



Brandon Hall Group

EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2023

Alstom: Best Use of Virtual Worlds

Alstom and Komodal

Best Use of Virtual Worlds

January 2024



Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	
Headquarters	48 Rue Albert Dhalenne, 93400 Saint-Ouen, France
Year Founded	1928
Revenue	Strong operational performance with sales at €15.5 billion and strong commercial momentum with order intake at €19.3 billion for the fiscal year 2021/22 See Key Figures: click here See FY 2022/23 Financial results: click here
Employees	Over 74,000
Global Scale	Worldwide operation, present in 70 countries and in over 250 sites
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	Alstom’s main customers include: • Rail passenger or freight operators such as AMTRAK (US), PRASA (South Africa), BNSF (US), SNCF (France), DB (Germany), RENFE (Spain), Virgin Trains (UK), Indian Railway and many others.
Industry	Sustainable mobility (Transportation, rail and road)
Stock Symbol	ALO (Euronext)
Website	www.alstom.com



Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Rue Marie Curie, 53810 Changé France
Year Founded	2020
Revenue	1,1 M€
Employees	15, based in France
Global Scale (Regions that you operate in or provide services to)	Mostly France, although many clients are multinational companies
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	<p>Komodal is a French leading provider of consulting services in virtual worlds. Its teams specialize in immersive technologies and the ones that will constitute the future virtual worlds. The organization provides two main services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Virtual world strategy: it helps C-levels representatives understand and integrate the virtual world technologies in their value chain. This service is meant for a long-term basis consultancy (between 1 to 3 years), providing insights on the market, tech watch, and experimentations.- Virtual events: Komodal has an operational team able to transform and make concrete an B2B / B2E gathering in a virtual world. In partnership with the 6 most advanced platform on the market, it ensures a strong deploy ability and knowledge for its customers. <p>This service includes virtual world planners, tech assistants, moderation staff, personalization of the virtual spaces...</p>
Industry	Consulting
Website	www.komodal.co



Budget and Timeframe

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Overall budget	Yearly budget of 25 k euros
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	The platform was shown and communicated to all HR network who were supposed to locally promote the tool
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	Around 10 people that includes the support from the provider
Timeframe to implement	Including validations from IS&T around 6 months
Start date of the program	(Several programs held since 2020)

Business Conditions and Business Needs

Effective communication and collaboration across diverse locations have become critical to business success. Traditional methods of in-person interactions can be expensive, time-consuming, and unsustainable, especially in today's eco-conscious environment; therefore, virtual interactions have emerged as a solution, offering a more inclusive, diverse, and sustainable approach to connect and collaborate worldwide.

By leveraging cutting-edge technologies, such as virtual worlds, businesses can create immersive and engaging virtual environments that allow individuals to interact in real-time, regardless of their location. This not only reduces costs and environmental impact but also fosters a more agile and collaborative work culture, driving innovation and growth in the process.

One of the means used by Alstom University on its commitment to sustainable training and education is leveraging virtual reality technologies to provide immersive and collaborative learning experiences to employees. The aim is to provide cost-effective, sustainable training solutions that reduce the need for physical resources, supporting a more flexible, adaptable work environment and benefiting employee development.

Alstom University's virtual world is powered by Komodal's solution, which aptly fits and answers Alstom's use cases such as virtual events, remote work, remote learning and team suites, allowing employees to collaborate and communicate in a more immersive and engaging way than traditional video conferencing or messaging.



Overview

The first goals of using virtual worlds in the L&D scope were based on reducing costs linked to attending presential meetings (travels, expenses with infrastructure...), increasing the possibilities of allowing more people to attend events and, consequently, reducing the carbon footprint of the company.

Those goals, which are inherent from virtual tools, add to the L&D goals concerning trainings and learners' engagements:

- Support collaboration and teamwork (through the simulation of real-world situations and gamified encounters between employees)
- Increase the interactivity and participation of employees in remote trainings and events.
- Facilitate training animation.
- Reduce Carbon footprint.

Following the company-wide implementation of the virtual world, learners have demonstrated a keen interest in leveraging its capabilities for a range of purposes. The virtual world has been used to organize a variety of events, including award ceremonies, job fairs, ice-breaking sessions, and training programs in a relatively short period of time.

