

# Virtual Reality Is Able to Provide a Stress Recovery Solution for Alibaba Workers

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## Abstract

Since the e-commerce market is booming in China, its high profitability comes up with many disadvantages. A giant e-commerce company called Alibaba could be one representative company of this situation. It is facing an extremely serious problem which is its inner workplace environment is been pointed out that employees are felt unsatisfied. Its workers are full of stress with high workload and frequent work overtime in this company. Based on the theory of VR technology, it could bring a vivid virtual experience to users while safaring in the digital world. Users are able to create or select their preferred environment, game and specific circumstances. This report shows the theory about why VR technology could help workers to reduce their stress in detail, and also pointed out and analyze one specific kind of VR technology which is called virtual nature. It demonstrates the other scholars' opinions about it and how the virtual nature is worked to help with the stress recovery solution in the workplace.

## Keywords

Alibaba, Stress recovery solution, Inner workplace environment, Virtual Reality, Reduce stress.

## 1. Introduction

In this report, it will analyze the current problem which a Chinese company called Alibaba is facing in its inner workplace environment and to give a recommendation by providing a VR solution for this company. Alibaba is one of the biggest e-commerce companies in China which has a huge sphere of influence in recent years. "Like Amazon and eBay, Alibaba is an Internet commerce company, but unlike these two giants, Alibaba does not actually hold inventory or sell goods. It's a middleman collecting annual fees and commissions from larger merchants and advertising fees from smaller ones."(Shradha, 2014) Jack Ma was the leader of Alibaba which decided to let the company become the middleman between merchants and their customers. This online shopping model is providing a platform that is able to increase the popularity of each merchant and also give more choices to the customers as well. Moreover, the scale of online shopping by using Alibaba or Taobao is becoming larger and worldwide. People in other countries are also able to shop the Chinese merchandise through this online platform which could lead foreigners to better understand China, Chinese culture and have a positive impact on the Chinese economy. In Alibaba, it is trying to use VR technology for their customers to increase their shopping experience online. However, the Customer is not the only party the company has to make them feel satisfied. The employees who are working in the company are also important. They have high pressures when working in a company like Alibaba because of the working intensity and long hours. Thus, the company should use VR technology properly to help its employees to reduce stress in the workplace.

As has been mentioned above, Alibaba should find a way to solve the high work pressure for its employees which is caused by the working intensity in this company. In these years, one

phrase or one word which is created by Jack Ma is becoming popular and controversial in China which is 996. This means the employee who is working in this kind of high intense company should all work from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm every day within 6 days a week. "The Chinese billionaire was referring to China's 'rule of 996', as per which an employee has to work from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm for six days a week." (Chinese billionaire, 2019) Because he thinks there is tremendous competition between workers and also the employees should contribute to the company much more to match the relatively high salary they have received from the company. Workers will feel stress and high pressure for working in a company such as Alibaba. If the employee slacked on their work, they will be eliminated through this competition. "Jack Ma said this during an internal meeting where he discouraged employees who worked less than 12 hours daily and said there is no place for people in Alibaba who expects to work for a typical eight-hour shift." (Chinese billionaire, 2019) He thinks the people who cannot accept the work with high intensity are not suitable for staying in Alibaba.

This is gradually becoming a social issue and controversial topic these years in China after Jack Ma has mentioned. This one of China's richest men has caught so much attention by establishing this opinion. After he mentions that, there are so many dissenting voices to condemn him for ignoring human rights. They think employees should have enough time to relax which is good for their physical health and mental health both. A person who does not have enough rest and sleep will affect their well-being and also work performance that will cause damage to the human body. Therefore, Alibaba should find a way to solve this issue and VR is providing a suitable solution for this tough question.

