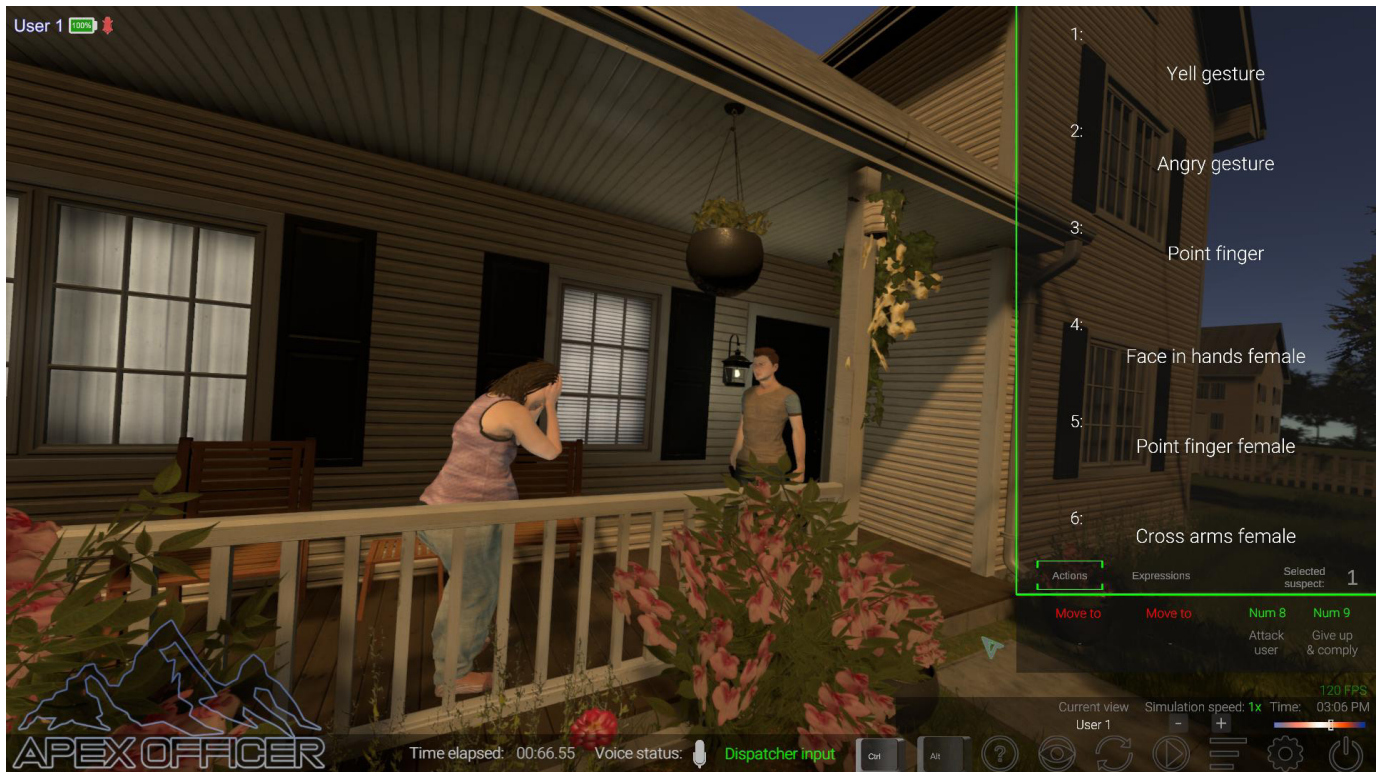


Lodi Police Implement Unlimited Training Scenarios in VR With Help From Apex Officer and HTC VIVE



When it comes to the many hazards of law enforcement, unpredictability is perhaps the greatest danger. It's difficult to anticipate when a call will come in, what awaits behind each closed door, or how individuals will react in a given situation when tensions run high. With so many possible outcomes in any situation, proper training is essential—and while experience is the best teacher, even the smallest mistake can prove to be costly. That's why police officers need a training environment that allows them to learn from every single action they take—especially incorrect ones. The more immersive and spontaneous the experience, the better it will equip them for whatever their next patrol may have in store. It's also the reason true-to-life simulations in virtual reality

are making a positive and impactful difference in real-world policing tactics.