Compared to traditional online environments, the usage of a virtual world provided a more immersive experience, enabling users to engage with digital content and interact and socialize with others in a more natural, closer to real world experience. For instance, they have enjoyed the ability to engage in one-to-one chats in secure zones, attend virtual events like football matches, boat rides, or even sit by the sea to unwind.

Those immersive experiences, when allied with elements of gamification such as customizable avatars and interactive features as walking, exploring, handshaking and dancing, soon sparked interest and answered the questions about the benefits of holding events in the virtual world. Nevertheless, the initial unfamiliarity of both learners and trainers with the software impacted the trainings' interactivity and animation at first.

In collaboration with Komodal, Alstom University conducted showcase training sessions for trainers and learners: trainers learned the necessary skills to animate the virtual world, while learners were guided on how to explore it. The result was a significant improvement in the animation of training sessions and a rise in the number and variety of events (from trainings to ice breakers, brainstorm sessions and others) in the past two years.



Design

Alstom University (AU – Alstom’s L&D department) and Komodal worked together to ensure that the program would fit its target audience – Alstom’s employees.

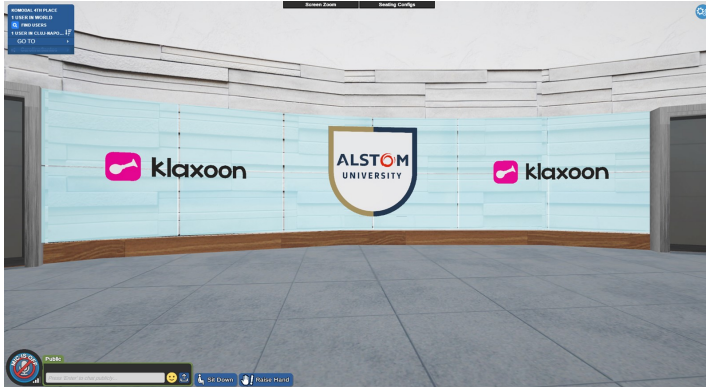
To do so, the first thing was to set a virtual reality world dedicated for Alstom employees. This not only allowed further customization, but also ensured data protection. The world featured a campus with meeting rooms based on the already existing rooms at Alstom HQ, in order to create a sense of familiarity.



Komodal’s virtual world has panels and frames that can be customizable. A good portion of them were customized with Alstom and Alstom University logos and images – and some others were considered as key panels which would be changed according to the event: they could hold an easy-to-consult schedule, or the event banner.



Finally, whenever there is an event within the Virtual World, the room(s) where the event will happen are also completely customized with images that reference the event and its theme, in order to ensure a full immersive experience.



Delivery

When Alstom University decided to partner with Komodal, there was already a big potential use case for it: in 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, AU was planning an online version of its annual event – Trainer Days.

Originally, Trainer Days is a 3 or 4-days presentational event that gathers trainers from all over the world for exchanging ideas, getting prizes for their yearly achievements, learning and networking. Keeping the feeling of the presentational event would be a challenge, and the common thought was to use Komodal’s virtual world-Virbela.

The implementation of the virtual world became more complex due to the limited time schedule and to the unfamiliarity of the event attendees with the software. To address these challenges, key people who would have exclusive pre-access to the software were selected as early adopters: they would act as ambassadors, explore the virtual world and help others master it.



Dear All

Congratulations! You have been chosen as an Early Adopter for the Virtual Venue in which the Trainer Days will be held this year!

The idea is to let you explore and familiarize yourself with the Virtual World before anyone else! The app "Laval Virtual: The 4th Place" will be made available in the app store shortly to facilitate the download. However, as early adopters you will have to do it a little differently.

Joining our Virtual World is as easy as 1, 2, 3!

- 1 **CLICK HERE** to open Alstom's appstore and download the installation file. This will ensure your access to Alstom's Virtual Venue.
- 2 You will receive an email from Laval Virtual the 4th Place (invitations@virbela.com) to activate your account.
- 3 You are ready to be Virtual! Customize your avatar and explore our Virtual World. Use our quick start guide and be sure to get familiar with it before the Trainer Days!



If you have any questions or need help:
[Click here to access the Early Adopters' Teams Channel \(for Alstom employees\)](#)



1. CREATING YOUR AVATAR

Your first task in our virtual world is creating your avatar.

You can change its appearance as needed - hair, skin, eyes, clothes...

