Role-Playing Game for Training a Design Process of Startup Company Compensation Plan

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ABSTRACT

A compensation plan that continuously motivates the employees of a startup company is very important because the employees are usually more worried about the stability and potential growth of their company than the employees of large enterprises. It is therefore important to educate personnel in the human resources department of a startup company to properly design a compensation plan. However, it is not easy to train personnel to do this. In order to properly design a compensation plan, the employees must be trained to correctly understand content theories and process theories, and should apply the theories considering the practical constraints of the enterprise. This study used a gamification program based on role playing to design a compensation plan for a startup company to give trainees a greater sense of reality and immersion. The gamification program suggested in this article was analyzed to be effective in motivating and giving fun to the trainees. This gamification program would be used effectively to train personnel in the human resources department of startup companies.

KEYWORDS

Entrepreneurship, Gamification, Role Playing, Startup

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1. INTRODUCTION

In order to achieve business goals and objectives, startup companies should develop an optimized compensation plan that satisfies their employees with a limited budget. If their employees are not satisfied with the plan and are not motivated to fulfill their roles and responsibilities, the startup companies cannot grow. However, the process of designing a compensation plan is very complicated and difficult. This is because, in order to design such a plan in an optimized form, personnel in the human resources department of a startup company must take into account the unique characteristics of their company and various motivation theories. Furthermore, the culture of startup companies is different from that of older corporations, and this makes the process more difficult (Edwards, 2017).

Trainers usually face two problems when they try to create sustainable motivations for trainees, as below. Firstly, the assessment and grading systems of most higher education programs are based on extrinsic motivation, which is less sustainable than intrinsic motivation (Kim, 2014; Kim et al., 2017). Secondly, most higher education programs lack in providing a flow model (Quaye & Harper 2014; Kim, 2017).

Gamification is a method that changes something that is not a game through a game or its elements (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Gamification can be a means to engage employees in tasks (Reeves & Read, 2009), promote collaboration (McGonigal, 2011), or motivate the employees (Zichermann, & Linder, 2013). Deterding and colleagues suggested defining gamification as “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding et al., 2011).

This paper suggests a gamification approach to train human resources department personnel to have the ability to design the compensation plan of a startup company by combining various motivation theories with the company’s realistic constraints on personnel.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of previous work on motivation theory and gamification approaches. Section 3 presents a role-playing game designed using fictional scenarios and gamification methods. Section 4 reports the results of a case study that validates the practical value of the proposed role-playing game. Finally, section 5 presents the implications of the present study and discusses further research perspectives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is an overview of previous research on motivation theory and gamification approaches.

2.1. Motivation Theories

Motivation is considered a powerful tool that reinforces behavior and enhances the tendency to continue (Kim, 2016).

McGregor (1957) proposed theory X and theory Y for traditional companies that have a centralized decision-making structure. Theory X assumes that most employees want to be directed and are motivated by financial means and the threat
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