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~~Soft~~ Power Skills in Minutes, not Months: How Immersive Learning Accelerates Skill Development

The constantly changing landscape of hybrid work and record numbers of employees leaving their jobs makes it increasingly challenging for businesses to retain workers and maintain productivity levels. Therefore, every executive, HR director, and people manager needs to ask themselves this question:

What's the ~~fastest and most efficient~~ way to develop ~~soft~~ power skills at my company?

Power skills improve interpersonal interactions and relationships. They include communicating, listening, being a team player, and demonstrating thoughtful leadership.

When a business has invested in power skills training, team members learn how to work effectively together. Employees feel more confident in their jobs, and they want to hold on to them.

But today's companies are facing a growing power skills gap. Recent studies find that hiring managers and executives throughout the U.S. are struggling to recruit candidates with requisite power skills.

Part of the problem is that many companies aren't prioritizing power skills when they bring on new hires, but there's something else going on: corporations often use outdated methods to upskill their workforces that barely move the needle today—and are likely to perform equally poorly in a post-pandemic world.

Instead, businesses should be investing in leveraging immersive learning and practice-based skills development programs. These programs, often powered by VR and AI technologies, have proven to be extremely effective in transformational skill-building, while achieving results more quickly than their static counterparts.

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The Fastest Way to Learn ~~Soft~~ Power Skills

Traditional training methods, such as instructor-led classroom education, can take weeks, even months, to improve skills. With the speed of business accelerating as it is, no organization has that kind of time to see the impact of essential skill-building. Businesses need solutions that enable teams to learn valuable power skills in days—if not minutes.

Some believe that skills such as empathy, time management, listening, and communication take years to cultivate. In a study conducted by Mursion and Future Workplace that involved surveying more than 300 learning and development leaders, 73% of respondents estimated that it takes years of real-life experiences to develop interpersonal skills.

But with immersive learning systems, businesses see results much more quickly, sometimes literally overnight. In the aforementioned study, respondents were also asked how long it takes for early-career employees to master a power skill—such as delivering a complex presentation to a challenging audience—using VR or other

immersive training methodologies. Across the board, they revealed that immersive technology-based learning, such as VR, develops power skills faster—in weeks instead of months—and in days instead of weeks. A 2017 study at the University of Central Florida showed that even just four 10-minute sessions using VR simulation significantly improved interpersonal behaviors.

A particularly revealing PWC study looked at various types of power skills training of new managers in 12 U.S. locations. It showed that employees completed VR programs up to four times faster than in-person training and 1.5 times faster than e-learning programs.

A study that looked at various ways to teach power skills to new managers found that VR training performed **4** times faster than classroom training.

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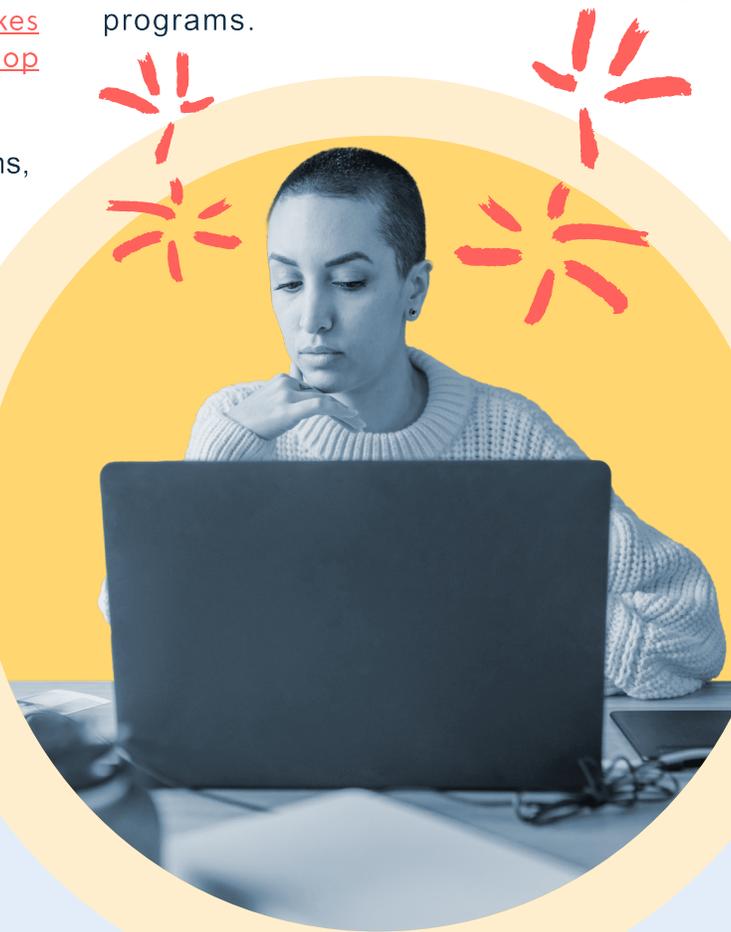
Highly Effective Learning

