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Got Game

How the Gamer Generation is Reshaping Business Forever

By: John C. Beck & Mitchell Wade

Book Facts

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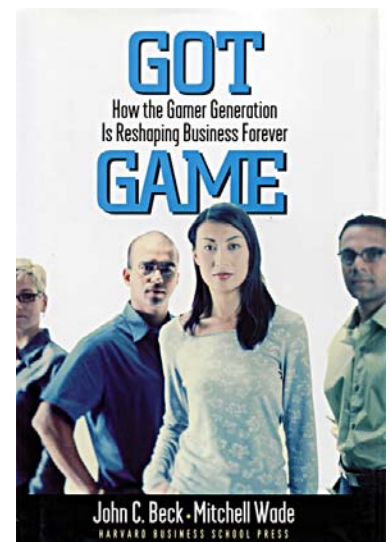
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Overview

Got Game reveals the profound impact that the "gamer generation" (already bigger than the baby boom generation) will have on the future of business. While games have made this group dramatically different in terms of their attitudes, expectations, and abilities, the potential of this generation has scarcely been noticed in most organizations.

Beck and Wade dispel common myths about gamers and reveal them as committed, team-oriented professionals who play to win. They offer strategies today's managers can use to bridge the generation gap and unleash gamers' hidden potential.

Highlighting an important and influential new generation, this book shows why every company should make sure its people have "got game."



How to Get Gamers to Play to Win for Your Company

The biggest factor shaping the future of business is small enough to fit in a teenager's hand. That factor is video games – and though most of us dismiss gaming as a waste of time, more than ninety million people are ready to prove us wrong.

Comprised of millions of rising professionals in the U.S. alone, the gamer generation will ultimately dominate the workforce – and they are already changing the rules of business.

Through a large-scale survey and hundreds of interviews, strategists John C. Beck and Mitchell Wade find that gaming is not a time sink, but an amazingly effective training camp for teaching critical business skills.

The authors describe the characteristics of gamers and provide insights into their ethos and belief systems through the results of their research.

They have found that all those hours immersed in front of video and

computer games have created masses of employees with unique attributes:

- bold but measured risk taking
- an amazing ability to multitask
- unexpected leadership skills.

Indeed gamers are strong in exactly the areas that today's companies need most. But to leverage these skills, today's managers will need to understand and appreciate the very different ways in which gamers think and behave.

Want 'Tude with That?

The book relates how gamers' values and skills shape their professional performance.

- **Driving for Excellence:** Gamers have a cleverly camouflaged commitment to professional excellence.
- **Winning Matters:** A strong belief in competition gives the game generation a welcome drive to perform.
- **Loyal to the End:** Even though gamers are focused on *their* skills and on competition, they care *more* about the organization they work for than non-gamers.
- **Working for the Money:** Gamers prefer pay and bonuses based on actual performance rather than a set salary.

Gamers are used to being heroes. Business professionals who have

also been gamers intuitively understand that their personal success depends on adding value to the enterprise and they actually expect to deliver an outstanding performance.

The book also specifies how to harness gamers' potential.

1. **Tap into their instinct for heroism.**
2. **Don't let the superficial badges of culture mislead you.**
3. **Use the game generation's "selfish" drives to inspire great performance.**
4. **Don't dismiss gamers' ability to concentrate and quickly move between tasks.**
5. **Help your people work together across the generation gaps.**

"All that experience with videos games has made these people passionate about adding value."

—John Beck and Mitchell Wade

Play Nice

After all that time alone, can gamers be great team players? Every manager wants employees who are competitive, good at solving problems, at least a little driven, and the willingness to collaborate with other employees.

There is a clear trend suggesting that the more time young professionals have spent playing video games, the more sociable they report themselves to be.

Based on the data, the authors recommend three types of possible changes to make the most of the gamer generation's innate sociability, they are as follows:

- **Provide a little structure.** Professionals from this generation have already spent hundreds or thousands of their socialization hours in clearly defined, goal-directed tasks.

- **Help them learn local standards.** Generational differences can be destructive if unrecognized or they can be productive if both gamers and non-gamers understand the ground rules.

You might consider setting up two-way mentor relationships in which the technologically savvy but structure-dependent gamers learn some of the things they might not have had time for – such as how to conduct small talk on a sales call – while perhaps passing along some of the digital expertise they seem to be born with.

