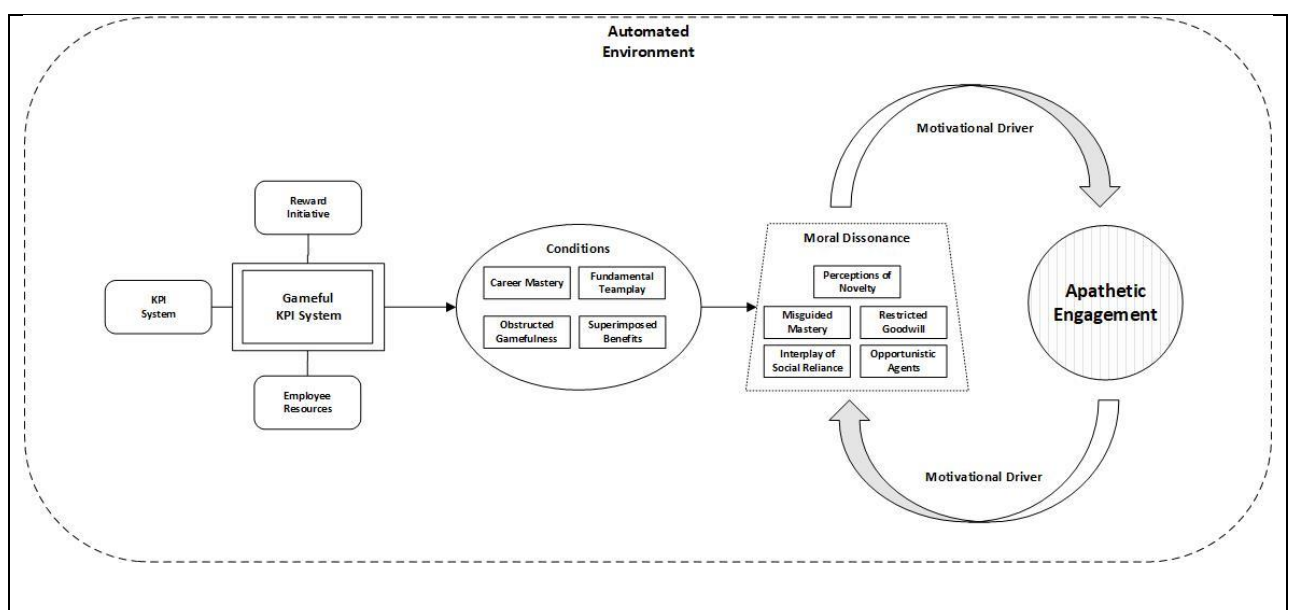


Figure 7.6: Overview of Apathetic Engagement

7.8. Positioning Apathetic Engagement in the Gamification Literature

The gamification literature has focused on the education and health sectors (Backlund & Hendrix, 2013), with some research into other domains such as service marketing and the automotive industry (Huotari & Hamari, 2012; Korn et al., 2014). While the contact centre industry has been regarded as a good 'fit' with gamification (Castellani et al., 2013), there has been little evidence to support this claim and limited investigation of the substantive context of contact centres. By studying contact centres, this research project has been able to surface the concept of apathetic engagement, which should provide gamification practitioners, academics and businesses a broader understanding of gamification's impact.

The study's first contribution is to incorporate new considerations to the concept of internalised states of 'gamefulness' as core criteria when viewing any game design element as truly gamified. The study began by using Deterding et al. (2011)'s definition of gamification as "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts". This was later expanded to address the classification of "game design elements" in New Zealand contact centres. This is because the definition of game design elements constitutes a vast array of potential design patterns, mechanics and heuristics. This study investigated and confirms the points of contention related to the concept of game design elements raised by Huotari and Hamari (2012).

The study's second contribution is a richer understanding of how agents enter states of gamefulness. The study does so by considering employee perceptions of what they believe to be game-like elements, and by examining factors that obstruct an agent's ability to perceive KPI-based reward initiatives as 'gameful'. In short, if employees do not perceive design patterns, mechanics or heuristics as game-like or 'gameful' then, they are unlikely to constitute what Deterding et al. (2011, p. 4) describes as "elements that are found in most (but not necessarily all) games, readily associated with games, and found to play a significant role in gameplay." This study thus can guide further discussion on the concept of 'gamefulness'.

The study's third contribution is about the deployment of gamification. While previous studies suggested that gamification is deployed as an explicitly-designed information system (Paharia, 2013), this study found that organisations prefer to retrofit reward systems onto

existing operational monitoring and KPI systems. This finding highlights that gamification is established in this way, partly because of the practical realities of implementing and developing comprehensive gamification systems, and partly because this strategy allows gamification to coexist with established incentive schemes, such as monetary bonuses or tangible gifts (Condly et al., 2003; Garbers & Konradt, 2014).

The study's fourth contribution is to confirm that organisational gamification improves performance through passive employee satisfaction, as well as through tightly-directed extrinsic and intrinsic, game-like, reward distribution systems (Mollick & Werbach, 2015). Cardador and Northcraft (2017) note that part of the 'work gamification' process involves increasing informational pathways alongside affective pathways; apathetic engagement provides new and confirmatory insight into how this is done. Employees are given access to more visible and immediately relevant feedback, while also using game-like features to make work tasks more enjoyable. The most common example of this in the contact centres that were studied is the use of key performance indicators and associated reward initiatives, which are often subsequently fitted with game-like components in the hope of driving deeper levels of engagement among employees. Apathetic engagement takes these discussions to a new level of maturity through evidenced discourse around KPI-based gamification solutions, workplace environmental conditions, social relationships and personal career aspiration.

The study's fifth contribution is to validate the range of factors that may improve or limit the effectiveness of gamification in workplaces. While several software platforms now exist specifically for contact centre gamification (Paharia, 2013), the findings of this study highlight and confirm the on-going difficulties such platforms will face, with respect to managing behaviours and motivations that are not easily quantified. Despite organisations being aware of the potential benefits of gamification, few have developed robust implementation plans to ensure sustainable engagement. Instead, organisations have tended to rely on systems featuring repetitive processes, which have diminishing levels of novelty, instead of directly developing or owning contextually-unique game-like elements. The consequences are present throughout the four intrinsically connected primary conditions categories of *fundamental teamplay*, *superimposed benefits*, *obstructed gamefulness*, *KPI system exploitation*.

