


Customer Story: Walmart's Blueprint for Training 1M+ Employees in VR

Walmart moved from a closed VR training system to an open ecosystem, allowing them to significantly reduce cost while unlocking new possibilities for training and development.

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 Customer Stories, Enterprise, VR



The Company

Walmart serves communities worldwide, with more than 10,500 stores and clubs in 19 countries and online sales at [Walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com). In 2023, the retailer generated nearly [\\$606 billion in global net sales](#), making it one of the world's most valuable brands.

Cutting-edge technology enables Walmart to scale its people-first approach. **An early adopter of virtual reality training, the company has trained more than 1 million employees through VR.**

The Problem

When Walmart first launched its virtual reality program, [VR as a corporate training tool](#) was still a novel concept. The company struggled with limited content and device management options from its original vendor. In addition, some of the challenges integrating VR included slow manual processes due to using devices that were not designed for enterprise use.

The Solution

Walmart switched to an open VR training ecosystem supported by ArborXR. Now, their virtual reality programs have dramatically expanded the range of available content and tools due to utilizing more flexible platforms. ArborXR enables quick deployment and iteration, and the company can choose the best devices and content to suit its needs.

For example, integrating ArborXR with Walmart's learning management system (LMS) allows advanced reporting and analytics. Employees can login inside the headset and all of their training in multiple apps is connected to their identity. This integration supports personalized learning paths, leveraging XR's ability to provide immersive, interactive environments.

ArborXR's mobile device management (MDM) services allow Walmart to manage devices at scale. Administrators can manage settings on individual headsets, remotely install files and apps, and customize the employee experience.



Walmart's Entry Into VR Training

For years, Walmart, like many companies, trained its employees through a mix of video modules and on-the-job instruction.

Unfortunately, passive training tools like video can't prepare someone for a high-stress situation like a Black Friday rush or de-escalating a fight between customers. At the same time, such events are too rare and unpredictable to train for on the floor.

VR solves both problems. [When someone experiences a simulation in VR, their brain remembers it as though it really happened.](#) This enables retention and recall. Unlike a real-life scenario, a person can safely go through a simulation as many times as needed to get a positive outcome.

Walmart initially focused on high-stakes use cases for VR training. This required an integrated approach across many internal teams and external vendors. Teams in asset protection, global security, end-to-end operations, and global tech came together to ensure functionality across Walmart's systems.

[Cognitive3D](#) worked with ArborXR and Walmart's internal LMS/LRS teams to track content completion and training progress. [Futurus](#) and [Roundtable Learning](#) collaborated to ensure the proper integration of software development kits (SDKs) into the VR content.

This extensive cross-silo collaboration was essential for successfully implementing XR within Walmart's massive enterprise structure.

Closed vs. Open VR Training Ecosystems

Walmart's first foray into VR training relied on a closed ecosystem. In technology, a "closed ecosystem" is one that only works with its own tools or with compatible tools by select partners and gated content. It's essentially an end-to-end single-vendor system.

An open ecosystem, on the other hand, supports integration with a wide array of technologies, services, and platforms. By not locking down the system against outside vendors, an open ecosystem allows more flexibility and adaptability.

While closed ecosystems create concentrated control, they're also rigid and difficult to evolve. For an organization of Walmart's scale, this created serious challenges.

Locked into One Content Vendor

A closed ecosystem restricted the company to a single vendor for training content. If Walmart wanted to introduce new or specialized training modules, it was limited to what its one-and-only vendor could provide. This created a risk of gaps in training coverage and prevented scaling of the technology across the entire org.

Hardware Inflexibility

In Walmart's early VR training implementation, it used Oculus GO devices. The Oculus GO is a 3DoF device, with limited content capabilities and hardware features. It was unable to support the comprehensive training scenarios Walmart needed.

Other limitations included a low refresh rate and a lack of wipeable surfaces. The low refresh rate tended to cause motion sickness. In a multi-user environment, the inability to wipe down and sanitize devices created a risk of viral sickness.

