Using Virtual Worlds to Expand Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities
9am - 12 noon April 29th
Steve Brown
Principal Investigator

Megan Conway
Principal Investigator

Thomas Conway
Project Director

Presentation: http://tinyurl.com/PacRim2013EmployAble
Email: employ@hawaii.edu

Signature Employment Grant

EmployAble
World Without Barriers
www.cds.hawaii.edu/employable
**Agenda**

**Overview and Introductions**
- What are Virtual Worlds?
- Benefits and Challenges for PWD
- Research on Virtual Worlds and Disability

9:00 am - 10:00 am

**Overview of Employment Issues for PWD**
- EmployAble Project Development
- EmployAble Project Outcomes/Pilot Study

10:00 am - 10:45 am

**Guided Tour**
- Small Group Interaction
- Q&A
- Evaluation and Pilot study sign-up

11:00 am - 12:00 noon
Overview & Introductions

Steve Brown, PhD.
Principal Investigator
Overview & Introductions

EmployAble Staff
Steve Brown
Megan Conway
Tom Conway
Rick Shankles
Madeline Harcourt
Marylou Matsuura

Guests
Elaine Katz
Corrina Stiles
“EmployAble” is a model virtual reality employment orientation and support center using Second Life as a primary platform to provide training, networking, mentoring and employment resources for people with disabilities and employers.

EmployAble is funded by the Kessler Foundation and developed by the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawaii.
Overview & Introductions

EmployAble is designed to meet the needs of people with diverse disabilities, with a particular emphasis on Veterans and those with Traumatic Brain Injuries.
Why are we interested in employment and disability?
A July 2010 Kessler Foundation and National Organization on Disability Harris Poll indicated 18-64 year-old PWD, are “less likely to describe themselves as working either full or part-time than are people without disabilities (21% versus 59%, respectively).”

This 38 percentage point gap is the greatest “measured in this survey, and helps to explain the persistence of gaps in other areas such as poverty and health care”
For the labor force participation rate, data were also positive for people with disabilities.

The rate increased from 31.1 percent in March 2012 to 31.8 percent in March 2013 (up 2.3%). The labor participation rate is the percentage of people who are working or actively looking for work.
In March 2013, the percentage of people with disabilities in the labor force was 20.7. By comparison, the percentage of persons with no disability in the labor force was 68.7.

April 5, 2013 Source: U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)
What are Virtual Worlds?

Tom Conway, M.B.A.
Project Director
What are Virtual Worlds?

Definition
Computer-based simulated environment where users interact with other users through graphic or textual representations of themselves utilizing textual chat, voice, video or other forms of communication.

Journal of Virtual Worlds Research www.jvwresearch.org
## What are Virtual Worlds?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtual World</th>
<th>vs.</th>
<th>Computer Simulation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Environment</td>
<td>undefined boundaries</td>
<td>Closed Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Controlled</td>
<td></td>
<td>defined boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-Time - 24/7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher Controlled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Life™</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeatable - On/Off</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Training Simulations</td>
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What are Virtual Worlds?

Social Interaction
Education
Business Meetings & Conferences
Research
What are Virtual Worlds?

Kessler Foundation Funded Research

- Long-term memory skills improved.
- *Immersion* increased learning.
- "Improve assessment of real-world functioning."

Benefits
& Challenges
for PWD

Megan Conway, PhD.
Principal Investigator
Benefits & Challenges for PWD

Benefits

- Social inclusion
- Practice and self-evaluation
- Safe and anonymous
- Targeted skill development
Benefits & Challenges for PWD

Benefits

● Realistic Environment
● Absence of Architectural Barriers
● Immersive
● Motivating
Benefits & Challenges for PWD

Challenges

For Users
- Accessibility for blind users
- Need for up-to-date computer equipment
- Need for computer skills

For Designers
- Ensuring Universal Design
- Capitalizing on interactivity
Research on Virtual Worlds and Disability

Corinna H. Stiles, J.D.
PhD Student, University of Idaho
Is Second Life a viable learning environment for veterans with disabilities to obtain skills related to regaining or retaining employment?
Research on Virtual Worlds and Disability