7.9. Theoretical Integration

To ensure the encapsulation of emergent phenomena, grounded theory studies place little reliance on pre-commencement literature reviews. Nevertheless, as discussed throughout Chapter 3, this study has examined relevant facets of existing literature to enhance the researcher's theoretical sensitivity. Which subsequently led to this study and the examination of KPI based reward systems and interacting with agent roles and perceptions. Moreover, it is through this research that the theoretical insight of apathetic engagement has emerged.

In the following chapter, the discussion addresses apathetic engagement in conjunction with relevant aspects of the existing literature. This analysis serves to expand our understanding of the utilisation of gamification practices, and how contact centre agents perceive their use. First, the relationship between apathetic engagement, the existing literature and the study's motivation are discussed. The discussion specifically examines how apathetic engagement builds upon our understanding of the agents' self-determination and the generation of optimal experiences, within the context of gamified contact centre environments. The subsequent discussion addresses apathetic engagement within the context of existing theories of burnout and other factors relevant to the contact centre industry that contribute to an agent's ability to meet the demands of their roles.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1. Contributions

The following subsections discuss the theoretical contribution and practical implications of the substantive theory generated in this study, the limitations of this research and potential avenues of future research.

8.1.1. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study has practical implications for the wider contact centre industry, finding that ill-conceived KPI based reward initiatives designed to leverage game-like elements in pursuit of agent engagement, may fail. Designers of such initiatives need to account for the interrelationship of agent team play, feedback methods and their autonomous work environments, as some agents may not be able to commit the cognitive or physical resources required for the inducement of gameful states. Meaning that regardless of the positive intent behind a reward initiative, agents may perceive such systems as extensions of work-like compensation schemes, which focus more on the exchange of extrinsic rewards than the generation of long-term intrinsic motivators through gamefulness.

The implications of these findings are potentially widespread. It is a common industry practice to reward staff with tangible goods, often under the pretence that agents demonstrate longer strong term commitment to an organisation. This study has found, however, that in many instances where KPI reward initiatives fail to induce states of gamefulness, agents see limited value in extrinsic rewards. Equally, when confronted with such systems, a segment of opportunistic agents will seek the simplest path available to accrue tangible goods, which holds the potential to negatively influence the fundamental teamplay dynamics that contact centre support systems set out to encourage. Such dynamics have been found to act as critical components of frontline agent roles, many of which, extend beyond those initially planned or accounted for by management driven KPI systems. Drawing on these findings then, organisations are better positioned to developed reward initiatives tailored towards supportive practices, in which employee benefits and motivations may exist more harmoniously alongside organisational objectives.

Equally, this study contributes to our current understanding of employee burnout by empirically demonstrating how agent's operating in a frontline capacity cycle between cognitive states dependant on their ability to meet the demands of their job with limited resources. This is achieved through findings that further confirm and build upon those presented in existing theoretical models such as the JD-R (Bakker et al., 2014), wherein front increased job demands and limited job resources result in strain or burnout. Apathetic engagement empirically illustrates the previously unconsidered factors of frontline agent job demands, in direct relation to KPI based monitoring systems, which, results in a cyclical dissuasion. The findings of Apathetic Engagement further extend these findings, by illustrating the influence that gamified KPI systems have on an agent's ability to meet such demands and, further, their willingness to pursue extrinsic benefits, sometimes to the detriment of those team members reliant on their cooperation and support.

The field of gamification research also benefits from the findings of this study through the discussion and application concerning concepts of game mechanics and gamefulness within frontline service work. This study has identified numerous work related, environmental and game-like elements which are perceived by contact centre agents as assisting in the induction of states of gamefulness within frontline work. This is of significance, as it has been argued throughout that for game-like elements to afford game-like experiences and, to be considered as gamification, they should be capable of fulfilling the requirement for personal states of gamefulness. While the explicit conditions behind the induction of gamefulness remains personal and nebulous criteria, this study nonetheless empirically demonstrates that even within high stress, in environments exhibiting minimal autonomy such states of gamefulness are possible, albeit limited in their longevity through current implementations.

8.1.2. Implications for Agents

The meta-analysis by Bucklund & Hendrix (2013) of game-based learning demonstrates the opportunity for gamification initiatives within the context of knowledge acquisition. As with the domains of Edutainment and Serious games, where physical and mental repetition are repositioned as enjoyable exercises, so too could Gamification be positioned as a means "to reduce boredom and increase motivation and focus" (Buckland & Hendrix, 2013, pp. 434). Within the context of current gameful KPI systems, however, a significant misalignment exists

between gamified objectives, the nature of contact centre work and the unconsidered trade-offs agents must make to coordinate their role. The exact scope of motivational implications for contact centre agents is difficult to define but, the findings presented throughout this study give some insight into areas of significance to the gamified agent experience.

The first is related to those agents who pursue career mastery through upskilling opportunities. Robson et al. (2015, pp. 415) state that within the context of gamification, progression mechanics are important as they dictate “the reinforcements present in the experience”. For agents pursuing career mastery this reinforcement is presented, at least initially, through the various progression-based reward initiatives constituting parts of the gameful KPI system. As highlighted through the findings of Apathetic Engagement, however, gameful KPI systems fail to take into consideration many of the requisites for actual career progressions or other pertinent agent goals and, therefore, reinforce behaviours which may not directly attribute to a sense of career mastery. The danger for agent motivation comes through the resulting dissuasion when it is finally realized that positively reinforced actions have had a limited real-world impact on their intrinsic career mastery aspirations.

Deci et al. (1999) suggest that in instances where extrinsic rewards are relied on to drive short-term behaviour, there is also a danger of “substantial negative long-term effects” (p. 659). These adverse effects emerge from the dissipating effectiveness of short-term tangible rewards, as Deci et al. (1999) claim they serve only to forestall the desire of intrinsically motivating tasks by inducing temporary self-regulated states of behaviour. In-part Apathetic Engagement is built on these resulting negative consequences, as agents struggle to reconcile the disconnect between the misaligned extrinsic rewards and their intrinsic motivation. From the outside, the extended implications of such rewards are often challenging to identify, particularly by those not intimately familiar with the day to day roles or experiences of agents. This is because the use of such rewards frequently creates the outward appearance of being beneficial to the organisation, by driving agent actions towards intentionally specified and desirable KPI’s. As noted through the findings of Apathetic Engagement, however, these actions are commonly accompanied by a range of unaccounted for behaviours such as system exploitation and social sacrifices which, are capable of harming productivity and financial wellbeing over the long term.