Limited Control

Managing and deploying VR content within the closed ecosystem was time-consuming. The outdated process involved first transferring content from cloud drives to physical storage devices. It was then sideloaded onto headsets.

Inefficient content management and deployment led to administrative delays and interruptions in training. For instance, the many steps development teams had to take to test and deploy training content could add days to the development cycle.



The Benefits of Using ArborXR to Support an Open Ecosystem

ArborXR helped Walmart achieve higher efficiency by supporting an open ecosystem. The company now has the flexibility to introduce a diverse mix of content and choose from a vast array of hardware.

“The platform is incredibly user-friendly, and the ArborXR team’s responsiveness has allowed us to continually improve and optimize our training initiatives,” said Mohsen Khurasany, Senior Manager of XR Content & Innovation at Walmart. “ArborXR’s content sharing and release channels have streamlined our interactions with vendors, allowing us to test and deploy content effortlessly.”

Integration with Walmart’s LMS enables rapid iteration and an engaging learning experience, Khurasany said. Single Sign-On makes logging in simple for associates and allows administrators to track their learning journey.

The switch to an open ecosystem overcame Walmart’s challenges with its VR training. But the benefits didn’t stop there. The company also reports improvements in content development, employee engagement, and bottom-line savings.

1. No Vendor Lock-In for Content

ArborXR’s open ecosystem eliminates vendor lock-in. Walmart now has [access to a diverse range of VR training content](#). This flexibility allows the company to ensure its training is always comprehensive and up-to-date.

2. No Hardware Lock-In

With no hardware lock-in, Walmart can select VR headsets based on performance and budget. ArborXR is compatible with all major VR, AR, and MR headsets. As time goes on, Walmart can always access the latest technology.

3. Flexibility to Quickly Iterate

ArborXR enables rapid iteration with off-the-shelf, internally developed, or externally developed VR content.

When Walmart's training needs change, it can quickly update or add new modules. Training will stay fresh and relevant, even as retail undergoes rapid change.

"I know I can get on the phone tomorrow with someone from ArborXR and work through a problem or share a need. That's rare and incredibly valuable to us," Jarrad Nagel, Senior Manager of Global Learning Innovations at Walmart.

4. Integration with LMS

ArborXR connects seamlessly with Walmart's LMS through SSO functionality. This integration allows Walmart to track the learner's journey and fine-tune associates' training. Walmart gets advanced reporting and analytics from [Cognitive3D](#).

Tracking the learner's journey helps content developers to identify moments in training modules where learners become confused. It also provides individual associates a tailored learning experience, leading to a better-trained workforce.

5. Improved Employee Morale

Walmart's investment in training tools promotes a positive work environment, driving trust and engagement among associates.

"The impact we've seen with XR has been remarkable, leading to better engagement, improved knowledge retention, and faster time to proficiency," Khurasany said.

The company has found associates are more likely to feel valued and motivated when they see Walmart investing in high-tech training. They interpret this as an investment in workers themselves, leading to improved job satisfaction.

6. Cost Savings and Reduced Losses

ArborXR contributes to Walmart's bottom-line cost savings by optimizing InHome Delivery training. Better-trained personnel make fewer mistakes, reducing claims and losses. Well-trained associates also work more efficiently, lowering operational costs.

Watch Walmart & ArborXR's live discussion from AWE 2024

In this video, ArborXR's CEO Brad Scoggin and Walmart's Mohsen Khurasany and Franky Summers discuss Walmart's innovative approach to virtual reality training. Mohsen and Franky share their experiences transitioning Walmart's VR training from a closed ecosystem to a fully open one. They delve into the challenges they faced, the importance of collaboration with various VR partners, and the significant impact this shift has had on training effectiveness and employee engagement.

How Walmart Launched VR Training In An Open Ecosystem



Final Thoughts

With ArborXR's flexible and comprehensive solutions, Walmart overcame the limitations of a closed system. It has set a new standard for how companies leverage technology to enhance training and operational efficiency.

"ArborXR's capability to handle complex enterprise networking environments has been invaluable," Khurasany said. "As we scale XR training across the enterprise, ArborXR stands out as the best enterprise MDM solution on the market."