Create your Virtual self and go discover our World!

2. MOVING YOUR AVATAR

Using your keyboard

← OR → Run
Space Lock/Unlock Camera

Using your mouse

Move your mouse over a place. If your avatar can walk to it, the icon of a person will appear.

Left click on this area to make your avatar walk to where you clicked!

3. MENU

In the top left corner there is a drop down menu.

Click on the **WORLD** icon to teleport to a room.

The **GO TO** menu lists all the rooms you can teleport to. The menu under your name allows changing the avatar, viewing your profile and saving emoticons.

4. VOICE CHAT

When the virtual world opens, your microphone will be muted.

Click on the **MIC** icon to open your microphone. It will become green, indicating that others can hear you.

You can also keep pressing **M** to open the mic. Once you release the key, the mic will mute.

Want to type instead of speak? Press **T** to open the chat!

5. PRESENTATION BOARDS

Click on a presentation board, to see a URL bar will appear in the bottom right corner of your screen.

Use this bar like a regular browser and navigate the web!





The early adopters also included workshop speakers. They had the time to explore the platform and adapt their presentation skills to the virtual world, prepare icebreakers and activities in order to enhance the interactivity with the attendees. Komodal also trained them on how to use the best of the virtual world according to each workshop subject.

Since the event was open to all employees, Alstom University created quick start guidelines and communications to guide attendees. The challenge, then, was to raise awareness about downloading the software in advance – the virtual world app could take an extensive download time depending on the attendees' bandwidth.

Amongst the actions taken to support employees there were also chat groups where people could express their doubts and get them answered by an expert. The chat was not only a helpdesk tool, but also a way to gauge the usage of the app – how many people were using it and how they were using it.

During the event itself, an AU-Komodal team was available to consider and solve all doubts and there were announcements for all attendees that the virtual world would be available for meetings and events – events would need prior consultation with AU's team to check the timeslots and rooms availability.

After the Trainer Days, Alstom University and Komodal held several other types of events, which helped gauging and learning about different ways of exploring the virtual world. The events went from workshops and trainings to award and opening/closing ceremonies for events which happened presentially or in other platforms.

Two events which are noteworthy by their different formats were the MBTI workshops and the Job Fair. The MBTI workshops were a series of 2 events with the objective of making a very diverse team with many people from around the world together, while the Job Fair had as objective presenting job opportunities available at Alstom for Alstom employees who aimed at a career progression or even a career change.

For the MBTI workshops, before going to the virtual world the participants took the Myers-Briggs personality test to find out which of the 16 personality types fit each participant. During the workshops, the MBTI expert explained more about each archetype and did activities to show the different ways of thought for each personality type, always aiming at showing how the types work together and at reducing potential challenges.



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To facilitate the Job Fair, all Alstom employees were encouraged to download the app and participate. A dedicated space was created, featuring multiple booths for different departments, with representatives present to provide information about open positions, opportunities, prerequisites, and recruitment processes. Participants were welcomed and given the chance to interact with the representatives and learn more about the various job openings available.