The consequences for employees also stretch further than the immediate or temporary misalignment of intrinsically motivating tasks. As discussed in Chapter 3, Callaghan and Thompson (2001) argue that the automated contact centre work process is one that sometimes involves agents extending their ability outside of their specific role yet, state that this extension has no discernable impact on the overall business process. This belief is rooted in a view that agents' roles are strictly monitored in such a way that they become almost entirely independent from others in the organization. Aksin et al. (2007) suggests that this is because tight restrictions limit how and when they can deviate from their prescribed roles. The findings outlined through Apathetic Engagement suggest, however, that while behaviours and performance are monitored and directed towards an autonomous set of actions, it is through the intertwined relationships of career mastery, fundamental teamplay and superimposed benefits that agents are explicitly linked to their co-workers, managers and reward systems. Therefore, while the conventional view of contact centre work has positioned agents as conducting de-skilled and semi-skilled roles in isolation (Russell, 2008), the findings of Apathetic Engagement propose that through the findings of moral dissonance, motivational drivers and autonomous environments the role of modern contact centre agents is one that is bound by a complex set of relationships driven by a mixture of social interactions, tangible rewards and desires for meaningful career mastery opportunities.

It is because of these complex relationships that this study positions the substantive theory of Apathetic Engagement as significant for our understanding of rewards, emotional labour and burnout within the modern contact centre. Hochschild (1983) outlines how agents leverage 'surface acting' and 'deep acting' to regulate their cognitive states and control emotional expressions while at work. This effort is said to be akin to "painting on" affective displays (Hochschild, 1979, p. 558) and is done to conduct one's role in an optimal fashion. The findings presented throughout Apathetic Engagement demonstrates that the concept of 'surface acting' can extend beyond the context of simply doing one's role, and, into the acquisition of rewards through gameful KPI systems and the pursuit of career mastery. This is because agents who are wishing to progress or upskill must make necessary trade-offs between their ability to receive rewards afforded through KPI compliance or career mastery opportunities. Irrespective of their decisions, however, agents are frequently required to

maintain a positive appearance of gratitude or appreciation for rewards or mastery opportunities, due to the innate reliance of management favour, social support and positive perceptions of worth on actual contributors to career mastery opportunities. Agents must show appreciation even when fully cognizant that misaligned rewards exist only to propel the completion of undesirable tasks and not further career mastery, even when positioned by managers or team leaders as doing so. They must “paint on” affective displays around rewards which hold limited value for their long-term satisfaction. As outlined by Grandey et al. (2005), the danger of such states is evident through their inclination to deplete mental resources and, within the context of Apathetic Engagement, this contributes to the dissipating effectiveness of gamified reward systems.

In many respects, this dissipating effectiveness could be viewed as an extension of the erosion of agent resilience (Bain & Taylor, 2000), in which agents eventually become emotionally compromised. Maslach et al. (2001) suggest that prolonged states of emotional compromise and interpersonal stressors can result in symptoms of burnout syndrome such as exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. Within the context of Apathetic Engagement these states are presented through agent’s attitudes and behaviours around their career mastery prospects, social interactions and behaviours towards the acquisition of rewards.

Exhaustion or the state of feeling “spent” (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, p. 17) is demonstrable within New Zealand contact centres in scenarios where agents are tasked with addressing sustained call queue overflows with limited resources. Agents are expected to exert effort beyond their natural capacity in pursuit of reactive extrinsic rewards. Such rewards are deployed as a means to alleviate emotional deficiencies and reinvigorate agents towards perpetual KPI commitment, however, often do little to address the cause of call problems or provide any real relief for agents ‘in the moment’. For instance, where managers use food and beverages as a reactive reward, little consideration is given to the fact that agents inundated with calls are unable to spare the time to eat or drink, given that it would slow down their already heavy work process or, that customers would hear eating down the phone. The subsequent failure to address the core problem of call overflow in-lieu of ineffective rewards then contributes to a wider sense of cynicism in which agents perceive solutions as temporary band-aids.

Maslach et al. (2001) suggest that such states of cynicism can drive people towards behaviours which they find cognitively manageable. Within gameful KPI systems, these behaviours manifest within agents as they distance themselves from others, elect to exploit KPI systems to receive extrinsic rewards or, merely seek temporary relief solutions detrimental to their KPIs. Though these actions often only further ratify agent cynicism. Conversely, agents who elect to provide feedback or find resolutions beyond their capabilities are often met with inadequate and ineffective solutions or informal acknowledgements with no demonstrable outcome. Such interactions then contribute to a sense of inefficacy, where agents feel that they have a limited amount of power to produce positive change within their environment. While these states are not entirely new to the contact centre literature, with previous research identifying such inefficacy as leading agents to “scam or steal a few minutes off the phones” (Woodcock, 2016, pp. 242) as a form of managerial resistance, they have, however, been under considered for their importance within proposed reward initiatives such as gamification.

8.1.3. Implications for Managers

Gamification holds a special allure for New Zealand contact centre organisations. This appeal comes from a sense of intrinsic compatibility between existing enterprise systems and rewards used to motivate employees. However, as discovered throughout this study, in some instances, this belief leads organisations to prematurely proclaim they’ve successfully gamified their work environment and, that as a result employees are now better off. While this study has highlighted many of the implications for employees faced with ill-conceived gamification initiatives, the influences of such systems equally carry through to the managers tasked with guiding their use. This is because the successful integration of game-like mechanics within contact centre environments requires an elevated understanding of what motivates staff at an individual level, the nuances of deployed KPI systems and an in-depth understanding of rewards will stimulate or harm team-based performance. As a result, for managers, the gamification of contact centre work invariably represents an amplification of employee rewards but, also one of the obligations around their use.

