

How NS (Dutch Railways) realizes huge cost savings each year with VR training

NS (Dutch Railways) is the principal passenger railway operator in the Netherlands. Founded in 1938, the NS provides rail services on the Dutch main rail network, which is the third busiest in the world after Switzerland and Japan.

The Learning Center is part of the HR & Recruitment department of NS and works with 35 L&D specialists. One of their strategic priorities is digitization of learning. Practical instructions using equipment are replaced with more flexible knowledge-oriented online offerings and remote guidance to practice critical aspects from operating procedures.



“NS is committed to new forms of learning, with an emphasis on real-world learning and informal learning supported by technology. (...) To allow students to learn in a controlled environment, we used a pilot with virtual reality. The results are good, participants are enthusiastic and see added value.”

Challenge

Hundreds of train mechanics participate in an annual national training program, spread out over different maintenance centers in the Netherlands. Trainees are scheduled for two whole days and use train equipment that can't be used for regular operations during the training period. This results in a significant loss of revenue.

Solution

With VR training using storytelling and 360° video, NS created a realistic and recognizable on-the-job learning environment for train mechanics and drivers, where it feels to them as if they are actually present in the train set. Trainees can use their own smartphones to learn from practical situations in varying levels of complexity.



Results

NS currently uses VR training for practising maintenance and repair procedures. The company realizes significant cost savings, as trains can remain in operation longer. As the learning experiences and results were succesful, VR training is widely regarded within the company as an added value over more traditional methods like classroom training. In 2022, one of the VR training programs was awarded with an internal IT innovation award.

NS plans to expand the use of immersive learning to other use cases (e.g. adding recruiting and soft skills training for employees in train station shops, control rooms and security teams), and to add integrations with their LMS (SAP SuccessFactors) to make the trainings more accessible and integrate training results.



“Most L&D tools are user friendly for the learner, but terrible for the developer. Warp VR is a notable exception as a very user-friendly tool for both creators as trainees. What also stood out to me is their helpful and responsive support team.”

Peter Faulhaber, Digital Learning Advisor and Developer, NS

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