

VITA4VETS

Virtual Interactive Training Agent for Veterans

2015-present

The Virtual Interactive Training Agent for Veterans (VITA4Vets) is a virtual simulation practice system designed to build job interviewing competence and confidence, while reducing anxiety in military service members and Veterans. It was developed by the USC Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) with support from the [U.S. Army](#), [Google.org](#), and the [Dan Marino Foundation](#).

The need for this effort is significant. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that over 700,000 U.S. Veterans are unemployed and that OEF/OIF Veterans between the ages of 18 to 24 have a higher unemployment rate than non-Veterans of the same age group (24.3% and 15.8%, respectively). The military provides transition training but when one considers these unemployment statistics, it underscores the urgency for creating methods to better prepare Veterans for transition to civilian employment following a military service.

VITA4Vets develops exceptional skills and instills a sense of discipline that makes Veterans well-qualified and desirable candidates for the civilian workforce. Though many Veterans have the necessary talent and temperament for vocational success, some report that the process of engaging in a job interview is anxiety provoking, as well as socially and verbally challenging in ways that can limit success.

The system leverages ICT's internationally recognized leadership in the creation of Virtual Humans (VHs) that can support a wide range of interpersonal skill training activities. It uses six VH characters that span different genders, ages and ethnic backgrounds. Each character is capable of three behavioral dispositions or interview styles (soft-touch, neutral, hostile) and can be placed in a variety of interchangeable background job contexts (office, restaurant, warehouse, etc.), all controllable from an interface menu. Feedback from vocational experts familiar with this population inspired the design of each selectable VH character and job context..

Offering a variety of possible job interview roleplay interactions supports practice across a range of challenge levels and allows for customizable training geared to the needs of the user. Initial testing of the system at the [U.S. Vets](#) facility in Los Angeles has produced positive results, indicating increased confidence with practice and high job acquisition success rates.

Project Leaders: Dr. Skip Rizzo and Matthew Trimmer

USC ICT leverages its expertise in artificial intelligence, graphics, virtual reality, and narrative to advance low-cost immersive techniques and technologies to solve problems facing service members, students, and society.