Callan, Bauer, and Landers (2015) proposed that gamification within the workplace could lead to scenarios where managers would be unable to avoid reconciling the “dark side” of reward

schemes. They stated that this reconciliation would require acknowledging potential consequences from the employee perspective but, equally, those that may inadvertently be thrust upon managers as well. Within this study, the findings of moral dissonance, automated environment and motivational drivers demonstrate that such scenarios hold a significant role within New Zealand contact centres, particularly those aiming to utilise game-like mechanics to drive business objectives.

The findings of moral dissonance illustrate the many ways in which managers must consider how they use and perceive gameful KPI systems and, how these actions influence the behaviours of employees. Critically, managers must constantly evaluate how their beliefs about employee competencies, behaviours and results (Shields, 2007) could be potentially swayed by the outputs of rewards. As illustrated through the categories of fundamental team play and KPI system exploitation, within current gameful KPI systems, managers are often placed in a position where they hold significant power over the accrual of extrinsic rewards. Given that many of these systems are still in their infancy and are created with limited guiding policies, the authority over rewards often extends beyond those given to employees and, through to those that may be acquired for personal gain. Such designs invite purposefully exploitative behaviours, or 'turning a blind eye' to underperforming subordinates and also, hold the potential to inadvertently enable overzealous managers to afford rewards based on favouritism (Prendergast & Topel, 1996).

Managers must also remain cognizant of the various types of rewards and the influences accompanying game-like mechanics can have over employee's mental states. This is particularly demonstrable in instances where managers opted to leverage competition-based rewards which continue to hold the potential to unconsciously increase stress among employees (Shahri et al., 2014). In part, this increase in stress, for some, could be attributed to the elevated sense of social recognition one receives based on their performance. Social remuneration demonstrates that employees can value recognition over tangible benefits and, that such recognition holds the potential to influence how employees conduct aspects of Fundamental teamplay. This finding builds upon existing investigations into the influences of social comparison (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2009; Oduor et al., 2014) where one evaluates their own abilities by comparing them to the abilities others. However, as each of the gamification instances within New Zealand contact centres was relatively new, and as this

study is not longitudinal, limitations around the long-term effects of social rewards on social comparison found in other studies (Zuckerman & Gal-Oz, 2014) are also present here.

These considerations, in combination with the findings presented throughout, illuminate a new string of obligations for managers wishing to leverage the motivational benefits of gamification within the New Zealand contact centre industry. Of equal importance, however, are the potential opportunities gameful KPI systems represent for managers in their efforts to direct and guide employee behaviour.

Firstly, feedback systems can be recalibrated cognizant of the previously unconsidered aspects of a front-line agent's role. Specifically, the misalignments between what managers believe direct behaviour vs an employee's actual beliefs. Within contact centres this misalignment coexists with a broader obligation towards employee values, organisational objects, and work directives (Wallace et al., 2000) and, by addressing these issues explicitly managers ensure they do not unintentionally contribute to the negative trade-offs which contribute to stress, burnout and turnover often found within KPI based contact centre environments. Secondly, in recognition of the role that informal rewards play within current gameful KPI systems, organisations can consider the ways in which such rewards can be tracked, measured or monitored for not only their financial influence but, motivational benefits as well. Equally, the use of informal rewards and the role in which fairness considerations can play on their effectiveness and distribution can be evaluated and accounted for (Williamson, 2008). This study goes some way into highlighting these influences, particularly where employees are dissuaded.

8.2. Achieving the Research Objectives

This study investigates the use of gamification within New Zealand contact centres, and throughout, has employed the grounded theory processes of coding and constant comparison analysis for the investigation of a diverse data set. Although a significant proportion of the data informing this study comes from semi-structured interviews, a substantial amount derives from a stream of theoretically sensitising practices such as memoing and a constant emersion into the ongoing development of gamification research and practice.

The results of this investigation reveal the core themes of automated environment and moral dissonance subsumed within the substantive theory of apathetic engagement. When relating these core themes to existing literature concerning motivational drivers, gamification and the contact centre industry, the findings contribute to a greater understanding of the interplay between frontline agents and deployed reward mechanism. It is through this understanding that this study offers an answer to the research questions presented throughout:

- **RQ1:** How is gamification used within New Zealand Contact Centres?
- **RQ2:** What are the motivational influences of gamification in New Zealand contact centres?
- **RQ3:** How do frontline contact centre employees perceive gamification?

The study answers the first research question by examining existing definitions of gamification from within the academic literature and empirically investigating the reliance upon gamification within New Zealand contact centres. Findings reveal that popular definitions of gamification hold certain degrees of subjectivity, borne from interpretations of concepts of 'gamefulness'. Therefore, in establishing the use of gamification within New Zealand contact centres, the examination considered the perceptions of employee's subject to such systems. The result of which is the identification of industry reward initiatives focused on Key Performance Indicators, and the management of employee cognitive and physical resources. This discovery underpins findings throughout this study, as the basis for current gamification systems is the repurposing of existing Key Performance Indicators intrinsic to an employee's everyday role. Because of this, there is a distinct relationship between the formation of gamification initiatives within New Zealand contact centres, and the findings pertinent to answering the second and third research questions.

The second and third research questions - "what are the motivational influences of gamification initiatives in New Zealand contact centres?" and "how do frontline contact centre employees perceive gamification?" - are answered through the discovery of the four main categories, *fundamental teamplay*, *superimposed benefits*, *obstructed gamefulness*, *KPI system exploitation* and their interconnected relationships. Explaining the relationship between these categories are two primary themes, *moral dissonance* and *automated environment*. Both of which, reflect the cyclical nature of gamified contact centre work and

the distinctive compromises agents must make within their role that later influence their perceptions towards gamification initiatives.

The findings reveal, therefore that current gamification use within New Zealand contact centres is ineffective at best. At worst, the current implementations of gamified KPI systems propagate many of the longstanding issues around contact centre work, specifically the dissipating motivation driving employees to provide fresh and enthusiastic service. The discovery of Apathetic Engagement, however, presents a significant opportunity for the industry to re-evaluate *reward initiatives driving gamified KPI systems*, to tailor agent work environments away from those conducive to states of *moral dissonance*.

