User Types HEXAD

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USER TYPE HEXAD

So, my Master wasn't convinced that video game focused player types were a good fit for gamification. Thinking he was clever, he created his own version – the User Type Hexad. Yeah, whatever, but I do like the look of the Disruptor type.

Motivation brings us to one of my favourite topics – user types and player types!

In the games industry, player types are a well-known concept. Whilst there are many player type models and taxonomies out there, such as Amy Jo Kim's Soci*al Player Types* [1] or Chris Batemans's *Brainhex* [2], the most often quoted one is Dr Richard Bartle's Player Types [3].

By his own admission, Bartle's types are great for helping create MMO games, but they have little to no relevance when building gamified systems. As such, I created my own - Marczewski's Gamification User Types Hexad.

Rather than being based solely on observed player or user behaviour, I initially created these types as personifications of our four intrinsic motivations (RAMP).

Before I take a proper dive into the types, it is essential to keep in mind that people cannot be broken down into simple individual categories like this. They will likely display most if not all of these traits in varying degrees [4].

When creating a gamified system, you need to design to encourage the behaviours that will give your system the best outcome, whilst engaging as many users as possible. These types can help with that.

In Brief

Socialisers are motivated by ***Relatedness***. They want to interact with others and create social connections.

Free Spirits are motivated by ***Autonomy*** and self-expression. They want to create and explore.

Achievers are motivated by ***Mastery***. They are looking to gain knowledge, learn new skills and improve themselves. They want challenges to overcome.

Philanthropists are motivated by ***Purpose and Meaning.*** This group are altruistic, wanting to give to other people and enrich the lives of others in some way - with no expectation of reward.

Disruptors are motivated by ***Change***. In general, they want to disrupt your system, either directly or through other users to force positive or negative change.

Players are motivated by extrinsic ***Rewards***. They will do what is needed to collect rewards from a system and not much more. They are in it for themselves.
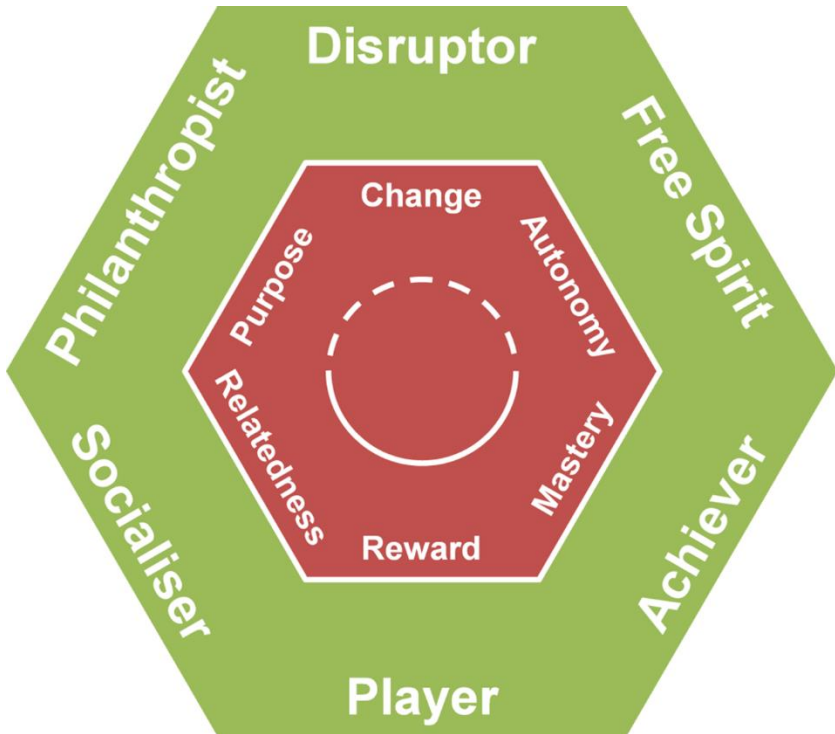
Figure 1 Marczewski's User Type Hexad

These six types are enough to help most create engaging systems, however if you want to get really into it – keep reading. Otherwise, jump to the next chapter!

