

Forest founders: Using gamification to fight climate change

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A couple of months ago, my parents downloaded an app that recorded the number of steps they took each day. After the day ended, the app sent them their daily total, and recorded it in a database. They would frequently send me their high scores, and when I came home to visit, I was amused by how much more time they had spent walking. Sometimes, towards the end of the day, they would even go out for an additional walk to push their total past a milestone. Part of what I found so interesting about their behavior was the fact that it hadn't been motivated by any new information about walking's health benefits, or a recommendation from their doctor. Instead, it was the gamification of walking that brought about the change.

Many people have noticed the motivational effects of gamification and begun using it in a wide variety of applications. One of these applications is environmental restoration.

Though plenty of charities have been working in this space for years, they often do a poor job displaying the impact that a donor's gift has had on the environment and/or rewarding them in an entertaining way. [Forest Founders](#), a new restoration-focused organization, is breaking this trend.

Created by entrepreneur Ford Seeman, Forest Founders rewards its members with points and honors for their contributions, which all go towards planting of trees in America and Africa. This feedback creates an additional psychological “bang for the buck” that has already served to incentivize a significant amount of charitable action. To date, despite its brief history, Forest Founders has been responsible for the planting of over 30,000 trees. Clearly, their gamification strategy is working.

I recently got the opportunity to speak with Ford and learn about his plans for the organization’s future. In addition to building the organization’s private member base, Ford would like to begin partnering with businesses to increase the amount of money flowing to Forest Founders, and thereby into the planting of trees. His idea is for businesses to direct a portion of the profits from the sales of specific products to Forest Founders. Doing so will allow consumers to directly benefit the environment with their purchases, and will help participating businesses display their commitment to restoration.

To translate donations into planted trees, Forest Founders has partnered with [The National Forest Foundation](#) and [Trees for the Future](#). Both charities have a tremendous amount of experience in the field of tree planting.

The National Forest Foundation was created in 1992, and has engaged in massive reforestation efforts ever since. In 2018 alone, the organization planted 2.6 million trees in American forests. Trees for the Future, on the other hand, operates in developing nations. Instead of working to restore natural forests, this organization helps local farmers create forest gardens. In this system, crops and trees are planted together in a way that fosters increased yields, and decreases disease prevalence. Since its creation in 1989, this charity has planted over 115 million trees, and shows no signs of slowing down.

If you would like to create an account with Forest Founders to fund reforestation, click [here](#). A subscription will cost you only \$5 per week, and will fund the planting of 16 trees every month. According to Seeman, this is the number of trees required to completely offset the average American’s carbon emissions by a factor of three. You can increase the number of trees planted on your behalf by reinvesting the points you earn into more plantings and by referring more paying subscribers to the organization.

Who knew going net zero could be so easy?

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