8.2.1. Limitations and Future Research

While the findings presented, offer new insight into the use of gamification initiatives in New Zealand contact centres the reader should remain mindful of the limitations of the study which, have always held the potential to directly or indirectly influence outcomes. As this study used a grounded theory methodology, it was necessary to adopt a sampling approach that facilitated access to a broad and diverse array of participants. Despite the researcher's success in conscripting participants from a range of large, longstanding organisations within New Zealand, there were still instances where access to segments of the industry and its workers was not possible. In many cases, this limitation was one of the finite resources for the business, in which agents could not be spared time away from call queues without significantly impacting the wellbeing of other service workers. As a result, this study was forced to adopt a narrower scope of participant involvement than initially preferred.

Therefore, Apathetic Engagement is a substantive and context-specific theory grounded empirically within the data that was accessible. While this access has provided unique insights into the New Zealand contact centre industry, the explanatory power of this study within a global context is limited. Equally, as the focus was placed exclusively on service work conducted within contact centre environments, this study has excluded other relevant circumstances in which the gamification of a workforce has occurred. For example, gamification has seen increasing prominence across education and health services, sectors not represented in this study. Significant opportunity exists to extend the findings presented through Apathetic Engagement to neighbouring information technology sectors, through

examinations of empirical gamification deployments, environmental working conditions, degrees of users' autonomy within such environments and the core aspects driving long or short-term employee engagement. Equally, Apathetic Engagement could be considered outside the context of New Zealand contact centres and, future researchers are invited to map and measure the model's effectiveness within international in-bound contact centre environments, ideally, those currently leveraging gamified KPI systems.

This study has also leveraged widely accepted and current definitions of the concepts of gamification, game, play and gamefulness, while simultaneously discussing the many debates and potential avenues of evolution around their future use. Because, the researcher believes many of these concepts formulate an individual's subjective interpretation that, are inherently bound to the observable social and historical context. Nonetheless, the researcher accepts that as the academic discipline surrounding gamification matures many of these concepts will evolve, and while this study assists towards meeting this goal, it occurred while cognisant of this limitation.

Finally, the study acknowledges that the experiences and biases, discussed throughout Chapter 2 that the researcher brings with him to the study held the potential to influence its outcome. The researcher has attempted to mitigate these biases through the acknowledgement of his pre-understanding and memoing and coding procedures but, nevertheless accepts that some may remain unaccounted for or, be inherently inseparable from the analysis process.

While these limitations have been unavoidable throughout the conduct of this study, their unintentional benefit is found in the potential they hold as a point of commencement for future research efforts. The samples selected for this study were limited primarily to organisations located in Auckland & Christchurch, New Zealand and as such present the opportunity for future efforts to further develop the theory in other geographical contexts. Equally, as this study focuses explicitly on the influences of gamification initiatives on frontline contact centre employees, future research efforts could investigate other service work settings to observe if Apathetic Engagement is a phenomenon particular only to such roles.

This study also builds upon the existing discussions of Deterding et al. (2011) and Huotari and Hamari (2012) in that it presents the concept of gamification and its associated game design

elements as containing a degree of personal subjectivity. As such, the reward initiatives considered throughout are considered gamified only to the extent that frontline agents believe them to be so. Because of this, significant opportunities exist for future research efforts to examine the subjective nature of 'gamefulness' within other work contexts and, look at how such contexts influence the effectiveness of modern emerging mechanics in relation to those found in this study.

Apathetic Engagement is a substantive theory and, not a generalisable formal theory because:

[w]e construct research processes and products, but these constructions occur under pre-existing structural conditions, arise in emergent situations, and are influenced by the researcher's perspectives, privileges, positions, interactions, and geographical locations. (Charmaz, 2014, p. 240)

Opportunity therefore, exists for future research efforts to take the findings presented and examine them within the wider context of service work and other emerging gamified environments. The researcher believes that gamification within the contact centre industry will hold a significant role moving forward. This is because many of the established measuring systems, reward practices and management strategies are conducive to game-like elements and, provide a natural way to supplement otherwise routine or mundane roles with the motivational stimulus. It is possible that as contact centre gamification becomes more prominent, the scope in which gameful KPI systems are deployed may also expand. In this respect, future research should endeavour to capture the experiences of managers or employees subject to such systems.

As a starting point, the researcher expects that while current implementations focus on frontline agents, future efforts may encapsulate those working in adjacent or supportive roles, particularly in instances where companies adopt flat hierarchical structures propelled by new Agile business models (Alexandre et al., 2013).

This opportunity could be realised through the validation and quantification of gameful KPI systems, specifically those game-like elements previously unconsidered as holding significant influence over employee behaviours. Organisations and the broader gamification research community stands to benefit significantly from further exploration and measurement of

employee engagement in gameful KPI systems. Future researchers could also endeavour to evaluate the influence of organisational culture on the deployment of gameful KPI systems and, measure the success of such implementations at the individual and organisational levels. It is also possible for future research to examine the degree to which each component of autonomous environments, moral dissonance and motivational drivers influence the success of gamified initiatives. It is conceivable that for specific industries or work contexts providing more or less autonomy within an environment may hold influence on its success, particularly if consideration is given to the changing cognitive burdens of moral dissonance and innate motivational drivers. These studies should be considered as existing alongside the traditional lines of engagement research (Simpson, 2009) and, acknowledge that gamification is an innately multidisciplinary area of understanding which will inevitably continue to intersect neighbouring concepts.