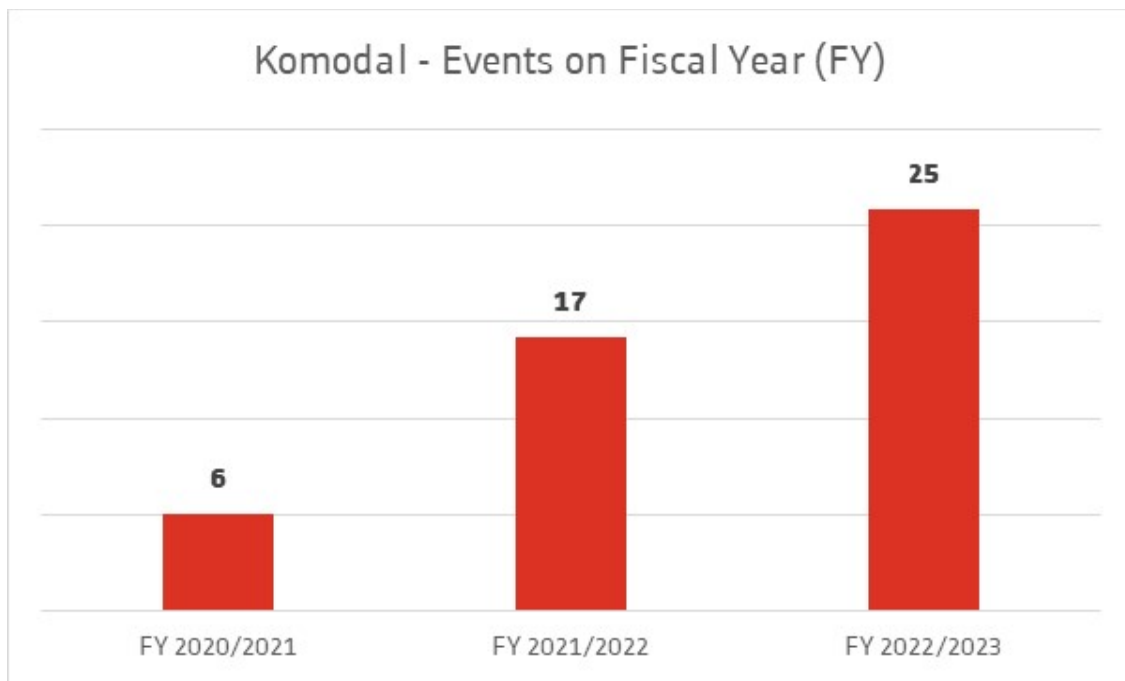




Measurable Benefits

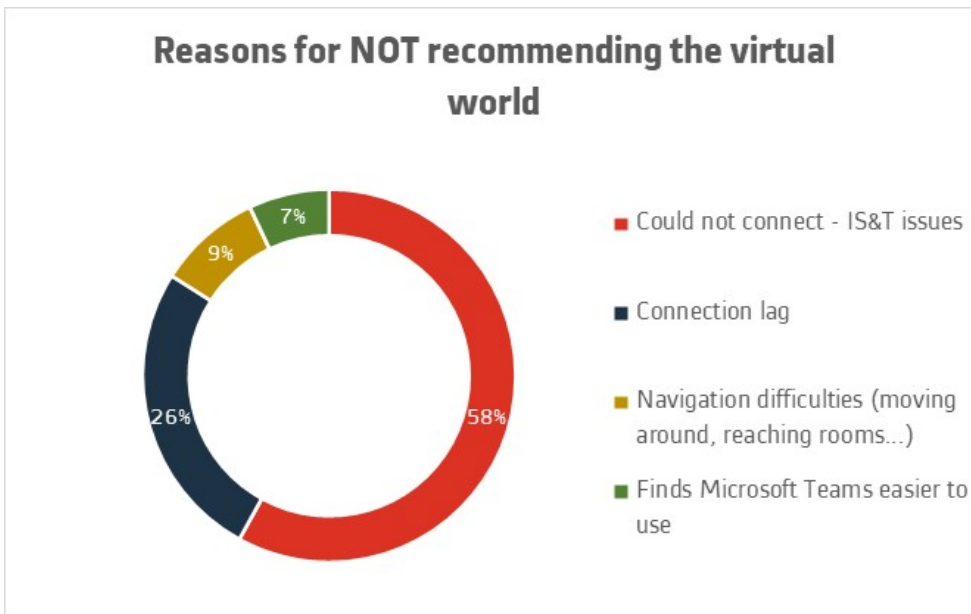
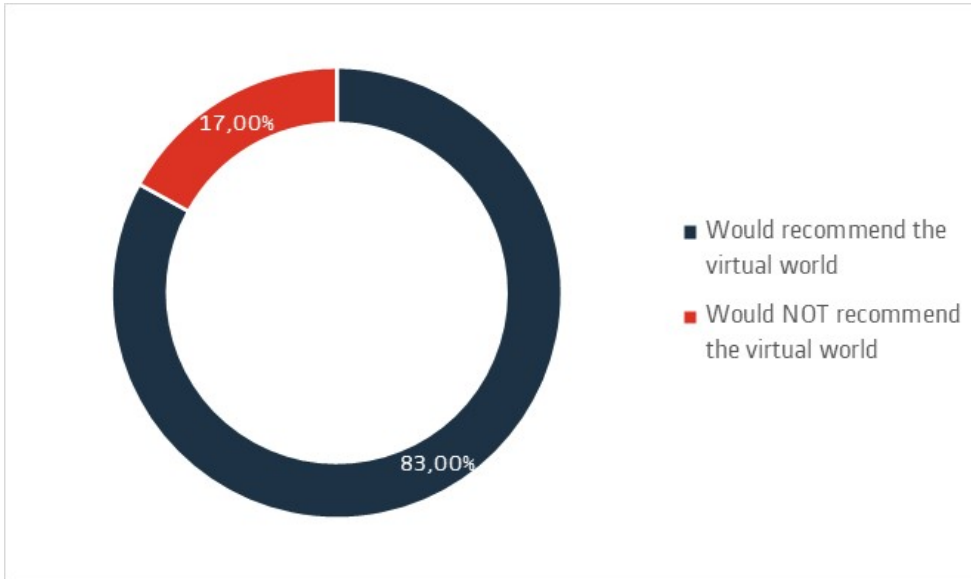
When Alstom University and Komodal decided to partner and offer the virtual world as a solution for events, trainings, workshops, and meetings, the first KPI chosen to measure the impact was the quantity of events held in the tool throughout the months – the growth of the number of events is a very good KPI that shows the interest of the Alstom population in the tool.