The better people can learn, the faster they do so. It's why immersive learning helps employees speed through learning that used to take much longer. It's the most effective method available to practice real-world situations and develop actionable skills to bring back to work, and life.

In the Mursion and Future Workplace study, respondents rated experiential and interactive approaches considerably higher than traditional methods. 82% of them said role-playing in real-world situations was "extremely effective" or "effective," whereas only 50% said the same about reading a book or paper.

In the aforementioned PWC study, learners trained in VR were 257% more confident to deploy what they've learned in training than those learning online or in classrooms.

What is it about immersive learning that's so effective? How does it engage learners, hold their attention, and aid in increased recall? Its critical component is its ability to offer experiences that feel real and relevant to participants.

Unlike traditional training methods such as classroom or online training that can be dull, discourage vulnerability, and leave little lasting impact, VR-based simulations provide a safe place for people to practice interpersonal behaviors at an accelerated pace. They receive rapid corrective feedback and can better assess behavior, and studies show that these simulations simultaneously engage trainees' emotional and cognitive processes.

For example, avatar-moderated simulations from Mursion use a live person—supported by an AI-powered avatar—to coach learners through different and evolving simulations. Not only can these strategically developed sessions automatically adapt on the fly, but they also represent unique and highly realistic situations an employee may face. Since learners can't memorize the examples, they must stay completely immersed in the experience and interact firsthand to grasp the content practiced during each scenario, they can't multitask or be distracted.

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When participants experience immersive learning, they interact with avatars in a familiar setting that feels connected to their everyday lives. This allows them to:

- Develop and reinforce neural pathways that are critical for teaching power skills and changing behavior.

- Enjoy highly memorable, impactful experiences without the potential risk of real-world consequences.

- More readily demonstrate desired behaviors, which then become second nature.

Advantages of VR simulation training:

- Creates immersive experience training that scales

- Realism and relevance for maximum effectiveness

- Diverse personalities and situations

- Safe and anonymous practice

Taking It to Scale

Immersive training's ability to achieve fast results offers businesses an opportunity to teach power skills to all employees, improving metrics that reflect substantial growth in all areas, from customer satisfaction, employee engagement and sales performance to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A garment factory in India established a power skills training program saw an ROI increase of 250% over an eight-month period.

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Once, companies reserved this kind of training for corporate leaders, but that's changing. Why? One reason is cost. Many businesses no longer see value in spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to plan off-site retreats for executives. While there can be an upfront cost to setting up immersive training programs, it's significantly less per capita, year after year. Second, companies are seeing that power skills learning among all employees benefits the organization overall, financially and culturally.

A recent MIT study involved teaching power skills to a group of garment factory workers in India—a group that wouldn't typically be eligible for such training—with remarkably positive and holistic results. A 12-month training program conducted in five factories that taught skills related to communication, problem-solving, decision-making, time and stress management, financial literacy, legal literacy and social entitlements, and execution excellence delivered substantial returns. In the end, the training improved the business' bottom line as well as the employee experience.

Some highlights include the following:

- The business saw a 250% increase in ROI over an eight-month period.

- Power skills were proven as valuable to a group that wouldn't typically have access to this training: female, uneducated and largely unskilled factory line workers.

- There were boosts in worker productivity, the ability to perform complex tasks more quickly, improved attendance, and increased retention during the training.