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Appendix 1: Game-like Initiatives Identified by Participants

Participant	Familiarity with gamification	Business Process	Key Elements Mentioned
TP 1	Enthusiast	Performance Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition • Points • Achievement
TP 2	Semi-familiar	KPI System Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points/Metrics • Achievement/Recognition • Managing Resources • Supporting Team
TP 3	Semi-familiar	KPI System Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Currency • Recognition/Digital Badge • Team Support
TP 4	Semi-familiar	KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progression • Social Recognition • Voucher • Virtual Currency • Achievement
TP 5	Unfamiliar	Team Monitoring KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vouchers • Special Events • Virtual Currencies
TP 6	Semi-informed	Learning and Development KPI System Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Currency • Progression • Achievement • Special Events • Client Recognition
TP 7	Semi-Informed	Customer Survey KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money • Competition • Scores/Points • Competitive Auctions

TP 8	Semi-informed	KPI System Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork/Achievement • Virtual Currency • Voucher • Social Recognition • Badges
TP 9	Semi-informed	KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Currency • Vouchers • Achievement • Social Recognition • Competition
TP 10	Enthusiast	Performance Review Learning and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progression • Team/Client recognition • Awards • Achievement
TP 11	Semi-informed	KPI System Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition • Achievement • Virtual Currency • Voucher • Leaderboard • Virtual Cosmetics • Traditional Sports/Games
TP 12	Semi-informed	KPI System Examination Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Progression • Achievement • Recognition • Virtual Currency • Progression Exams • Traditional Game Competition • Social Reliance/Teamwork
TP 13	Semi-Informed	Performance Monitoring KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Feedback • Social Recognition • Team competition • Voucher

		Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual Currency
TP 14	Semi-Informed	KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Competitive Game Virtual Currency Voucher Bonuses
TP 15	Semi-Informed	KPI System Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upskilling/Progression Achievement Recognition Accumulative Prizes Food/Confectionary Competition
TP 16	Enthusiast	KPI System System Developer Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual Currency Team Virtual Currency Examination/Progress Food/Drink Rewards Online Auction
TP 17	Unfamiliar	KPI System Customer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem Solving Recognition Food/Drink Rewards Teamwork
TP 18	Semi-Informed	KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual Currency Social Recognition Progression Opportunities Achievement Examination Process
TP 19	Enthusiast	KPI Systems Monitoring Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Recognition Web-based Games (Flash) Competition MMORPG Virtual Currency Food/Drink Rewards

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Events
TP 20	Semi-Informed	KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill Acquisition • Achievement • Social Recognition • Virtual Currency • Progression Exams
TP 21	Semi-Informed	KPI Systems Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Recognition/Social • Virtual Currency • Traditional Games • Special Events • Team Driven Game Creation
TP 22	Semi-Informed	KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex Problem Solving • Virtual Currency • Social Recognition • Team Ranking • Digital Recognition (Mass Emails)
TP 23	Semi-Informed	KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination System • Achievement • Career Progression • Virtual Currency • Voucher
TP 24	Semi-Informed	KPI System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food/Drink • Special Events • Team Competition • Social Recognition • Vouchers

Appendix 2: Gamification Definitions

Definition	Author
<i>Gamification is the use of game design elements in nongame contexts</i>	(Deterding, Sicart, et al., 2011)
<i>A process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences in order to support user's overall value creation</i>	(Huotari & Hamari, 2012)
<i>The use of game mechanics and experience design to digitally engage and motivate people to achieve their goals'</i>	(Burke, 2013)
<i>Gamification should influence human behaviour through engaging experiences, using game design principles in decision-making applications and services not related to gaming.</i>	(Kappen & Nacke, 2013)
<i>The use of game thinking and game mechanics to engage users and solve problems</i>	(Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011)
<i>The process of making activities more game-like</i>	(Werbach & Hunter, 2012)
<i>Gamification is the use of game elements in contexts that originally had no link to game-related elements</i>	(Zichermann & Linder, 2010)
<i>Taking game mechanics and applying to other web properties to increase engagement</i>	(Bret, 2008)
<i>The employer-imposed game in a work environment where the goals of the game are designed to reinforce the goals and purpose of the employer.</i>	(Mollick & Rothbard, 2014)
<i>The intentional use of game elements for a gameful experience of non-game tasks and contexts</i>	(Seaborn & Fels, 2015)
<i>The application of game-design principles to change behaviours in non-game situations</i>	(Robson et al., 2016)

Appendix 3: Consent Form

14 November 2016

page 1 of 1

Consent Form



Project title: **Enterprise gamification: A Study of Contact Centres in New Zealand**

Project Supervisor: **Dr Harminder Singh**

Researcher: **Sean Hinton**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I understand that I have **limited confidentiality** while taking part in the research. This is because while my identity will be disguised using a pseudonym, some people may be able to infer my identity based on their knowledge of the organisation or who was invited to take part in this research. This means that other people may be able to infer who has said what in publications based on this project.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I understand that I will be given an opportunity to review and assess the accuracy of the transcribed interview prior to its use in this study.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I would be happy to conduct a follow-up interview during a later stage of the project: Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Date:

Participant's contact details (to receive a copy of the report):

.....

.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on May 11, 2015, AUTECH Reference number 15/139

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

1st November 2016

Project Title

Enterprise gamification: A Study of Contact Centres in New Zealand

An Invitation

Greetings! My names Sean Hinton, I'm a postgraduate student at the AUT undertaking a research project that will help me write my thesis in fulfilment of the Doctor of Philosophy degree. I am inviting you to take part of this important and beneficial research project.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection if you withdraw this will neither advantage nor disadvantage you.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim of this study is to explore and better understand the motivational influences of enterprise

“gamification” systems in New Zealand-based contact centres. Further, it is expected that this study will expand the current knowledge base surrounding emerging digital tools and techniques used in gamification systems. The goal is to generate a better understanding of how gamification systems can be utilized to improve work environments, which will in-turn create more enjoyable and rewarding processes for all involved.

The outcome of the research will be my thesis which is completed as part of my Doctor of Philosophy degree, a conference paper, and a journal article.

What exactly is “gamification”?

Gamification is the use of game mechanics in non-game contexts. Popular examples can often be seen in commercial loyalty programs and can consist of virtual points, virtual badges or digital leaderboards. While these mechanics are by far the most common, they are by no means an exhaustive list. In reality, any mechanic seen in a traditional game or video game could be used in gamification. Therefore, currently, we consider “gamification” as taking the engaging

elements from games and applying them to non-game contexts with the goal of making them more rewarding.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified as an employee of who is/was exposed to a gamification system or process in a contact centre environment. We believe you can provide us with valuable insight of about the systems in place that will help support this research.

How was I identified for the study?

You have been contacted for this study for the following reasons:

☐ Colleague Referral

☐ Online Networks (Linkedin etc.)

☐ Requested Involvement

☐ Other

What will happen in this research?

The aim of this research is to explore and better understand how “gamification” is used in New Zealand contact centres. Essentially, we are trying to achieve the following objectives.