Important: Alstom’s Fiscal Year goes from April to March next year. The virtual world’s first release was in July/2020 – therefore in Fiscal Year 2020/2021.

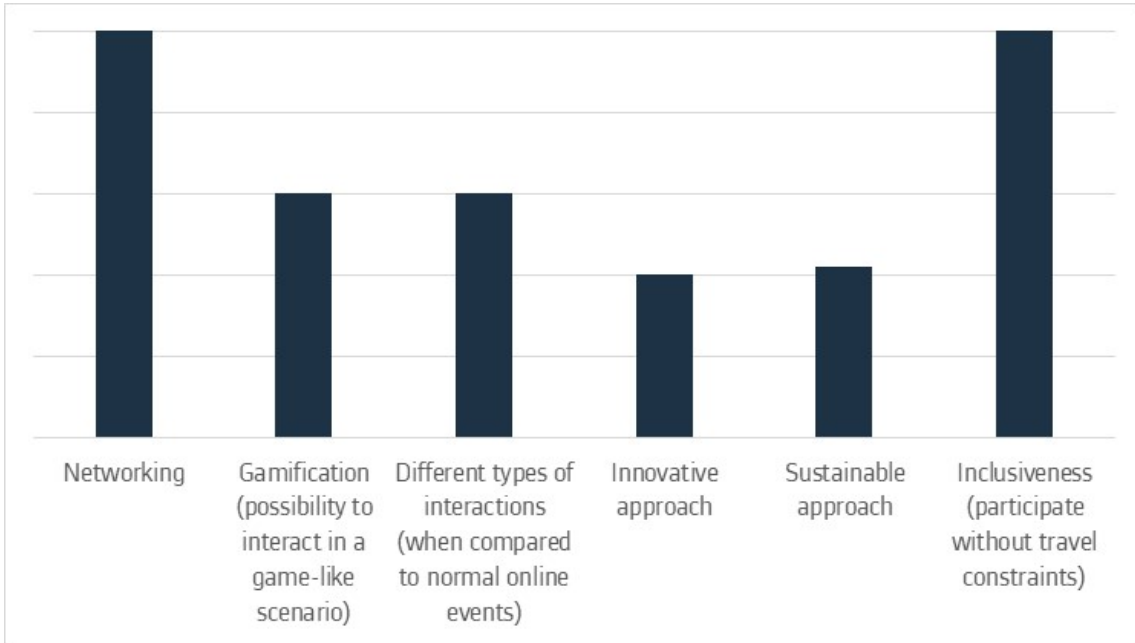


After each event done in Komodal, Alstom University sends a satisfaction research, which compiles the answers for questions such as would the user recommend the event and what is the most interesting feature in the virtual venue, and requests written feedback as well. The campus features 2500+ active users, who participated in an average of 3 – 4 events each.

For whether the users would recommend the event, an average of 85 users per survey participated in the surveys sent throughout the 25 events. Alstom University interviews those whose answers were negative (an average of 14 users per survey sent) and compiles the types of answer.



For the most interesting features in the event, Alstom University’s survey had a static list of features, with the option of adding suggestions. The few suggestions made throughout the events were found to be within one of the already existing categories; thus, the “other” option does not feature in the chart. The users could vote in more than one, yet some were present in almost all answers from the average of 85 users per survey.



