

# Best Western invests in virtual reality for training, guest enjoyment

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As part of a new training initiative, Best Western Hotels & Resorts partnered with Mursion, a virtual training platform where professionals can practice interpersonal skills, to create a series of simulations for front-desk staff.

These simulations are taking place over virtual reality, making Best Western the first hotel company to use VR to train employees for guest interactions. As part of Best Western's "I Care, Every Guest Every Time" initiative, simulations are already being used in select properties, and Best Western claims that the sessions -- which take place in 60-minute increments -- have generated tangible boosts in guest satisfaction.

One of the primary focuses of Best Western's VR simulations is to refine problem resolution in its employees. Though it sounds like science fiction, this strategy is not off the mark. SilVR Thread, a developer of VR equipment software for devices such as the

Oculus Rift, HTC Vive and Samsung Gear VR, wants to [create training simulations for a variety of professions](#) to prepare for real events on the field. For example, police officer training to help with awareness, or EMS training to prepare for complications.

The service-based hotel industry can also benefit from this because being unprepared for the unexpected could lead to poor guest experiences, lost bookings and negative online reviews.

Best Western Plus Kelowna Hotel & Suites is using virtual reality for its guests as well. The hotel has partnered with QuestUpon to create an interactive experience for hotel guests, with the 'BC Wildlife Adventure' that features both Kelowna and BC's wildlife.

"Our staff often notice that our younger guests are looking for things to do," said Brenda Rayburn, director of sales and marketing for Best Western Plus Kelowna. "We now have an interactive adventure, for kids of all ages, that has them navigate through the hotel and courtyard, engaging with nature and wildlife that's native to BC and Kelowna. It works well for us since it utilizes our beautiful one acre courtyard and we're already known as an urban resort hotel."

As guests arrive, they will notice prompts throughout the hotel to get them playing the quest. Once they have the application on their mobile device, they get started in the lobby of the hotel. The quest will then take them on a geocaching adventure through the hotel and courtyard, navigating to various missions, tasks and mini-games. Some of the things they'll get to experience is catching salmon as they jump upstream, taking a picture of a moose, picking apples off a tree and seeing a grizzly.

"We blend a scavenger and treasure hunt together with geocaching, and then wave the 'magic wand' of technology throughout, bringing everything to life for an extreme level of engagement," said Tammy Meyers, co-founder of QuestUpon.