- **Manage your teams as group video games.** Structure team assignments like a game; provide clear high-level direction but also lots of room to explore.

"The most important finding here is that, where we might have expected isolation, the data instead reveals that gamers care more, not less, about connecting with other people." —John Beck and Mitchell Wade

Win or Go Home

Video games have built ROI into the gamer generation's DNA.

Gamers don't just learn about people; all that gaming experience teaches them about the rest of reality, too. Games show them how the world works and that failure doesn't hurt.

Before winning most games, gamers will have failed hundreds of times. Such high failure rates can be extremely productive. Because of the high probability of failure, players naturally focus on what they did wrong, what they could have done better, and how to get to the next level. So the game generation learns through repetition something that countless teams have tried to instill: Failure is part of the process that leads to success.

Gamers have learned to embrace risk for exactly the right business reasons; to capture an appropriately large reward.

The book outlines possible reasons for this:

- **Risk:** Gamers have different attitudes toward risk than the rest of us.
- **Comfort, but not too much comfort:** Gamers, like good executives, aren't looking for comfort and safety; they are after bigger prey.
- **Experience:** All that simulated experience, in so many sophisticated – but virtual settings, might provide tactical lessons and even resilience for solving problems
- **Trial and error learning:** Games provide countless opportunities to test and retest different problem-solving strategies immediately and without heavy preparation.

"In other words, the game generation actually believes the risk/reward rhetoric that the rest of us just parrot when business school classes or SEC regulations of our hyperrational consciences require us to." —John Beck and Mitchell Wade

Gamers on Top: What to Expect from Gamers as Executives

The book outlines why members of the game generation have the makings of great CEOs.

- **Gamers "think different":** For members of the game generation, individual control, trial and error, and constant change are all just part of life.
- **Gamers are naturally global:** Members of the game generation have been exposed to a multitude of cultures through the gaming experience.
- **Gamers get tough:** Gamers have learned, the only real limiting factor to be successful is a person's own willingness to keep trying. The only real driver is the desire to reach some better state.

- **Gamers pace themselves:** Members of the game generation are self-educating.

Although professionals from the game generation have a lot of potential for leadership, their comfort with flexible organization, their natural leader's perspective, and their rational embrace of risk won't automatically convert into performance.

To really get inside the game culture, you need to at least know the specifics of how gamers prefer to spend their free time. Use that knowledge to tap gamers' potential for leadership and insight.

Also by doing some very light, game-specific scenario planning, you might be able to find areas that bear watching for your particular business. Use gamer knowledge to find those areas.

"There is no denying that gamer executives will be different from their predecessors. That difference is exactly what will make them great CEOs." —John Beck and Mitchell Wade

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About the Authors

John C. Beck is President of the North Star Leadership Group, Senior Research Fellow at the Annenberg Center of the Digital Future, University of Southern California, and a member of the Monitor Executive Development Faculty Network. His teaching and research focus on strategy, globalization, and leadership. Dr. Beck currently teaches at the Ivey School of Business and Thunderbird, the American Graduate School of International Management; he has also taught at Harvard, Dartmouth, and Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management. He brings to the analysis of videogames and business not only his perspective as a scholar and strategist, but also particular insight into games' power at attention management; Dr. Beck co-authored the Harvard Business School Press title *The Attention Economy*, named one of the year's ten best business books by Amazon, the American Library Association, and others.

Mitchell Wade analyzes the business impact of digital games from a very practical point of view: twenty years of experience helping companies use information to get results from key people. Most recently, his novel approach moved senior executives of an industry-defining firm to strengthen their own leadership and coach their teams to greater success. Mr. Wade has explored the link between information and action in such demanding settings as the pre-eminent think tank RAND, where he innovated in both communications and strategic-planning. He has worked with nonprofits, start-ups, government agencies, and members of the Fortune 500. His clients have included Google, Inc., Charles Schwab, Accenture, and the White House science advisor. He has also taught thought leaders and researchers at, for example, Harvard, the Claremont Colleges, and Cedars Sinai Medical Center to use information more effectively. He understands the connection between personal drives and organizational results; with John Beck, he wrote the leadership study *DoCoMo* (American Management Association, 2002), summarized by the *Boston Globe* as "that rarest of business books, one that reaches beyond business logic to reveal what comes from the heart."

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