Finally, the written feedback was overall positive. Some had notes about the technical issues found throughout the event, and only a few were negative.

In the beginning, when people were still logging in, I took the time to explore the world and understand the mechanics. After that I was also able to profit from all those people and network a lot!

It's a pity that during some presentations the screensharing was not working. Except for that, good job for all presenters!

Professional but also entertaining. The atmosphere was quite unique and lively. The interaction was informal and casual, but efficient. It was an informative, useful and well-organized fair.

I am very happy to see that the decision-makers at ALSTOM are open-minded and make good use of such a digital tool! It's quite inspiring.

Ok, I took a while to create my avatar and find out how to go to places, the function keys, etc. but once I got my way around, it wasn't bad. It was also good to talk with the experts and understand more about the tools we have at Alstom. Overall good experience and fun too :)

It was quite difficult to find the rooms where the workshops were happening. Even with the help of the staff, I had a hard time to find it.

The difficulties of the presenters to screenshare also had me thinking if we should not keep our meetings on Teams... I mean, it was nice feeling like in a game, but if the presenters cannot use it properly, no added value.

- 1 – Speed it up. I don't have time to walk around as I was playing an adventure game from the 80s
- 2 – Do I actually have to visit a room or a booth to find the information? Isn't there anything on the intranet?
- 3 – Some rooms were unclear, some were empty. I checked the schedule, went through the wrong room and didn't know how to come back

I had some stability issues in the beginning, but it was the site connection that was low. After, when I managed to join, it was unclear on what I had to do and where to go. There could be some signs on what to do.

When I understood how to use the software, it was interesting and fun to interact with people. When there were too many people in a place I got confused, but that was all.



Overall

The use of Virbela's virtual world for training sessions, workshops, and event organization has very positive feedback from the company, indicating that its usage is likely to grow in the near future. Its implementation has also facilitated workshops, with an increase in the number of presenters welcomed into the virtual world. This has led to a greater diversity of workshop styles and presentations, highlighting best practices for future events.

During the first workshops, the presenters were able to leverage the gamification features of the virtual world, which proved to be appealing to learners. Now, whenever workshops or events using the virtual world are announced, both new and experienced users show eagerness to use and explore the platform – and this eagerness for something beyond the traditional chat and meeting tools helped driving the adoption of the tool in the company.

The positive feedback and enthusiasm of the learners have been encouraging and helped overcoming the points to address in order to ensure a smooth usage of the virtual world. In fact, the technical and usage issues that arose from using the virtual world provided valuable learning experiences for Alstom in tool implementation as a general.

The launch of the virtual world at the training event was crucial for the platform's popularity, yet it also hindered some IS&T issues from being solved on due time, such as the incompatibility of the virtual world's screen sharing with Alstom's digital security. The integration between Alstom's IS&T infrastructure and the virtual world software needs to ensure a smooth experience; therefore, Alstom University, Komodal and Alstom's IS&T team engage in frequent discussions to secure the platform's functioning.

Another very common IS&T issue, that is addressed before every event, training and workshop in the virtual world, involves the fact that Komodal's rich virtual world comes with a large download package, which can be a challenge for users with limited bandwidth and brings the need of constantly raising awareness among participants about the need of downloading/updating the app in advance.

The introduction of the virtual world required the implementation of change management. Alstom University has been promoting the benefits of the virtual world and providing onboarding sessions for users before each event. Reaching a large population has proven to be challenging, thus AU and Komodal plan to hold monthly sessions that are open to the entire Alstom community. As employees continue to discover and utilize the full capabilities of the tool, the complexity of the process is proving to be worthwhile.



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The usage of the virtual world has brought unexpected advantages: users report it is also a way to escape from the stresses and pressures of the real world; a gamified space where users can relax, explore, and engage in activities. When considered alongside the other advantages, such as connecting with others, engaging in creative activities and exploring a gamified world, the virtual world presents itself as a unique, appealing experience.

In the future, Alstom University and Komodal aim at keeping exploring the virtual world's possibilities for several types of events – from trainings and workshops to ceremonies and fairs which simulate events in the real world, stretching borders and allowing more and more people to participate on those initiatives.

Overall, Alstom University's commitment to sustainable training and education is a testament to its forward-thinking approach and dedication to both employee development and environmental stewardship.



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