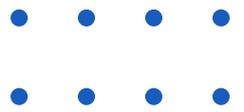




VIRTUALSPEECH



VR for Soft Skills Training



High-quality Virtual Reality (VR) equipment has become more affordable during the past few years, leading to its wide-scale application in a number of industries. One of the main areas in which VR is being used is in corporate training.

From assembly-line operators to brain surgeons, thousands of people are developing new skills with the help of VR, and an increasing number of people are using VR to enhance their soft skills.

The term “soft skills” is applied to skills that are needed for effective social interactions, including customer service, negotiating, sales pitching, presentations, and business networking. These skills are essential for the effective functioning of businesses and are what managers are looking for from prospective employees, according to research by LinkedIn on 20+ million jobs.

With a rise in automation, being proficient in these difficult-to-imitate human skills will become increasingly important. A study by Manyika et al. (2017) for McKinsey estimates that up to 30% of the hours worked globally could be automated by 2030, and it is the uniquely human skills, or soft skills, which will become ever more valuable in the years to come.

VR provides an affordable, scalable and measurable way for companies to train employees in the transferable skills they need to operate a successful organization.





Limit to traditional training methods

Teaching soft skills is hard because people react and behave differently in similar situations, so traditional teaching methods, which typically follow a 'one size fits all' approach, are not the most effective.



There is reliance on passive teaching methods, such as lecturing, which can cause those learning to disengage (Capps and Crawford, 2013) as it is difficult to understand the relevance of information when it is isolated from its context (Gee, 2009).

Traditional training does score highly when self-reported but it is unclear whether this learning is applicable to real life and therefore a true return on investment (ROI) for companies.

Practicing soft skills in VR can provide a continuous learning experience that's more authentic to the context of when the skills will be used in the workplace. Being able to practice on-demand in realistic, multi-sensory, and interesting experiences is unique to VR and can't be replicated in the same way with traditional teaching methods (Hill and Smith, 2005).

VR creates a strong sense of presence and immersion (Bailenson, 2008), enabling learning in an experiential way in the safety of the virtual world, where there are no real-world consequences to any mistakes made.

“
When learners can continually practice real-world situations in the safety of the virtual world, they learn through experience and can more easily apply their learning to the workplace
– Sophie Thompson
”



How is VR effective?

Learning through experience

VR enables employees to learn through practical experience, as users are immersed in a world or environment that simulates real-life situations. For a long time, learning through experience has been argued as being the most effective way to learn and studies have shown that it increases the quality of learning and retention by 75-90% (Pérez-Sabater et al., 2011).

By learning through experience, the information becomes more meaningful, and learners can relate to it because they are applying the information in their own way, through their responses and behavior. The 70-20-10 model for learning and development is an experiential learning model, created by McCall, Lombardo, and Eichinger (1996). This model, based on their research, shows how people learn best in the workplace. They found that:

- 10% of learning comes from formal educational events, such as training courses.
- 20% of learning comes from interactions with other people through a range of activities, such as mentoring, coaching, and group learning. The main benefit of this approach is the support and feedback from peers.
- 70% of learning comes from job-related experience. This type of learning allows people to make decisions, problem-solve, and discover what skills they have and what skills they need to develop. VR fits into this category because it can simulate job-related experiences and as such, the learner responds in a more authentic, realistic way than in traditional training.

Benefits of VR Soft Skills Training

Safe place to develop skills for real-world situations

The safety of the virtual world is the ideal training ground for high-stake situations. Before VR, employees would have to imagine high-risk scenarios and visualize how they would deal with them.

VR removes the need to imagine and instead replaces it with a realistic simulation. It provides an effective learning experience by training people in the most realistic way possible, without the situation actually happening in real life, so that those learning are safe to make mistakes and learn from them.

The cost of making a mistake in the virtual world is nothing compared to the cost of human error in reality. This is especially useful for employees who avoid learning through experience because of anxiety. They can develop their skills and increase their confidence in a safe space, before applying what they have learned to real-life situations.