For the rest of you, the User Types can be broken down into four intrinsically motivated types, four extrinsically motivated types (the Player) and four disruptive types (the Disruptor).
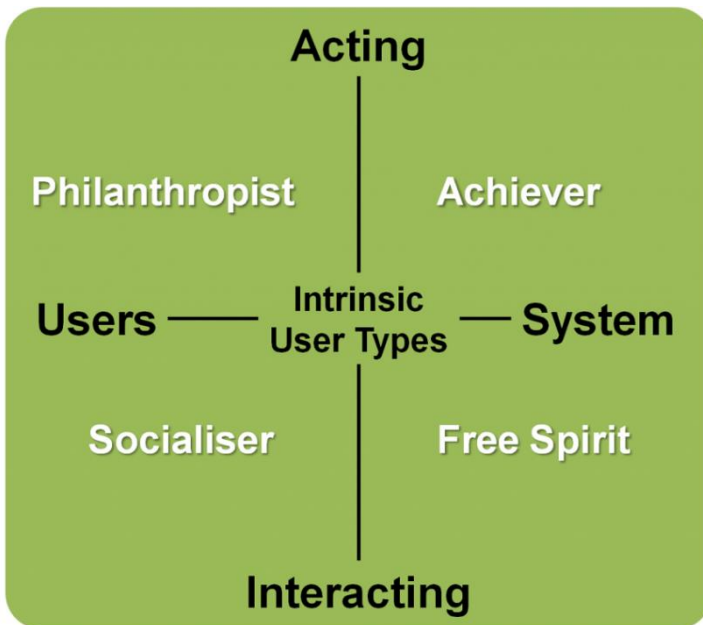
Intrinsic User Types

Acting

Philanthropist   **Achiever**

Users —— Intrinsic
User Types —— **System**

Socialiser   **Free Spirit**

Interacting

Figure 2 Intrinsic User Types

Philanthropists: This group are looking for a sense of purpose and meaning. For some this may be altruism, for others it may be more of a feeling that what they are doing serves some higher purpose. For example, users who contribute to Wikipedia often do so with no expectation of reward, they just wish to contribute to the collective knowledge of society [5].

Achievers: Typically motivated by mastery, you can expect achievers to want to complete every challenge your system has and be the best at each one. Whilst tokens of completion such as certificates and badges may be gratefully received, they are not going to be the reason achievers engage with the system. In the same way, they may

enjoy having other people within the system, but rather than looking for social connections, they will be viewed as new challenges to master.

Socialisers: Within a gamified system, people who are looking to create social connections are described as Socialisers. They would typically be motivated by systems that promote relatedness, for example, social networks.

Free Spirits: Free Spirits are primarily motivated by autonomy. Autonomy, in the context of the User Types, refers to freedom from external control. Depending on their own preferences, they would welcome systems that allowed for exploration or creativity.
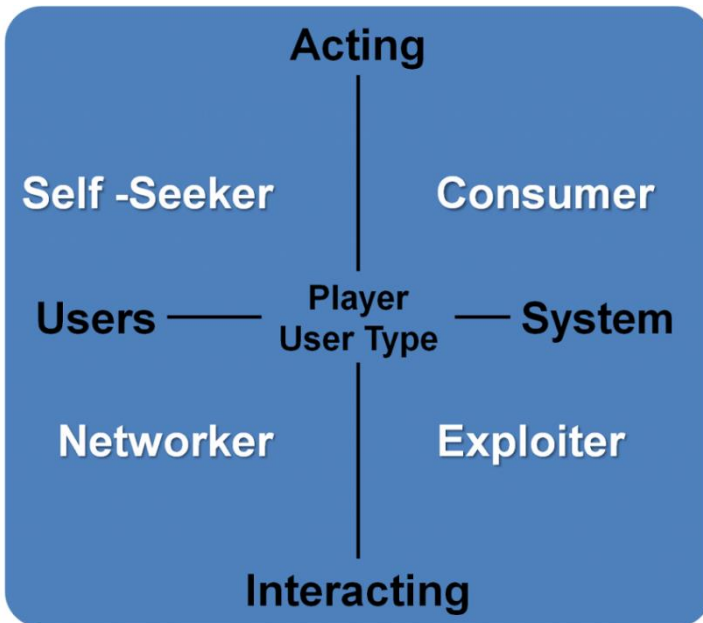
Player (Extrinsic) User Sub-Types

Figure 3 Player User Sub-Types

At their core, the Player user type is motivated by extrinsic rewards. They are the user type that will respond well to systems that offer points and badges as their core "game" elements. Within this type, there are several subtypes that behave in a similar way to the intrinsic user types in order to obtain the rewards on offer.

Self-Seeker: This group of users will act in a similar way to Philanthropists. They will answer people's questions, share knowledge and be helpful – but for a price. If there is no reward, do not expect them to get involved! They can be useful when quantity is more important than quality.