Outline

- Intro - Resistance to Virtual Reality
- Second Life
- Accessibility
- Psychological Fulfillment
- Veterans with Disabilities and Virtual Reality
- EmployAble: World Without Barriers
Research on Virtual Worlds and Disability

Future Research

- Identified Gaps in Research
- Research Proposal
- Disability and Identity in Virtual Worlds
- Employment/Vocational Rehabilitation
Research on Virtual Worlds and Disability

Contact

Corinna H. Stiles
corinnastiles@gmail.com
Project Development

Tom Conway, M.B.A.
Project Director
Using the virtual environment Second Life as a platform, EmployAble facilitates employment skills training, networking, mentoring, and employment resources for both persons with disabilities and employers.
Skill Builder

"Skill Builder" enhances participant skills in areas employers have identified as critical to employment success. These include tools that allow participants to:

a. Identify current employment skills and challenges;

b. Build a resume;

c. Identify interview skills and practice in a simulated interview situation; and

d. Learn about job search techniques and tools, and look for a job using these tools.
Access Info

"Access Info" provides employers, employees and job-seekers with information for supporting hiring and retention of people with disabilities. Information exhibited in this area includes:

a. Benefits of hiring people with disabilities,

b. How to recruit and retain people with disabilities, and

c. Creating an accessible workplace. This area will also have a list of general employment resources, including resources targeting specific populations such as Veterans.
Match Maker

"Match Maker" is devoted to making connections between people with disabilities, mentors, and employers. This area:

a. Connects employers with employees via Social Media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, EmployAble Blog) and email announcements;

b. Encourages application submission and review;

c. Promotes actual interviews;

d. Connects people with disabilities with successful mentors who can help guide them through the interview and employment process.
Module: Job Application and Interview
Congratulations upon completing Module Two of EmployAble’s training.
You’ll need to complete this Post Job Application & Interview Quiz

Post Job Application & Interview Quiz
- This quiz should take about 20 minutes.
- Please answer all questions with the best answer.
- You are ready to continue on to the Second Life portion of EmployAble.

* Required

Please enter your first name, middle name initial, and last name initial.
ex: Rickey Lee Shankle would be entered as rickeyl

How much should you know about the company you are interviewing with? *
- Understand the industry, the products/services, and key points about the company.
- You got the interview, you know enough.
- Read the annual report and latest news stories.
- You’re selling yourself, not your ability to memorize facts.

To reduce the stress of a job interview: *
- Take deep breaths and think about something else.
- Read a book about job interviews.
- Be prepared and do your research.
- Concentrate on being relaxed.

Plan to be at the interview: *
- Right on time.
- 2 hours early.
- Late: Gives you a sense of importance and will impress your potential employer.
- 10-15 minutes early.

Open Post Job Application & Interview Quiz
EmployAble Project Participant Flowchart

Potential Participant Contacts EmployAble

Takes Entrance Survey for Suitability

- Accepted
  - Individual
    - Pre-Test Interview Module
    - EmployAble Interview Web-based Module
    - Virtual Ability Training
    - Post-Test Interview Module
  - Group Member
    - Designated Group Online Meeting

- Denied
  - Sent Notice Thanking for Interest in Project
Project Outcomes

Megan Conway, PhD.
Principal Investigator
Project Outcomes

Model Virtual Employment Center that is sustainable and replicable.

- Demonstrate innovative use of technology.
- Model can be built upon with additional programs and curriculum.
- Model can be customized to specific professional fields or populations.
50 people with disabilities supported to gain or retain employment.

- Prepare for a job search.
- Network and search for a job.
- Apply for and interview for a job.
- Disclose a disability.
- Identify and describe support needs.
Project Outcomes

Pilot Study

Participants

● 50 adults with disabilities who are looking for a job or want to retain a job.
● At least half veterans or people with TBI.
● Have basic computer skills and access to a computer and the internet.
Project Outcomes

Pilot Study
Program

- June - August, 2013
- 2 hours/week Online
- Individual or Group Participation
- Mentoring, Social Networking, Curriculum, Resources, Practice
**Project Outcomes**

**Pilot Study**

Data Collection

- Screening and Pre-survey
- Mid-point Survey
- Post Survey
- Observations
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Questions?
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