New Study Shows SIMmersion's Virtual Reality Technology Can Combat Unemployment By Preparing Job Seekers for Interview Questions

SIMmersion's system "Job Interview Training With Molly Porter" provides expert interview tips and role-playing practice with a realistic virtual interviewer. A study by researchers at Northwestern University shows that the technology is highly effective at building interview skills, improving players' answers to standard interview questions and boosting confidence.

Columbia, MD (PRWEB) January 30, 2014 -- "Tell me a little about yourself."

Molly Porter leans forward, the picture of professional poise. It's clear she has interviewed hundreds of applicants and knows exactly what she's looking for from her interview questions. The job seeker on the other side of the desk, on the other hand, is much less certain about the way forward. Molly's simple request to "tell me a little about yourself" feels like the first step into a minefield.

Fortunately for the job seeker, Molly is not a real-life recruiter, but a virtual character in SIMmersion's system Job Interview Training with Molly Porter. The state-of-the-art training technology was developed with funding from the National Institute of Mental Health (Grant # 5R44 MH 080496) to help people with psychiatric disabilities address a topic very much on the minds of the general population: "What are the best things to say in a job interview?"

For individuals with psychiatric disorders, researchers at Northwestern University write that "the job interview may be a significant barrier to obtaining employment [due to] social cognitive impairments." A system that coaches the social skills required to interview well "may be a significant target for vocational rehabilitation services." In their research, the Northwestern team demonstrated that Job Interview Training with Molly Porter is effective at building interview skills and confidence in its users.

The study randomly divided a sample of roughly forty patients with psychiatric disabilities, such as major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, into two groups. Each group conducted a pair of mock job interviews with trained role-players. Participants received scores based on how well they presented themselves during the role-plays. Two weeks later, both groups returned for another pair of interviews to document any change in their skill levels.

Between the assessments, participants in the experimental group engaged in multiple sessions of Job Interview Training with Molly Porter. The system opens with easy-to-navigate educational content full of expert interview tips, and is anchored by a virtual interview with Molly powered by SIMmersion's PeopleSim Conversation Engine. Molly draws from a script of hundreds of standard interview questions during highly realistic mock interviews that never play the same way twice. Her feelings towards the user are shaped by the user's answers, so a string of good choices makes her more encouraging, while a series of poor ones will make her more brusque. Making mistakes in a real interview can cost applicants the job, but mistakes in Job Interview Training are teachable moments free of stressful consequences. Extensive feedback from Molly, an on-screen coach and an after-action review make sure every training point is captured and users know where to focus for improvement. Users can play at different difficulty levels so the challenge increases along with their skills. If users choose to fill out a sample application, Molly will personalize the conversation with questions specific to their education background, work history, and other details unique to them.

On average, participants played through fourteen interviews with Molly over the course of almost ten hours of training. After completing the second set of live role-plays, the group without SIMmersion's training actually saw a modest drop in performance. In contrast, the participants who practiced with Molly significantly improved their interviewing skills, especially on key dimensions like sharing personal details in a positive light, and sounding honest and easy to work with. Users of Job Interview Training with Molly Porter also reported twice as much growth in their confidence in their interviewing skills than the other group.

"A virtual reality approach to training job interview skills might be a feasible and efficacious tool to improve job interview performances and self-confidence," the researchers conclude. Preliminary data from follow-up interviews shows that users of Job Interview Training with Molly Porter are having more success at finding work than participants who did not receive the training, suggesting that the system can drive real results in the job market.

SIMmersion looks forward to a future where every job seeker has the skills and confidence to see "tell me about yourself" and other standard interview questions not as steps through a minefield, but opportunities to shine.

For more information about Job Interview Training with Molly Porter, visit www.jobinterviewtraining.net. SIMmersion develops immersive simulations to train difficult conversations. Learn more at www.simmersion.com or by calling 443-283-2555.

Contact Information
Dale Olsen
SIMmersion
http://www.SIMmersion.com
+1 4432832504

Online Web 2.0 Version
You can read the online version of this press release here.