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Hoopla's Game Center aims to kick up the friendly competition among sales staff by articulating goals and plastering results on live animated leaderboards. The new functionality reflects a growing trend among businesses -- gamification -- which so far appears to be an effective way to overcome employee resistance to using CRM systems.

Hoopla: It's a Brand New Sales Game

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[Hoopla](#) has debuted a new module for its sales performance platform. Game Center uses contests to incentivise CRM software users to perform certain tasks or reach specific goals. Results are published on live animated leaderboards.

"It all about creating friendly competition designed to drive motivation and inspire certain behavior," Mike Smalls, CEO of Hoopla, told CRM Buyer.

It typically works this way: A sales operation identifies a certain behavior or goal, such as prompting sales staff to make more cold calls or follow up with prospects. The module then creates a contest around this data, which resides in a CRM system -- in this case [Salesforce.com](#).

"Based on that goal, the competition is then designed with start and end data, teams, points for certain actions, and so on," Smalls said.

The application also lets users place certain images, videos or sound effects to reinforce the action. The contest then unfolds in the Web application, as well as on TV leaderboards around the office, Smalls continued.

Incredible Impact

This technique of gamification is proving to be successful in many endeavors, including business software. There has been a 30 percent increase, on average, in activities that were inspired with short-term bursts of competition, Smalls said, based on industry statistics.

"We have had our customers report that that increase can be as much as

200 percent," he said.

For the moment, the Game Center is integrated only with [Salesforce.com](https://www.salesforce.com).

The company is working on integrating with other CRM vendors, which will be announced in the medium term, according to Smalls.

Integration is key to the application's ease of use, because it automatically pulls the data out of the CRM system, he noted. That is how the scores are automatically updated, allowing the game to unfold in real time.

Since the Game Center launched, takeup has been significant, Smalls said. "We already have several hundred competitions running simultaneously."

A Hot Topic

Gamification is a topic of keen interest to companies right now, noted Ari Zoldan, CEO of [Quantum Media Holdings](https://www.quantummedia.com).

"It taps into the intrinsic competitive spirit of employees, who are able to compete while working towards a common goal," he told CRM Buyer.

In the case of Hoopla's gamification of sales performance, employees are incentivized "to engage with their sales goals, boosting morale and employee satisfaction," Zoldan said.

The Downside of Hasty Gamification

A number of applications built around gamification have entered the market in recent months and years, many in the CRM space. Companies have had a notoriously difficult time enticing employees -- especially sales staff -- to fully use CRM systems, and appealing to their competitive spirit via gamification has proven successful.

However, vendors must be careful and not just slap a game-like interface on any application and expect it to succeed, said **Albert Chen, assistant professor of game design and development at Cogswell College in Sunnyvale, California.**

"I can see leaderboards and such as a clear way for sales people to gauge performance and engage in friendly competition," he told CRM Buyer. "However, just like leaderboards in video games, if they are not well thought out, they can potentially have a negative effect."

For example, the classic video game leaderboard shows the high score for

all players.

"It's great when you're at or near the top but if you just started or aren't very good at the game, it can be very demoralizing to see how far above you the top players are," Chen said.

However, a player who is allowed to filter scores for comparison with those directly above and below will be able to see reachable goals and have the added benefit of feeling good about doing better than others.

"In an organization or company, you are as strong as your weakest link," concluded Chen, "so I think judicious gamification that not only builds engagement but also community and a common cause is the best strategy."