Practice on demand

The difference between VR and more traditional methods of teaching is that it is difficult to practice many scenarios that require soft skills using e-learning or in-person training. Realistic learning environments, particularly at the point of need, were difficult to replicate before VR and were missing in traditional teaching methods (Hill and Smith, 2005).

VR can simulate a range of random actions, to which the user needs to react. An example of this is a media ambush scenario in the VirtualSpeech app, where the user is ambushed coming out of an elevator by press reporters, with cameras flashing and difficult questions being asked - a scenario that is difficult to replicate in the real world.

Data-driven insights, measure ROI, and track progress

VR provides a unique, objective, and systematic method for behavioral data capture that gives both the learner and organization a unique insight into soft skills performance – and crucially for the organization, a method for tracking ROI.

Participants can easily recognize which areas need to be improved and determine the best learning path and courses to take to build these skills. With VR, those learning and managers can track progress and measure whether their skillset has actually improved. With VR and unlike traditional training methods, soft skills can, for the first time, be quantifiably measured. Participants can receive feedback and be graded on their eye contact, pace of voice, and clarity.

We discuss this in more detail, including how we use our Virtual Skills Assessment algorithm, in the Deploying VR for Soft Skills training section.

Scalable, lower-cost alternative to in-person training

Other traditional methods, such as hiring actors and in-person training sessions are usually expensive and standards can vary widely. In comparison, companies can be sure that employees are receiving a standardized, high-quality level of training when conducted in VR. The price of VR headsets has fallen substantially in the past few years, so the price of VR training, compared to traditional methods, has decreased.



Feedback to easily identify strengths and weaknesses

Users also know how well they are performing because they can receive instant feedback on their performance, including information about their eye contact, tone, volume, and speaking pace, as with VirtualSpeech.

With rapid advances in AI, speech-to-text, and text-to-speech technologies, users will eventually be able to have conversations with the avatars and the avatars will react to what is being said in real-time, as would a human colleague.

Increased engagement and retention levels by up to 75%

As previously mentioned, VR consists of experience learning, with active recall, which means that a user's memory is being stimulated whilst learning. This is beneficial for long-term retention and is more effective than passive recall, such as re-reading information or watching videos.

At VirtualSpeech, we have found that employees repeat the VR training scenarios over several months, increasing knowledge retention and helping to overcome the Ebbinghaus Forgetting curve. This repeated learning helps users become comfortable with soft skill scenarios and better able to deal with them in the workplace.

STATISTICS

4x Faster

Learning with hands-on experience

95%

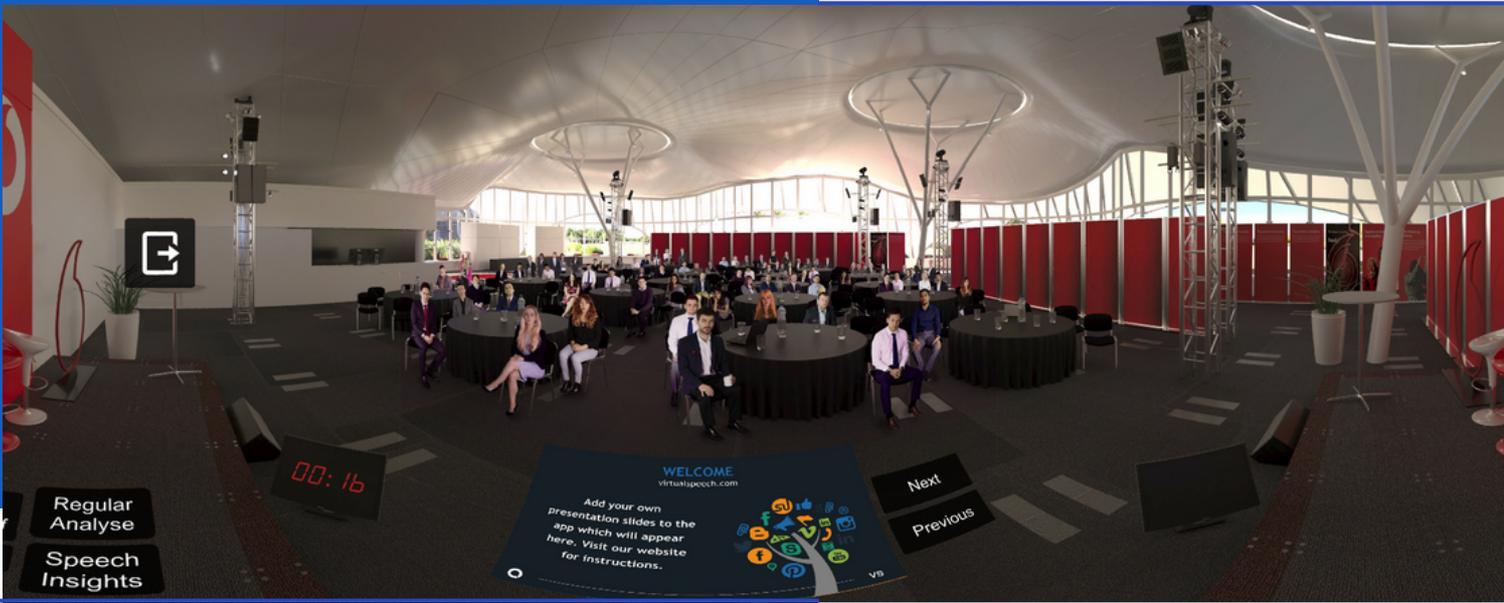
of users said their soft skills had increased