Consumer: Consumers will modify their behaviours to get rewards. If that requires them to learn new skills or take on challenges, like an Achiever, then they will do it. However, if they can get rewards for just doing the bare minimum – even better. Think of them as the ones who will enter competitions just for the prize or who shop at one store just for the loyalty programme.

Networker: Where a Socialiser connects to others because they are looking for relatedness, Networkers are looking for useful contacts from whom to gain something. They follow the big influencers on social networks, not because they are interested in them but because they hope it will get them noticed, increase their influence and lead to reward. They probably love *Klout!*

Exploiter: Like Free Spirits, these people are looking for the boundaries of the system, where they can go and what they can do. However, for them, it is a way to find new ways to rewards. If they find a loophole, do not expect them to report it unless they feel others are earning more than them exploiting it!

They are the most likely to exploit the system, some would even describe them as cheats. They are also the people who will build objects just to sell. Think of *Second Life*. Many people started to build custom items and objects, but some realised that as well as being fun, they could make some money from selling items. For a few this turned into a way of making a living [6]. They stopped making things for fun and just made them for profit.

The Player User Type is important to recognise, as most people coming into a gamified system are likely to enter initially due to rewards (points, prizes etc.). The trick is to try to convert them from being reward oriented into intrinsically motivated users (Socialiser, Free Spirit, Achiever, and Philanthropist).

There is some evidence in work done by Herbert Et Al [4] to show that the extrinsic types will convert to their analogous intrinsic types. For example, a Networker may convert to a Socialiser over time, but it is not a certainty in all cases. Design for the intrinsic user types that benefit your system, but include reward paths in the onboarding process for best effect and greatest coverage.
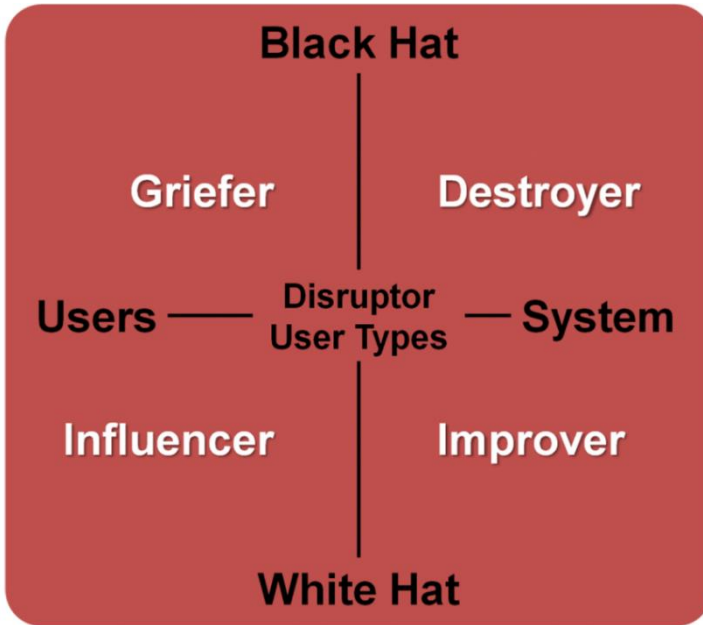
Disruptor User Sub-Types

Figure 4 Disruptor User Sub-Types

Disruptors disrupt a system, positively or negatively, in some way. This may be by acting on users or on the system itself. As with the Player type, the Disruptor type is a group rather than a single type. However, I do not tend to go into the detail, as the effect on your design is generally the same for all the variations of the type.

Going into a deep dive, we get these four main types of Disruptor:

Griefer: This is straight out of Bartle's expanded eight types. I have chosen to use Bartle's description because this is the pure bully type. If you have ever heard of the Triad (or indeed Tetrad) of Dark Personalities [7] – these guys will tick one or all of the boxes! They want to affect other users negatively, just because they can. It may be to prove a point about the fact they do not like the system, it may just be for fun.

They have no place in most gamified systems, so you need to find ways to either change their minds – or get rid of them.

Destroyer: This type of user wants to break the actual system directly. This may be by hacking or finding loopholes in the rules that allow them to ruin the experience for others. Their reasons again may be because they dislike the system or it may just be that they find it fun to hack and break stuff. If you cannot convince them to convert to an Improver, then you have to get rid of them.

Influencer: These users will try to change the way a system works by exerting influence over other users in much the same way as a political leader might. This is not to say they are a negative type, far from it. If they feel the system needs to change and you actually allow them a voice to help change it, they could become massive advocates. Make use of them or you will lose them – worse still they could end up switching to a Machiavellian style Griefer!