Main objectives:

- Expand the current knowledge base surrounding the effectiveness of emerging digital tools and techniques, with an emphasis on the perspective of employees’ subject to gamification.
- Generate a substantive and context-specific theory capable of offering a more concise understanding of enterprise gamification processes.

To achieve these objectives, we will use semi-structured, open-ended interviews designed to capture the appropriate information for analysis. These will be transcribed. The analysis will be used to make recommendations surrounding the future use of gamification so that the systems are both more enjoyable and effective.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There are no discomforts or risks to you.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Not applicable.

What are the benefits?

You will benefit from an analysis of how gamification systems are currently being used through the resulting recommendations made in the final report. Both you and your company will have access to this report which can act as a reference point for discussing potential changes in your own work environments.

Benefits for the researcher: Understand how gamification systems are used in New Zealand contact centres. Learn about emerging game-mechanic tools and techniques currently being used to motivate staff in complex work environments. Result in the conferment of a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Benefits for the wider Community: Provide greater insight into the capabilities of gamification for anyone considering the use of game mechanics in non-game contexts to motivate users.

How will my privacy be protected?

Pseudonyms will be used in the research to protect your identity. However, we can only offer you **limited confidentiality**. This means that there are two reasons that other people within the organisation may be able to infer who participated in the research and who has said what in any published reports.

There are two main reasons for the limited confidentiality. First, due to the specialised roles and tasks undertaken by participants, it may be possible to identify the identities of certain participants. Second, senior managers (who distribute the invitation to participate) may be able to infer who participated in the research.

No personal information will be released to third parties.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

You will need to attend an interview session with the researcher which is open ended-and will take approximately 30-40 minutes.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have two weeks to decide if you would like to take part in this research project from the date of receipt.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You will need to complete and return the attached consent form. You may withdraw from the research at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

Will I be able to review my answers prior to analysis?

Yes, you may request a copy of the interview transcripts prior to analysis.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

A report will be produced. You can request a copy by directly emailing the researcher.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Harminder Singh, Harminder.Singh@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 – ext: 5029.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz or +64 (0) 9 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Sean Hinton
+64 (0) 274
400 312
[shinton@aut
.ac.nz](mailto:shinton@aut.ac.nz)

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Harminder Singh
Harminder.singh@aut.ac.nz
+64 9 921 9999 – ext: 5029

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *May 11, 2015*, AUTECH Reference number *15/139*.

Appendix 5: Indicative Question Set 1

- What is/was your role/roles and how long have/had you been doing it?
- What is the most challenging part that/those contact centre roles?
- What is/was the most rewarding aspect of this role?
- What do you do with your downtime at work (between calls, or quiet days)?
- Are there any particular tasks you try to achieve in this downtime? Either set by the company or yourself.
- How long do these normally take?
- How does downtime affect your motivation?
- What kinds of processes or systems does your company use to motivate or reward your work
- What kind of performance indicators or similar metrics are used by your company, and what do you think about them?
- How do these affect your performance?
- How have technologies like social media impacted how you communicate with co-workers/employers/managers.
- How have your obligations towards a company been influenced by technology? (i.e. work later, call in sick earlier, hide things on social media etc.).
- How do you feel about the terms “gamification” and “Performance management”.
- What role do you think respect plays in a performance management systems?
- What is a “game” to you?
- Have games or game-like initiatives been used in your workplace, if so how?
- Do you feel there’s any benefit to using these in the workplace why/why not?
- How does the performance of other employees impact your work? (team-based KPI’s etc.)
- What does “playful” behaviour look like in your work environment?
- How have technology systems or processes put in place by your company have aided or distracted you from completing work?
- Have you ever used skills or knowledge from games/social media (mobile, console, social media) in your work environment? What were they?
- Are there any particular tasks/calls/problems that you put more effort into than others? If so Why?
- Are there any tasks in your role that are consistently engaging, or make time flow faster?
- What sort of things do you do in your role to make the work more enjoyable for yourself?
- In What areas of your role would you say you have the most freedom?
- How would you change performance monitoring/measuring systems in your company?
- Do you know of anyone else that might be suitable for this study?

Appendix 6: Indicative Question Set 2

- What is/was your role/roles and how long have/had you been doing it?
- Why did you choose to work here?
- What is the most challenging part of your contact centre role?
- What is/was the most rewarding aspect of this role?
- Do you ever have any downtime at work? If so what do you do during this time (between calls, or quiet days)?
- What kinds of processes or systems does your company use to motivate or reward your work?
- What kind of performance indicators or similar metrics are used by your company?
- What do you think about the KPI system? How does it affect your motivation towards working?
- Do you have team-based KPIs? If so, do you feel they accurately measure your performance or contributions to a team?
- How does your company provide visual feedback on your performance?
- In what areas would you say this system could use improvement?
- Are there any systems or processes in place which you think you'd be better off without?
- How does the performance of other employees impact your work? (team-based KPI's etc.)
- Are staff outside of team leaders ever relied upon as support channels? If so why do you think this happens?
- Have the performance metrics (team or individual) influenced your behaviour at work? How?
- Are there any particular tasks/calls/problems that you put more effort into than others? If so Why?
- Are there any tasks in your role that are consistently engaging, or make time flow faster?
- In what areas of your role would you say you have the most freedom?
- Does your company use any sort of system to reward staff or anything which appears "game like"? And how do they work?
- How would you say they impact your performance?
- Do you pay more attention to your KPIs as a result of this system?
- Are there any activities which you feel should be rewarded through this system that currently aren't.
- In what ways could it be improved?
- How have technologies like social media impacted how you communicate with co-workers/employers/managers.
- Have your obligations towards a company been influenced by technology? (i.e. work later, call in sick earlier, hide things on social media etc.).
- Could you explain your social media behaviour to me?
- How does this differ from other times or places, i.e. home?
- Are there any notable differences in your behaviour when using social media at work?
- Why do you think that is?
- What are some of the benefits of using social media for you at work?
- Have games or game-like initiatives been used in your workplace, if so how?
- How do you feel about them?
- Do you feel there's any benefit to using these in the workplace why/why not?
- Do you play any traditional style games? (mobile, console, pc etc.)
- What do you enjoy most about those games?
- Do you know of anyone else that might be suitable for this study?

