

## The Control Panel Game Review

### An Effective way to demonstrate the impact of workplace Performance Influencing Factors

By Aidan Henderson, Senior Human Factors Consultant at IHF Ltd.

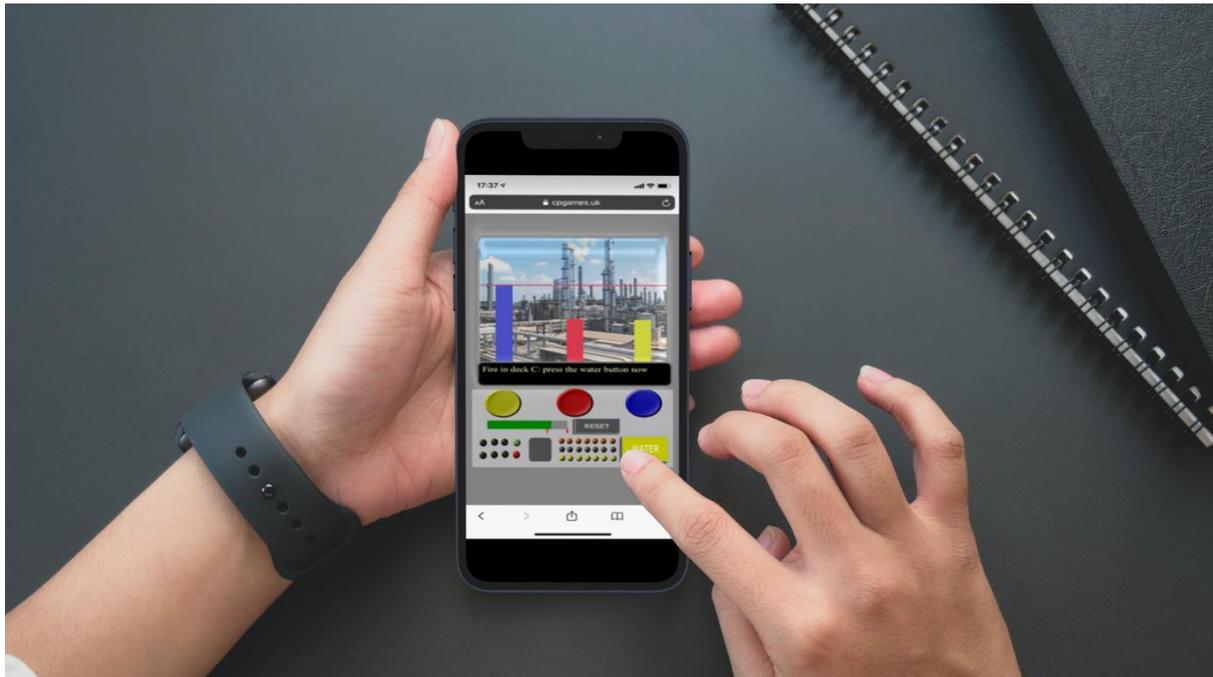


Figure 1: The Control Panel game in action

When working with industries that may be new to the field of human factors, it is commonplace to encounter resistance from the workforce, with statements such as “it’s just common sense” or “this isn’t really appropriate for us” often being heard. Trying to get past this initial resistance is often one of the biggest challenges we face when trying to demonstrate the value and importance of considering the human in the system.

IHF have been working with several clients over the years, including within the UK rail network, where this very problem has been encountered. One of the key breakthroughs in combating this initial resistance during training sessions has been the introduction of the *Control Panel* game.

### The Game itself

*Control Panel* is a fun and engaging game which delegates play on their mobile phones, which over the course of 4 live rounds and a practice helps to show just how powerful the effect of various workplace PIFs including distraction, overload and poor HMI design can be on personal performance (response time and errors).

In the game, delegates are given a simple task – namely resetting levels when they get too high – which starts off with a well-designed and easily understood interface, letting them get



a baseline for their performance. Over the course of the following rounds, the task is made increasingly difficult, with the interface being changed to become less intuitive, distractions in the form of a messaging interface, and the addition of extra tasks. As would be expected, over the course of the game the standard of performance drops, with reactions slowing, mistakes increasing, and the number of serious events (fires) going up. **The facilitator facilitates the game and shares the collective performance after each round.** The reaction to the game is both amusing and effective, as the level of challenge increases, good-natured irritation goes up, and players develop an understanding of just how much they are influenced by outside factors over which they have limited control.

## The benefit

IHF use the game in the early stages of training courses across various industries. Prior to playing the game, there is often an element of “**why are we here**” within the course attendees – as if often the case with training courses. After playing the game, the group dynamic has noticeably changed. The benefits are multiple, the first and most obvious being it serves as an effective icebreaker, getting the course delegates into a more receptive mood for learning. The game is very effective at driving engagement, with comments such as “that’s brilliant”, “can we play that again” and “**I hadn’t realised just how much I was affected**” being heard on many occasions. More importantly however, it also helps them to understand that workplace PIFs affect us all – even when carrying out what seems to be a simple task. After playing the game, delegates are invariably more engaged with the remainder of the course, with a clear increase in the number of questions being asked, and a desire to understand not just the effects of PIFs but how to seek to mitigate their effects on a personal and organisational level.

Several clients who have used the game have gone on to use it in training across their organisations, not just within human factors contexts, as it is so effective at driving engagement.

---

## The background

*Control Panel* was developed by occupational psychologists and gamification experts at Caspian Psychology. The game is licensed on a per use basis and is open to anyone (internal trainers and consultants) who conducts Human Factors training in the workplace.

You can trial the game and find out more about *Control Panel* and other games directly from Caspian Psychology: <https://www.caspianpsychology.com/>

## Aidan Henderson Bio:

Aidan Henderson is a Senior Human Factors Consultant at IHF, based in Scotland but working worldwide. He developed an interest in Human Factors initially as an aircraft engineer, before developing and honing his skills in academia. He now specialises in training and task analysis in high hazard industries. [www.ihf.com](http://www.ihf.com)