86%

of users were more confident

93%

would recommend VirtualSpeech



Case Study: Vodafone UK

How VirtualSpeech replicated the Vodafone UK Pavilion in VR for employees to practice presentation skills in their Learning Week and beyond.

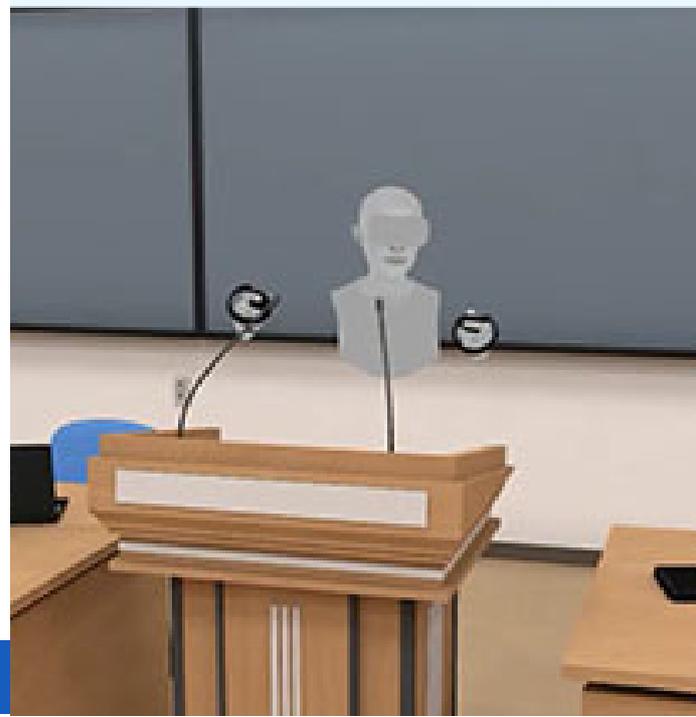
Result highlights

- Built a customized virtual environment ready for deployment in 4 weeks
- 91% of learners would like to see more VR training at Vodafone
- 93% of employees would recommend VirtualSpeech to a colleague

Many of the key Vodafone presentations occur in the Vodafone Pavilion, a large conference room venue with a complex layout. The main goal was to re-create this Pavilion in VR so that employees could practice and improve their presentation skills in this room virtually. VirtualSpeech also provided additional VR scenarios to practice different soft skills.

In VR, the employees can practice in various virtual environments, upload their own presentation slides and notes, receive instant AI-powered feedback, as well as track progress within the app. Managers can also track learner completion and progress, and more easily measure ROI.

