

## **Exercise for Coursera course Gamification, instructor Kevin Werbach**

By Haley Isleib

**Goal:** Improve the physical fitness of the workforce as measured by a decrease in the percentage of overweight and obese staff.

**Plan:** Using an interactive website/app, employees will be encouraged to join forces on a quest to improve the health outlook of a virtual character named Smithster.

### **Smithster is a personification of the entire city workforce.**

To begin, employees enter their stats (height, weight), dietary decisions and current level of exercise. This is voluntary; staff will self-select to participate. The open periods during which staff can elect to participate will be limited to one week every four months. This is to prevent a negative feedback loop if a new participant's stats negatively impact the health of Smithster. To balance any potential negative effect, Smithster's virtual "wealth" will be increased every time a new employee joins the game. Wealth will decrease if a participant is inactive for too long or leaves the game.

Those who improve their health stats will earn virtual badges and acclaim as the heroes working to save Smithster. The key is that the game seeks improvement, which is relative for each participant. An employee who is already fit will actually have less impact on Smithster's health than the overweight, inactive cake-eater who loses five pounds and starts eating spinach while walking to work each day.

In addition to achievement badges, whenever Smithster's health has improved for two weeks in a row, a random name will be chosen from participants as the winner of either a tangible award (a physical medallion or \$5 gift certificate) or a special virtual award that allows the participant to make a modification to Smithster's look -- give him new virtual shoes or change his hair, etc. Once every four months, during the sign up week, participants can gain badges for inviting new people to play.

One tricky issue will be the personification of the city's diverse workforce. Race, gender, culture -- how should such features be presented without creating a feeling of exclusion? One way to go is to make Smithster a purple alien. PEOPLE OF EARTH! ONLY YOU CAN SAVE SMITHSTER! Or something like that.

Most of the rewards will be intangible, such as virtual badges and wealth. The extrinsic rewards may include gift certificates or physical medallions. We can also include improved health and weight loss as extrinsic awards for participants. One intrinsic goal is helping the imaginary Smithster. Others include the feeling of making a contribution to something greater than yourself; and of course, having fun.