As long as technology develops, virtual reality gradually blends in the life of human beings. VR is a visualization tool which could help users to put themselves virtually in the situation. According to Bailenson, "because users' brains are treating the experience they are having as psychologically real, they are physiologically aroused in a way that is similar to what occurs during real experience." (Bailenson, 2018, p. 37). VR is based on the psychological principle to create a physical sense for users' vividness, and lead users to feel it is truly happening around them. There are many benefits Bailenson mentioned in his article that VR has which are increasing the ability of learning and mental sensitivity, increase the ability to cognize and focus, exercise the body and help the body move naturally. As Bailenson said, "When you experience a VR simulation, you move your body as you were experiencing an actual event in the real world." (Bailenson, 2018, p. 38). Thus, VR has many strengths for people's daily life and also has benefits for companies and employees in their workplace.

For solving this problem, using VR is an efficient way to help people recover from intense work, relax and decrease pressure and stress. Protecting human rights is also an imperative aspect that could also help to increase job performance and efficiency. According to Ahmaniemi et al, "Getting virtually to a calm place for a while during a busy working day could have a positive impact on experienced stress levels and even work performance." (Ahmaniemi, Lindholm, Muller & Taipalus, 2017, p. 206). Thus, a company like Alibaba should pay more attention to the well-being of their employees rather than just blindly require work performance from them. The "996" mode of working should be cut down and increase more break times for workers to get rest. According to the high-intensity work and full capacity of workload, this kind of online industry has, cancel the "996" mode of working is impossible. The company only could rearrange this kind of long hour work shift to help the employee to earn more time to recover their stress. Thus, the company should purchase some VR devices for their employees and put in the rest lounge to encourage them to use it during break time. However, Alibaba is investing a lot of money to create a better online shopping environment by using VR for its customers and seems already has a VR technology for customers, their own employees also need this kind of VR tech to help them create a more comfortable working environment as well.

There is a specific kind of VR technology that could provide help for employees to relax and kill stress which is called virtual nature. As the employees from Alibaba have to stay in the office or indoors all day and even 6 days a week, reaching nature is impossible for them. However, going out is able to help human beings to release their pressure and integrate with nature and feel the fresh air. Thus, virtual nature shows up to solve this problem by using VR devices. "These studies suggest that nature experiences such as being exposed to natural light, seeing living plants and hearing nature sounds really have an improving effect on work wellbeing." (Ahmaniemi, Lindholm, Muller & Taipalus, 2017, p. 206). In the visual nature reality, it will include the sound and image of nature and people will put themselves into nature 360 degrees and fully cognize of nature. In addition, it also could have different nature scenes for users to pick the one they preferred. There are images of the virtual nature reality that can be seen in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2. Starting every sense in the virtual nature reality is vital because people will feel fully engaged only when they can use all senses to feel the environment. According to the researchers, the full virtual nature reality could have a better result for employees rather than the virtual game reality. The VR of full nature function could provide the sounds and the image for the users and it will lead the users to integrate with the VR device with full sensory perception. Users are able to use the virtual nature to feel the forest, ocean, and other different scenes of the environment which will be provided by video. People will immersive in this kind of environment by using VR technology.



Fig. 1. (Thoondée & Oikonomou, 2017)



Fig. 2. (Thoondée & Oikonomou, 2017)

There are some advantages that virtual nature reality provides to users and companies. For the company, firstly, it is a low-cost virtual reality to use rather than some complex VR devices, and it is definitely effective based on the research. There is some data that shows employees feel relaxed and some better results after using virtual nature reality, and they also have a high

willingness to try this kind of VR during their work. These are some bar charts that can be seen in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4. Secondly, it also cost less time than other virtual game reality devices. The duration of playing a game is relatively long and also interacts with people’s minds. The company appealed to the kind of VR which needs less time to use and to reach better results and also could be used during working time. The best choice is Virtue nature reality which mainly uses video of nature and does not need so much time for users to engage. For the users or employees, it is able to decrease the blood pressure, heart rate, and skin conductivity according to researchers. “physiological measurements indicate that relaxing VR content such as nature videos can lower blood pressure, heart rate, and skin conductivity even when experienced on a relatively short daily session.”(Ahmaniemi, Lindholm, Muller & Taipalus, 2017, p. 209). Therefore, virtual nature reality is an efficient tool that is able to help the company to reduce the pressure on its employees by using this technology.