“93% of employees would recommend VirtualSpeech to a colleague”





Benefits of the VR training experience

- ✓ Employees have the opportunity for on-demand, realistic practice in the Vodafone Pavilion before delivering a presentation in the Pavilion in front of a real audience.
- ✓ Learners receive feedback on their performance, which they can instantly use to improve, tracking their performance each time they practice.
- ✓ Employees can practice a range of other presentation and public speaking skills in the additional VirtualSpeech VR scenarios provided such as a meeting room, sales pitch, and press conference.
- ✓ Performance analytics and feedback data provided within the VR app ensures employees know which areas they need to work on, and managers or admins can view learner's areas of strength and improvements as well

86%

of users felt more confident after using VirtualSpeech training

95%

of respondents said they had improved their soft skills with VirtualSpeech

93%

of learners would recommend VirtualSpeech to a colleague

95%

said that practicing in VirtualSpeech prepared them for real-world situations

Barriers to adoption of VR training

Despite the benefits of using VR for corporate training, there are barriers to its adoption. The short-term cost of implementing VR training can be higher than traditional methods because of the price of purchasing headsets. Furthermore, employees must have access to them.

It is not just the purchasing of hardware that needs to be considered when balancing the budget. Integrating VR training with your existing Learning Management System (LMS) and customizing the training for your particular brand can both add to the cost of uptake.

With such a new evolving technology, it is essential that ROI is higher than for traditional training methods. The main reason for introducing VR training is to benefit employees, but there is a risk of employee backlash, especially from older employees who tend to be more reluctant to adopt new technologies.

As younger millennials and the first years of Gen Z enter the workforce, companies will have to adapt to their behavior, working styles, and preferred methods of learning - which are likely to be technology-focused and geographically dispersed.

SUPPORT AND TRAINING

Whether it's onboarding sessions or online guides, we're always on hand to provide support and training to you and your employees.

We also provide consistent email support throughout your license to ensure you get the most out of your immersive training.

Best practices for deploying VR soft skills training programs

There are several key areas you need to think about when deploying an immersive learning program, including how to allocate resources, integrate with existing training, the logistics of rolling out the program, and how to increase learner adoption.



Finding a need and setting objectives

The first step is identifying an important need within your organization that can be effectively addressed and benefit from an immersive training program. Ideally, this need has a measurable goal, which can be tracked with analytics and data from the training so you can track ROI and success of the project.

When thinking about the outcome of an immersive training program, you should consider tangible objectives such as cost savings, scalability, and learner success, as well as less tangible ones such as confidence, engagement, and repeatability.

Rollout and adoption

The time frame for rolling out immersive training depends on your learning objectives and usage goals, internal buy-in, how many learners you have, and specific use cases. You want to capture the right amount of training data to demonstrate real impact.

Focus first on a small number of stakeholders for whom the training topic area is mission-critical as they will be your biggest supporters. This will speed up buy-in, facilitate ad-hoc deployment and greatly help with the collection of feedback, and subsequently larger rollout.

Location of participants

If you're rolling out the program to a large group of people who are widely distributed, you'll need to plan for having VR headsets in each location. These headsets can be shared amongst employees or students, so you don't need a 1-to-1 match of users and headsets.

Allocating resources and cost

Organizations that implement immersive training early will have an advantage compared to their competitors, as their workforce efficiency in skills trained with VR is likely to increase significantly.

However, the first year of a new immersive program can be more expensive than traditional e-learning, due to the initial hardware costs (VR headsets) and any customization requirements. But this varies between organization and seniority level - if, for example, you would normally spend \$500 on a flight and accommodation alone for training, and instead, you spent that on a VR headset and software, then actually you could even save money from the first year.

Employee adaptation to new technology

As with any new technology or change, there will be a transition period to get comfortable with new formats and platforms, and Immersive training technology is no exception.

We recommend that immersive training should be made optional, where people can opt-in to take the training if they are looking for an innovative alternative, much in the same way organizations have a catalog of online and in-person training courses.

Integrate with existing training material

To get the most out of an immersive learning program, integrate it with your curriculum and platforms already in place for teaching, training, or upskilling. This will help the transition to VR training as it becomes a supplementary solution to more familiar learning methods.