Lodi Police: Looking Towards the Future

Like many other precincts, the Lodi Police Department in California used a traditional video-based system to train new and current officers. In these sessions, clips of actors reading scripts of pre-written scenarios are displayed on a traditional flat screen. Participants then respond to the situation portrayed in each scenario and are shown a response clip by the trainer based on their reaction to continue the segment. While this

method gave trainees a better idea of the more likely occurrences that can happen when on out on patrol, the system is not without its flaws. For example, one major concern was the lack of depth needed to portray each training scenario as accurately as possible. Traditional videos and their one-size-fits-all configuration weren't always aligned with the most timely issues affecting Lodi on any given day.

Apex Officer: A New and Better Way to Train

With a current total of 22,000 officers trained over 80,000+ hours throughout the existence of the Apex Officer program, its creation largely comes from the influence of CEO and co-founder Chase Dittmer. His passion to provide the best training possible and personal experience with police officers played a major role in the program's development. "As the variety and type of threats to law enforcement and citizens alike continue to grow, many police departments are looking towards innovative technology to better train their law

enforcement personnel in a safe and cost-effective manner. Unlike competing judgmental use of force simulators, Apex Officer provides a truly immersive, fully integrated, and real experience," said Dittmer. In order to achieve that goal, an extensive and immersive solution was required—that's where Apex Officer comes in. With nearly 2 million outcomes conducted to date, their simulations include such encounters as:

- CPR and first aid
- Mental illness
- Crowd control
- Missing persons
- Crisis intervention
- Domestic violence
- Gang awareness
- Traffic accident investigation
- High risk entries

With so many different modules to choose from, training sessions become more in-depth, comprehensive, and efficient. One of the most notable differences is the interactive element. "With Apex, the trainee can have endless dialogue and talk



about anything without a scripted response,” said a representative of the Lodi Police department. “The ability for two officers to interact in a scenario is something that this technology could bring to life in a way a [traditional video] projector never will.” Unlike previous methods, Apex Officer gives trainers the ability to assume the role of an avatar within the simulation, using a headset and microphone of their own. This allows for an active dialogue between officers in real time. These unscripted encounters force participants to be mindful of their surroundings, think on their feet, and make split-second judgment calls. It adds an element of uncertainty every man and woman in law enforcement faces while on duty, inside the confines of a controlled learning environment. For example, a complete 360-degree view allows the trainee to observe and assess everything happening in their vicinity, giving them more awareness of each situation as if they were actually confronting it in real life.

Participants are able to perform other tasks that are unique to a VR simulation, like search under cars, look around corners, and check behind doors. Switching between scenarios can also be done with ease. “It takes only minutes to put a trainee in the back yard of a house at midnight and immediately change to a day-time car stop. The amount of training we can provide in a small amount of time is definitely a cost saver.”

HTC VIVE: Helping to Bring it All Together

In order to fully bring the vision of Apex Officer to life, the right equipment was required. The VIVE Pro has the ability to produce the true-to-life aspects of the simulation, as well as handle all the demands of such a complex program, which checked off all the necessary boxes. “No other VR system could have provided what VIVE does,” said Dittmer. “The ability to create tracked accessories that work and function in VR, just like they would in the real world has been a huge factor in our success.” Since a big component of the platform involves sensor-equipped weaponry, the tracking capabilities of the VIVE VR system and VIVE

Trackers were especially important. The VIVE Tracker allows you to bring real-world peripherals into the virtual world. These tracked peripherals include tasers, pistols, rifles, and tactical shotguns. Completing an exercise with replicated equipment that has the weight and feel of that an officer will use in their daily patrol is immensely valuable. According to Dittmer, “VIVE is the only system that makes this kind of training possible.”

The Result

Through Apex Officer and HTC VIVE the Lodi Police Department got the perfect combination of robust training that instilled officers with more confidence in less time. Thanks to the platform’s unique situational training feature, the department could create timely scenarios that reflect current events happening around the community.

For example, if a string of vandalism broke out across neighborhoods in the city, officers could be put into specific simulations that prepare them for how to properly handle the problem. On top of it all, the department also benefited from a financial standpoint. Since the platform lets the Lodi police department conduct extensive training within a small window, that efficiency has aided in saving both time and money. Still, developing well-rounded police officers who are proficient at their job is the most vital result. Dittmer sums it up best when he said: “People’s lives are on the line. You operate like you train.” Together, Apex Officer and HTC VIVE is helping to unlock the potential of every police officer and police department to ensure they can confidently provide the communities they’re sworn to protect with better policing, regardless of the challenges they face.

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