Improver: Improvers will interact with the system with the best intentions in mind. They may hack it or find loopholes, but their aim is to change the system for the better. They are similar to the Free Spirit type in reality; they want to have the chance to explore the system, find problems and try to fix them. A simple example would be those who submit support tickets for bugs and track their progress. Take care of these users as they can help you massively. Mistreat them and they may well become Destroyers.

As you can see, the Disruptor can be a complex type and although they make up a very small percentage of the overall user group, they can be very powerful. Handled correctly, they could help improve your system, handled badly, they may destroy it.

Using the User Types

One of the main questions I get about the User Types, is how do you actually make use of them?

The Hexad is a simple framework to look at basic motivations of users who are in your system. There are two main ways to go about using the user types in the early phases of your design.

Survey the Populous

The first option is to survey your intended target audience to find out what types they are. Then you can design a system that focuses mostly on those types.

Although surveying is a reasonable thing to do, it does have a couple of drawbacks. It assumes the questions are relevant. It requires people to self-report with honesty, something that we intend to do, but at times, we do not recognize that cognitive biases can prevent this from happening [8].

The final and most important drawback is the nature of people themselves. You see, the survey provides snapshot information on the type for a potential user before they interact with the system and out of context. As we have seen, over time it has been found that the user types can change [4]. The user type you are when you first start using a system may not stay the same. Therefore, surveying and building your system based on initial types may actually be counter-productive.

This is the approach if you are looking for a short-term campaign; you just need to work out what your potential users want over the immediate term.

Design Gamification for Types

The alternative is to come at designing for gamification types from another direction. Define the problem your gamification is trying to solve. Next work out what kind of user types are most likely to be able to help solve it – and build the system to encourage and support them.

For instance, if you are looking for innovation in your company and you want to get people to submit new ideas, what types of people are most likely to give up their time to do this? Well, initially it would make sense that Philanthropists would be up for the challenge. Their "joy" comes from helping others and adding to the greater meaning of life the universe and everything.

This being the case, you need to create an environment that allows them to give their ideas, but also to advise others and support them with their ideas. You may also want to consider Free Spirits. They are creative and could be the ones who have explored areas where there can be the most innovation. This means you would create a system that encourages and supports their involvement. You give them tools to think creatively and develop their ideas.

That is not to say you ignore the other types. You can create social networking opportunities for Socialisers or add voting systems with points and badges for the Players, but remember they are not the ones who will be helping you directly solve your problem – the need for innovation. Also, remember that different motivations appeal to people in varying degrees and combinations. Although they may be a socialiser, they can still have traits that a Philanthropist may have.

This approach will help you build a system that solves your problem. Yes, users may evolve their type during usage, but the system will still encourage others to come along and use it. In addition, designed well, you can keep the evolved users on board in other capacities.

Later in the book, there is an outline of more than 40 mechanics and elements that can be used to support and encourage each of the six main user types.

Summary of the User Types

Intrinsic

Philanthropist Motivated by Purpose. This group are altruistic, wanting to give back to other people and enrich the lives of others in some way.	
Achiever Motivated by Mastery. They are looking to learn new things and improve themselves. They want challenges to overcome.	
Free Spirit Motivated by Autonomy. Some are looking to be creators, others explorers. Try to cater for both if you can. All like to be free!	
Socialiser Motivated by Relatedness. They want to interact with others and create social connections.	

Player

Motivated by Rewards. Will play your "game", to gain rewards. Players are a subset of users containing Networkers, Exploiters, Consumers & Self Seekers.	

Self-Seeker

Will act in a similar way to Philanthropists, but only for reward or recognition. Value quantity over quality, unless quality earns rewards!

Consumer

Consumers will do what is needed to get rewards. If that requires them to learn new skills or take on challenges, like an Achiever, then they will do it.

Exploiter

Like Free Spirits, these people are looking for the boundaries of the system, where they can go and what they can do. However, for them, it is a way to find new ways to rewards.

Networker

Where a Socialiser connects to others because they are looking for relatedness, Networkers are looking for useful contacts from whom to gain something.

Disruptor

Motivated by change, Disruptors come in four types. They can be of great assistance, but can cause a lot of trouble as well.

Griefer

They want to affect other users negatively, just because they can. It may be to prove a point about not liking the system; it may just be for fun.

Destroyer

This type of user wants to break the system directly. This may be by hacking or by finding loopholes in the rules that allow them to ruin the experience for others.

Influencer

These users will try to change the way a system works by exerting influence over other users. This is not to say they are a negative type, far from it.

Improver

Improvers will interact with the system with the best intentions in mind. They may hack it or find loopholes, but their aim is to change the system for the better.

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The End

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