



Hilton Garden Inn and Virtual Heroes Utilize the Vicious Engine to Power Team Member Training Program

Challenge:

Hilton Garden Inn (HGI) is one of the leading mid-priced brands in the hospitality industry worldwide. They currently have more than 600 hotels open, under construction, or in development throughout North America, Europe, Asia and Central America.

Prior to 2009, HGI's Team Member training consisted of three steps: *Orientation*, *Ultimate Skills*, and *Ultimate Service*. After being introduced to the company and to their position, a Team Member would be educated about job specifics through *Ultimate Skills* and about providing exceptional customer care through *Ultimate Service*.

Hilton Garden Inn tracks guest satisfaction through a program called SALT (Satisfaction and Loyalty Tracking). HGI guests receive surveys and responses from those guests take an average of two weeks to show up, making it extremely difficult for staff members to link their behavior to the resulting SALT scores. As a result, HGI started looking for a way to create a direct link between each team member's actions and the survey results, preferably one that would produce the guest's SALT rating immediately.

David Kervella, Director of Brand Culture and Communications at Hilton Hotels Corp, was put in charge of finding a solution. He needed a compelling, educational, and, above all, entertaining, addition to the training program that would provide Team Members with immediate feedback on their customer interactions. This solution would also have to cost-effectively cover HGI's more than 20,000 Team Members worldwide.

In the face of these challenges, David decided to take a modern, tech-savvy approach that lay completely outside hospitality industry training efforts to date. He looked to the business community's rising interest in using video games as corporate teaching tools, and the result was an idea for a training simulator that would resonate with Team Members of all ages, *Ultimate Team Play* (UTP).

UTP was intended to be an interactive way for new staff members to familiarize themselves with common customer service tasks. To ensure that the title was appealing, cost-effective and easy to distribute, HGI targeted Sony's PlayStation® Portable (PSP) handheld as the ideal platform. For development of such a unique title, they turned to Virtual Heroes Inc, a game development studio located in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park that specialized in creating what are commonly referred to as "serious games."

Those decisions made, HGI needed to find a powerful, flexible, and cost-effective foundation for the development of *Ultimate Team Play*, one that would let them build the best training tool possible.

Strategy/Solution:

Vicious Cycle Software was the first provider to release a game development platform specifically optimized for the PSP, the Vicious Engine (VE), making them a uniquely qualified candidate for the foundation of *Ultimate Team Play*.

Virtual Heroes licensed VE in July of 2008, and the application's full-featured suite of development tools allowed them to jump right into the creation of *Ultimate Team Play*. By making use of VE's built-in character animation, artificial intelligence, and player interaction systems, they had a fully-playable game up and running on the PSP in a very short period of time.

"The Vicious Engine allowed us to focus on what we do best: rapidly create leading-edge training and educational content, while providing us all the tools necessary to develop for a platform like the PSP without requiring our team to re-invent the wheel," said Randy Brown, Chief Technology Officer at Virtual Heroes, Inc.

Results:

Ultimate Team Play was launched in February 2009 on time and well within the anticipated budget. Within in a month, 500 PSP systems were distributed to Hilton Garden Inn hotels worldwide.

Since the launch, Team Member response to UTP has been overwhelmingly positive. "Our Team Members don't look at *Ultimate Team Play* as just training, they look at it as fun. We haven't had one negative response since the program started," said David Kervella. "I've had Team Members send me emails directly asking for a copy of the training program. That's the first time I've seen that happen in the hospitality industry or the corporate training world."

By leveraging the Vicious Engine, Hilton Garden Inn was able to launch a well-received and successful training program while also staying within time and budget constraints, contributing significantly to the success and well-being of their Team Members.

About Vicious Cycle Software

Vicious Cycle Software, Inc. is a premier developer of interactive entertainment software based in Morrisville, NC. Founded in 2000, the company is dedicated to creating compelling content for all ages across all platforms, including *Ben 10 ALIEN FORCE The Game* for the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system, PSP® (PlayStation®Portable) system, and Wii™; *Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords*® for the PlayStation 2 system, PSP system, and Wii; and PSP system exclusive and original title *Dead Head Fred*®, winner of the Writer's Guild of America's first inaugural Videogame Writing Award.

Vicious Cycle is also the developer and licensor of the Vicious Engine® , a comprehensive and fully portable middleware solution for game development on personal computers, consoles, and handheld systems. The recently announced Vicious Engine 2™ (V^{e2}) offers a suite of new and improved features for game development on the Xbox 360® video game and entertainment system from Microsoft and the PlayStation®3 computer entertainment system.

For more information, please visit the company's web sites at www.viciouscycleinc.com and www.viciousengine.com. Vicious Cycle is a D3Publisher development studio.