Freezing Time:
Soft Skill Development in Mixed Reality Simulations

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Paige Ware, Professor and Associate Dean

Stacy Ann Strang, Simulation Specialist and Manager
Session Overview

- Sketching soft skills across professional areas
- Experiencing *mixed reality* as a learning tool
- Outlining how adults learn in this space
- Discussing research and future plans
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<th><strong>Teaching</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coaching</strong></th>
<th><strong>Conflict management</strong></th>
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<td>Communicating in one-on-one and small groups (active listening, mirroring; avoiding projections; reframing; posing/sequencing questions to get beyond the “façade problem”; leading people to take action)</td>
<td>Navigate convo with extremely high emotions (establishing ground rules, allowing the client space to ‘feel’ and communicate, working to hone empathy)</td>
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<td>Giving feedback (finding a balance in discussing someone’s praise worthy points and their growth opportunities; managing those who lack a ‘growth mindset’)</td>
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What are soft skills in your professional area?
What do mixed reality simulations look like?
What do mixed reality simulations feel like?

- Behavior dial
  - We create the ‘invisible fence’ of behavior parameters for the avatar
  - 1 out of 5 is ‘super compliant.’
What do mixed reality simulations feel like?

- Avatar profiles - Building the World of the avatar
What do mixed reality simulations feel like?

- Scenarios - The Story Arc
What do mixed reality simulations feel like?

• Scenario: Getting to Know Linda Level 1
  
  Today, Linda has called a meeting with you to be her professional coach. She is feeling stuck in her job and is looking to understand why she can’t seem to get ahead. Linda feels as though everyone else is growing around her and getting promoted left and right. She works hard, why not her? Do you know how to help?
Debriefing the first simulation

- **Observe** the participant: What did you see? Hear? Wonder about?
- **Observe** the adults: What did you see? Hear? Wonder about?
- **Offer advice**: What could happen next? How might certain communicative choices lead to different outcomes?

- "Routine" simulations:
  - Support fluency
  - Build confidence
  - Offer evidence of skills
  - Create "muscle memory"

- Useful for:
  - New employees
  - New teachers
  - Documentation
  - Clarity in expectations
What does it feel like when “leveled up”?

- Scenario: Navigating Emotions Level 3
  - Linda is here for her second meeting with you. Today however, she is not in the right mindset to receive coaching. She has had a terrible day and is far from meeting you with a ‘growth mindset.’ Can you keep Linda on track and not become deterred by her negative attitude?
Debriefing the second simulation

- **Observe** the participant: What did you see? Hear? Wonder about?
- **Observe** the adults: What did you see? Hear? Wonder about?
- **Offer advice**: What could happen next? How might certain communicative choices lead to different outcomes?

- "Expert" simulations:
  - Support adaptive expertise
  - Promote critical reflection
  - Provide discussions for collective norming

- **Useful for**:
  - High-stakes situations
  - Critical conversations
  - Professional learning
Shall we “freeze time” to explore a soft skill in your professional area?
How adults learn in this space

- All learning takes place inside carefully designed worlds built with specific story arcs that guide the characters’ short- and long-term reactions to scenarios.

- Instructors then create meaningful, authentic experiences specific to individual learners and embed unique “soft skill challenges” that are co-planned and piloted with the simulation specialist prior to class.

- Simulations during class use “pauses” to elicit student crowd-sourcing of ideas, and the simulation specialist listens in real time to adapt accordingly.

- Collectively owned solutions among students ensure shared responsibility and take the pressure off individual learners.
Building bridges from research to practice
Tracking what teachers know and do across career arcs

• Federal funding (Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition grant): 4-year study examining 2 models of professional learning using “before” and “after” teaching videos of 200 teachers—scored by independent raters

• Foundation funding (Raising Texas Teachers grant): ongoing teaching and coaching of all 100 new pre-service teachers using mixed reality simulation support
Example: “before” and “after” videos