For example, you can combine existing e-learning courses with immersive training, so that learners can practice what they are being taught in the e-learning material. Learners typically don't want to spend too long in immersive headsets, so the combination of learning core content through regular e-learning channels such as online videos and quizzes, before practicing these in VR, is a powerful combination.

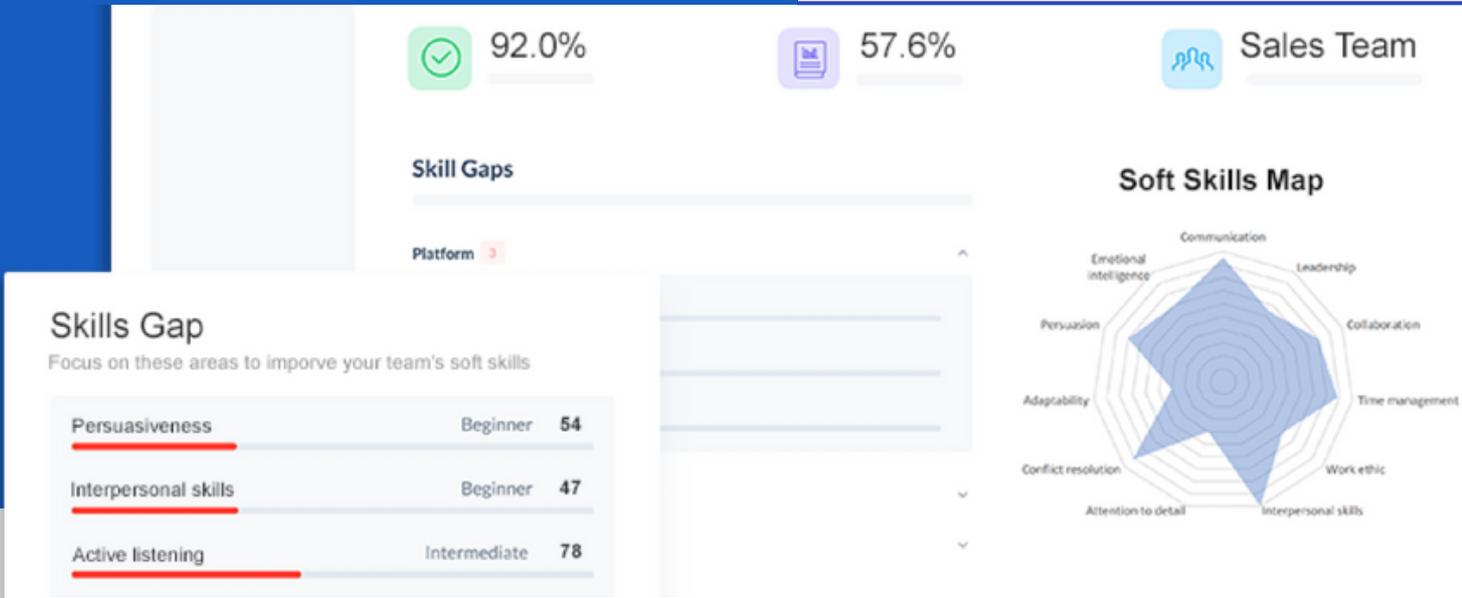
Client Testimonials

"VirtualSpeech helps conquer stage fright and get someone accustomed to what it feels like to be presenting to a crowd, and thus prepare for the same situation in real life.

Kit Eaton
The New York Times

"These courses help you build the confidence to get that competitive edge in the workplace. By building skills in a virtual environment, you'll be prepared for when the situation actually occurs."

