

The Impact of Immersive VR Training on Senior Living Business Outcomes, Workforce Development & Resident Experience

Background

Embodied Labs is a California-based company that specializes in creating immersive virtual reality (VR) simulations that enable caregivers to embody the experiences of aging individuals and individuals with disabilities – deploying them on a platform that makes the technology easily accessible and allows subscribers to capture data around impact metrics. These simulations enable trainees to experience the first-person perspective of people living with dementia, macular degeneration, and hearing loss, among many other topics – allowing professional and family caregivers to better understand the challenges faced by residents.

Embodied Labs began as a startup in 2016 when VR was just becoming widespread for training and education applications. The company is no stranger to the aging care space – with hundreds of aging-focused organizations as subscribers, and thousands of caregivers trained on their platform to date. Included in this number is California-based senior living provider Front Porch, an organization known for its innovative aging care thought leadership and practices, all in service to their mission to “inspire and build community, cultivating meaningful relationships and experiences that respond creatively to changing needs.” A large part of how Front Porch fulfills this mission is through the judicious application of and investment in technology initiatives – making them an ideal partner for Embodied Labs.

Over the past five years, Front Porch has integrated Embodied Labs' VR experiences into their training programs, supplementing them with discussions and reflective exercises to deepen learning. They have found that they are valuable not only for their direct care staff, but for their residents and families of residents as well.

Implementation

In fall of 2023, Embodied Labs was awarded a grant from California's Department of Aging as a part of their CalGrows initiative to provide free training to direct care workers and family caregivers across the state. Through the grant, Embodied Labs will train over 100,000 professional and family caregivers by the end of the year. When they were awarded the grant, they turned to one of their strongest customer partners – Front Porch. Through CalGrows, Front Porch will use the same approach to immersive training that they have successfully utilized for the past five years, this time extending both the training and the positive outcomes it provides beyond the walls of Front Porch and into the surrounding community, city, and state.

In a [recent interview with McKnight's](#), Kari Olson, president of Front Porch Center for Innovation & Wellbeing spoke about their excitement to be part of the CalGrows program:

“Embodied Labs is using the power of VR and immersive storytelling to help caregivers, family members, staff, and students see the world through the eyes of the people they care for and care about. We are thrilled to expand access to this innovative training platform particularly because of the dynamic way it can bring people together and improves lives.”

Between February and September, Front Porch and Embodied Labs will offer free training to caregivers across California through both in-person workshops, webinars, and through a self-paced online learning program.



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Data and Results

In past implementation cases in senior living training and workforce development initiatives, Embodied Labs' immersive training has created a return on investment by impacting **business outcomes** of senior living communities by:

- **Increasing comfort with choosing senior living**
Older adults and their families feel more comfortable about choosing a senior living environment for themselves or a loved one.
- **Creating an effective marketing strategy**
Use of immersive training for community outreach and education helps increase visibility, promotes thought leadership, and supports marketing efforts.
- **Increasing emotional intelligence**
Direct care workers reported better abilities to problem solve effectively, get along with their co-workers and managers, and diffuse conflict with co-workers, residents, and family members.
- **Reducing turnover**
The enhanced training experience contributed to higher job satisfaction among caregivers, leading to reduced turnover rates and greater staff retention.

It has impacted **resident outcomes** by:

- **Increasing actionable empathy**
Caregivers reported a greater understanding of residents' experiences and increased empathy towards their challenges, leading to more compassionate care.
- **Enhancing communication practices**
Caregivers improved their communication skills by learning how to more effectively interact with residents experiencing various conditions, such as dementia or vision impairment.
- **Increasing use of person-centered care practices**
Caregivers became more adept at providing person-centered care, tailoring their approach to meet the individual needs and preferences of each resident.

Increased ability to support trauma-informed care

Caregivers reported increased confidence in supporting residents with traumatic past experiences as a result of being a veteran, part of a marginalized community, etc.

Improved resident satisfaction

Residents reported feeling more understood and valued by caregivers, leading to higher levels of satisfaction with the care they received.

Conclusion

The collaboration between Embodied Labs and Front Porch, in addition to many other senior living communities across the country and world, has demonstrated the return on investment (ROI) of implementing immersive training initiatives – leading to positive impact of business goals, learning outcomes, and ultimately to improve the quality of care for older adults. As the world ages, and the range of options that older adults have for housing increases, so does the need for the most effective and efficient technology solutions. In 2024, the case for senior living operators to make the investment in immersive technology and training is clear.