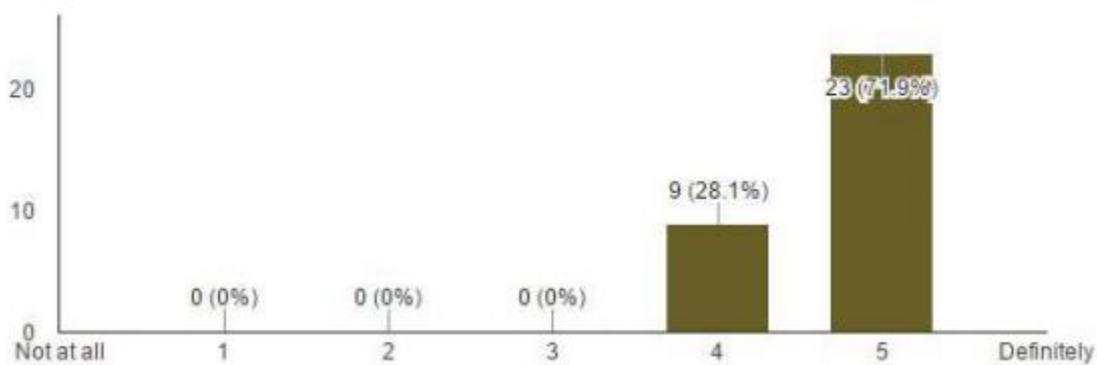


Fig.3. Feel relaxed (Thoondée & Oikonomou, 2017)

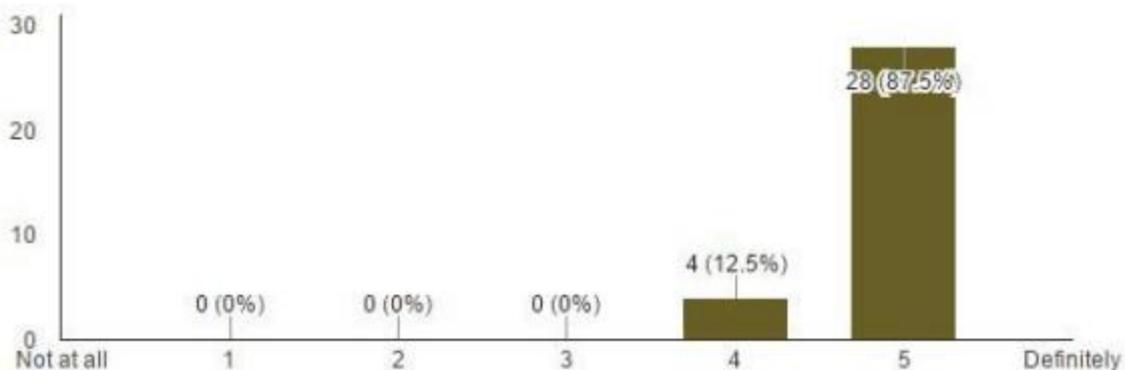


Fig.4. Implementation of the application in a workplace (Thoondée & Oikonomou, 2017)

However, there may be a concern of employees using virtual nature reality during working time. People are enjoying leisure time and do not want to go back to work is the biggest concern about this kind of VR. The intention of the company to import VR in the workplace is to reduce the pressure on their employees and to increase the performance of them. Nevertheless, it may become an excuse for employees to escape from their work. In conclusion, everything has pros and cons. The virtual nature reality is not guaranteed will bring all positive influences to the company such as Alibaba, but it is a useful tool to reduce pressure and stress for the employees and create a more harmonious workplace environment.

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