Lucy Brooks
FluentU.com



Reporting and soft skill assessment

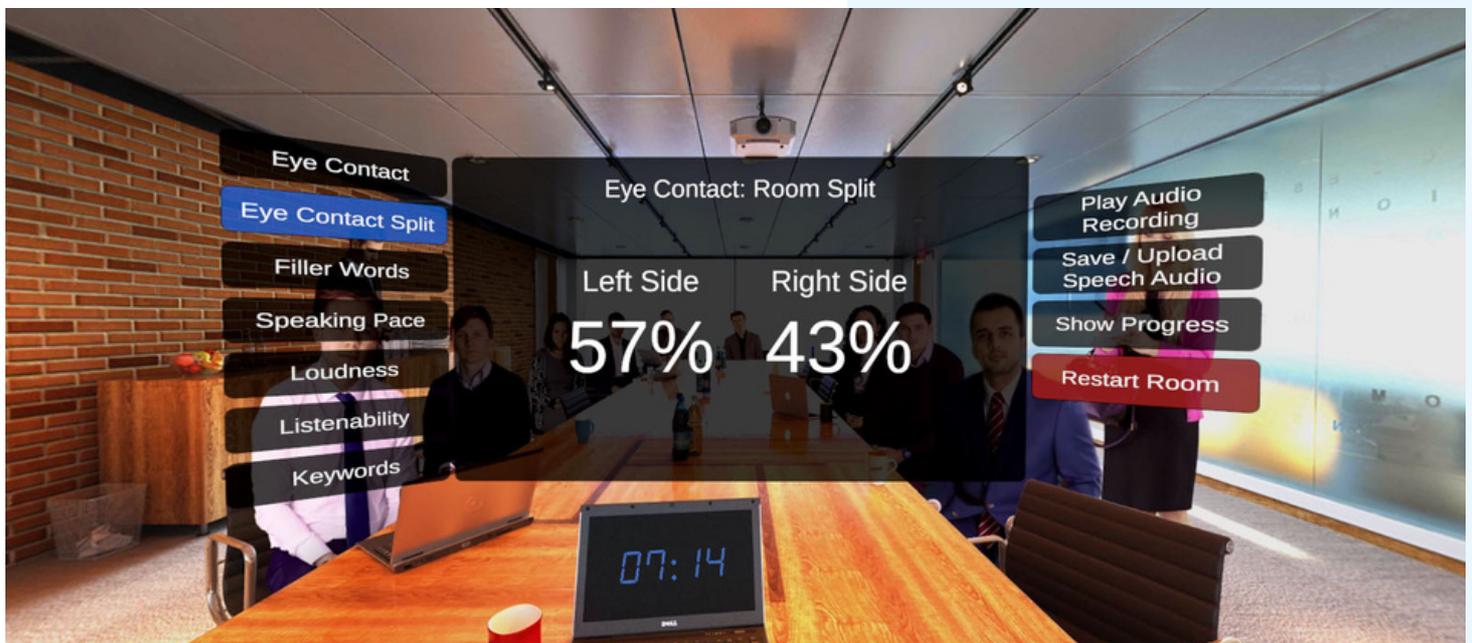
VR provides learners with real-time feedback to accelerate learning and identify areas that need improving. With this data, organizations can easily track ROI with quantitative data.

VirtualSpeech training provides users with feedback on their performance in the virtual world, using built-in speech analysis tools powered by AI. This feedback includes eye contact performance, pace of speaking, hesitation words used, and tone. All this data, as well as results in quizzes, completing scenario goals, branched scenario results, and more, provide data for the Virtual Skills Assessment tool.

Reporting and soft skill assessment

A unique, objective and systematic method for tracking soft skills performance in VR. Key benefits include:

- Managers can quantify and measure their team's ability across multiple soft skills.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses, with scores provided for the soft skills.
- Accelerate skill growth by assigning suitable courses to employees.
- A data-driven approach to VR learning and skills management.



The future of VR in corporate training

Companies are already implementing VR as a tool for corporate training. Managers are realizing the long-term reduction in cost and increased ROI in respect of engagement, safety, and retention of training, compared to traditional methods of training soft skills, which don't scale well.

As the VR industry develops and more becomes possible in a virtual setting, it is likely that more training will be done in VR and it will soon become a staple of employee training. Companies that are early to adopt the technology will have a huge advantage over their competitors.



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GET IN TOUCH

Whether you have a question about features, trials, pricing, need a demo, or anything else, our team is ready to answer all your questions.



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