- Workers were empowered by completing the program. They earned more revenue and had better opinions of themselves as workers; they also improved in how much they learned to take advantage of government programs, request training for hard skills, and save for their children's educations.

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Developing strong leaders is still a high priority for businesses, but the more that corporations are willing and able to democratize their power skills training efforts and make them available to all employees, the sooner they can start to make significant strides to strengthen their workforce across all levels of the organization.

Greater Business Value

Training experts around the globe are calling attention to the need for companies to offer personalized, immersive experiences. In the Mursion and Future Workplace study, nearly six out of 10 (59%) respondents said that finding ways to bring learning closer to work is a top barrier to creating the learning organization they want in the future.

More than **two-thirds** of respondents had either already implemented a VR training program for power skills or planned to implement one within the next two years.

Businesses that can overcome barriers to adopting immersive programs stand to upskill their workforce and gain an edge on the competition, as companies that invest in these technologies see the following benefits:
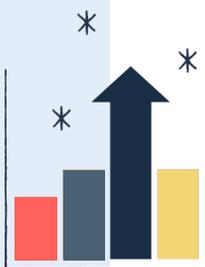
- Reduced time in handling interactions with public-facing activities, such as customer service or tech support calls

- Increased revenues due to the ability to more efficiently find solutions to correct issues

- Improved customer and employee experience

An example in which Mursion led to such outcomes is with H&R Block. When the global tax preparation firm launched VR simulations in their onboarding program for customer service agents, it saved 4,119 hours of "average handling time" on the phone with customers.

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Employees also benefited:

70% of their customer service representatives preferred the new VR program to traditional learning tools and said the VR simulations helped them improve their skills and confidence in handling difficult conversations.

The company also saw a **50% decrease in dissatisfied customers**, a 9.9% decrease in customer handling times, and significantly faster issue resolution times among the representatives who completed the program.

The Metaverse Will Revolutionize Power Skills Training

The metaverse holds enormous promise for immersive learning. As the pandemic forces employers to adjust to all kinds of new working styles, power skills have become essential. But the new landscape also makes developing these skills more challenging.

Business leaders and HR departments must look to adopt immersive learning programs that promise to be effective and efficient in teaching these skills across organizations. VR-powered, avatar-driven, practice training is highly effective, can help develop skills quickly, and is easy and cost-effective to scale.

Business leaders see the potential. In our survey, we asked participants, "If you could double your current learning budget, which training approaches would you allocate additional funding to?"

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More than half (51%) of respondents put VR in their top three—higher than social learning, micro-learning or gamification, and in-person learning.
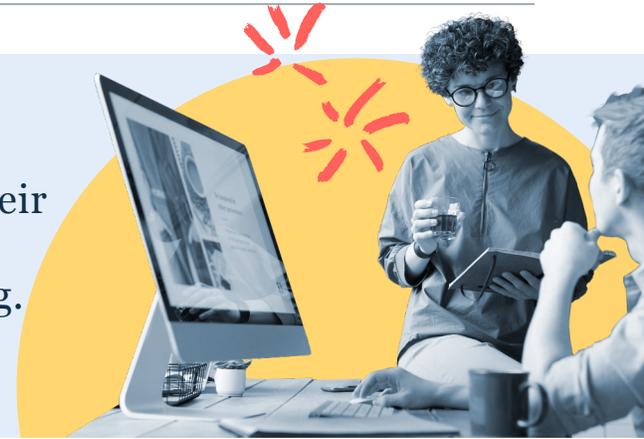
Today, advances in technology and learning science have led to innovative approaches in VR simulation. The use of avatars can trigger authentic responses in learners and advance learning faster than ever before. Organizations spend less time training more people, allowing them to retain a workforce that feels more supported and secure and willing to remain in those positions.

Accelerate power skill development in your organization.

Powered by a blend of artificial intelligence and live human interaction, Mursion provides immersive VR training for essential skills in the workplace. Mursion simulations are designed for the modern workforce, staging interactions between learners and avatars to achieve the realism needed for measurable, high-impact results. Drawing upon research in learning science and psychology, Mursion harnesses the best in technology and human interaction to deliver outcomes for both learners and organizations.

Try it yourself... **SCHEDULE A DEMO TODAY**