Appendix 7: Indicative Question Set 3

- What is/was your role/roles and how long have/had you been doing it?
 - Why did you choose to work here?
 - What is the most challenging part that/those contact centre roles?
 - What is/was the most rewarding aspect of this role?
 - Do you ever have any downtime at work? If so what do you do during this time (between calls, or quiet days)?
 - What kinds of processes or systems does your company use to motivate or reward your work
 - What kind of performance indicators or similar metrics are used by your company, and what do you think about them?
 - Do you have team-based KPIs? If so do you feel they are a good measure of your performance or contributions to a team?
 - Do you receive feedback on tickets you have dealt with (to see if the problem was resolved or not)?
 - Can you think of any apparent flaws in these systems?
 - Can you explain the virtual money system? (if applicable)
 - How do you feel about the virtual currency system? (if applicable)
 - How would you say it impacts your performance?
 - Do you pay more attention to your KPIs as a result of this system?
 - Are there any activities which you feel should be rewarded through this system that currently aren't.
 - In what ways could it be improved?
 - How have technologies like social media impacted how you communicate with co-workers/employers/managers.
 - Have your obligations towards a company been influenced by technology? (i.e. work later, call in sick earlier, hide things on social media etc.).
 - Have the performance metrics (team or individual) influenced your behaviour at work? How?
 - Have games or game-like initiatives been used in your workplace, if so how?
 - How do you feel about them?
 - Do you feel there's any benefit to using these in the workplace why/why not?
 - How do you feel about the Exam system?
 - Can you explain, from your understanding what they are and how they work?
 - How does that impact your performance?
 - Do you have any recommendations about how to improve that system?
 - Do you play any traditional style games? (mobile, console, pc etc.)
 - What do you enjoy most about those games?
 - Are there any systems or processes in place which you think you'd be better off without?
 - How does the performance of other employees impact your work? (team-based KPI's etc.)
 - Are staff outside of team leaders ever relied upon as support channels? If so why do you think this happens?
 - Are there any particular tasks/calls/problems that you put more effort into than others? If so Why?
 - Are there any tasks in your role that are consistently engaging, or make time flow faster?
 - In what areas of your role would you say you have the most freedom?
 - Do you know of anyone else that might be suitable for this study?
-

Appendix 8: Summary of Interviews

ID#	Role	Industry	Manager Status	Interview	Follow-up Questions	Mins	Question Set	Current in Industry
TP 1	Dev	Telco	Yes	VoIP	No	45	Q1	No
TP 2	CSR/Tech	Telco/ISP	No	Face-to-Face	Yes	52	Q1	Yes
TP 3	CSR/Tech	Telco /ISP	No	Face-to-Face	No	64	Q1	Yes
TP 4	CSR/Tech	Telco /ISP	No	Face-to-Face	No	61	Q1	Yes
TP 5	TL/Multi	Telco/ISP	Yes	Face-to-Face	No	57	Q1	Yes
TP 6	Dev	Telco/ISP	No	Face-to-Face	No	73	Q1	Yes
TP 7	CSR/Multi	Telco/ISP	No	Face-to-Face	No	66	Q1	Yes
TP 8	TL/Multi	Telco	Yes	Face-to-Face	No	42	Q2	Yes
TP 9	TL/Multi	Telco	Yes	Face-to-Face	No	43	Q2	Yes
TP 10	TL/Multi	Telco	Yes	Face-to-Face	No	67	Q2	Yes
TP 11	CSR/Tech	Telco	No	Face-to-Face	No	53	Q2	Yes
TP 12	CSR/TL	Telco	No	Face-to-Face	No	57	Q2	Yes
TP 13	TL/CSR	Telco	Temp	Face-to-Face	No	59	Q2	Yes
TP 14	CSR/Tech	Telco	No	Face-to-Face	Yes	64	Q2	Yes

TP 15	TL	Telco	Yes	Face-to-Face	No	50	Q2	Yes
TP 16	Dev/Tech	Telco/ISP	Yes	Face-to-Face	No	51	Q3	Yes
TP 17	CSR	Telco/ISP	No	Face-to-Face	No	48	Q3	Yes
TP 18	TL/CSR	Telco/ISP	Temp	Face-to-Face	No	52	Q3	Yes
TP 19	CSR/Tech	Telco/ISP	No	Face-to-Face	No	55	Q3	No
TP 20	TL/Tech	Telco/ISP	Temp	Face-to-Face	No	45	Q3	Yes
TP 21	CSR/Tech	Telco/ISP	No	Face-to-Face	No	58	Q3	No
TP 22	CSR/Tech	Telco/Banking	No	Face-to-Face	No	42	Q3	No
TP 23	CSR/Tech	Telco/Banking	No	Face-to-Face/VoIP	Yes	65	Q3	Yes
TP 24	CSR/Tech	Telco/ISP	No	Face-to-Face/VoIP	Yes	62	Q3	Yes

Appendix 9: Ethics Approval



A U T E C
S E C R E T A R I A T

11 May 2015

Lincoln Wood
Faculty of Business and Law

Dear Lincoln

Re Ethics Application: **15/139 Enterprise gamification: A study of contact centres in New Zealand.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 11 May 2018.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 11 May 2018;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 11 May 2018 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Appendix 10: Nature of KPI System Gamification Repurpose

Contact Centre	KPI system	Nature of Repurposed Employee Performance Reports
1	Yes	Competition, Team Performance, Individual Performance. Achievements, Team Recognition
2	Yes	Virtual Currency, Team Performance, Individual Performance. Team Recognition, Digital Badges, Exams
3	Yes	Virtual Currency, Achievement, Social Recognition, Progression
4	Yes	Progression, Achievement, Social Recognition, Competition, Team Performance, Individual Performance.
5	Yes	Points, Virtual Currency, Vouchers, Social Recognition, Team Performance, Individual Performance. Achievement
6	Yes	Team Performance, Individual Performance. Achievement, Social Recognition, Competition
7	Yes	Competition, Social Recognition, Team Performance, Individual Performance, Virtual Currency
8	Yes	Team Performance, Individual Performance, Achievement, Progression, Virtual Currency, Team Recognition, Social Recognition.