

Reality of virtual learning as top college builds future

Train4TradeSkills takes glittering prize

ONE of Britain's leading colleges has won a major award for bringing training for a good old-fashioned trade into the cyber age.

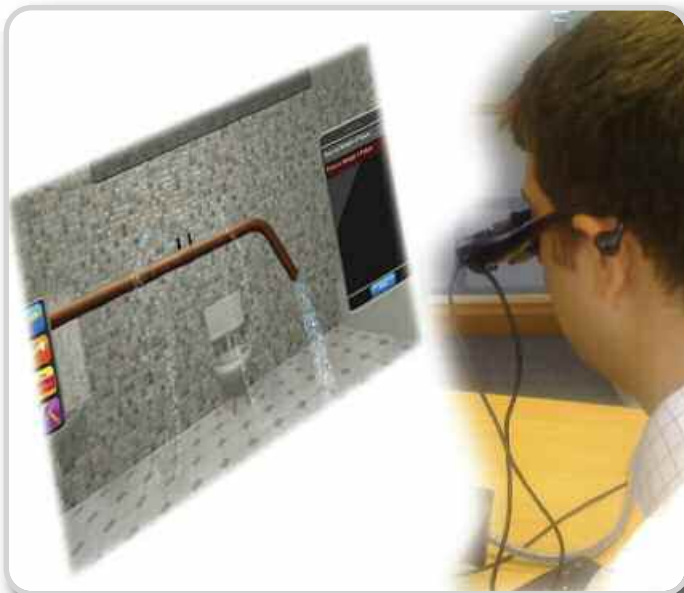
Train4Tradeskills took a prestigious E-Learning Awards in London last week for introducing a virtual reality learning system in its state-of-the-art classrooms and workshops.



Students learning traditional construction skills such as plumbing, building, carpentry and becoming an electrician now practise their skills using the system which simulates tackling jobs in real-life situations.

Myra Smallman, head teacher at Train4Tradeskills, on Collingdon Street, said: *"It's just like flight simulation being used to train pilots and cabin staff."*

"It allows the student to make their mistakes before they make their way into the big wide world. The beauty is you can be working away just as you would if you were on site but there is no danger of causing a problem for yourself or a customer – this really is the way forward."



Train4Tradeskills has expanded its virtual reality training studios and students are able to study all the major skills demanded by the building industry which experts say will boom again, particularly as the Coalition Government moves towards its Big Society vision.

Ministers already plan to spend a billion over six years to encourage local authorities to allow the building of new homes. Local government will have the council tax they raise on new homes matched by an equivalent Government contribution, **Housing Minister Grant Shapps** said.

Mr Shapps said: *"This new homes bonus will ensure that those communities that go for growth reap the benefits of development, not just the costs."*

The Government will provide a contribution equivalent to 125 per cent of the council tax paid on new "affordable homes" for low earners, Mr Shapps said.

Nearly 500 business people gathered at the London Marriott in Mayfair for the event where 37 winners were announced.

Train4Tradeskills received the award in the category Most Innovative New Product or E-Learning Tool along with AiSolve which helped develop the virtual reality system. Aisolve are made up of a group of extremely talented ex-students from the University of Bedfordshire who have been inspired by Professor Carsten Maple and managed by Train4Tradeskills.

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E-learning is the biggest growing part of the distance learning industry as more and more people find the best way to gain a skill to help guarantee a job for the future is by learning at home across the internet.

Train4Tradeskills students have the added advantage of the practical classrooms too.

Other leading companies attending the awards included Jaguar Land Rover, PricewaterhouseCoopers UK, BUPA, The Open University, Hibernia College, St George's University of London, Gloucester Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, the Olympic Delivery Authority and Boots UK.

Mr Jan Telensky, of Train4Tradeskills, said: *"This is a fabulous award for a company such as this and the prestige names at the ceremony reveal the kind of competition companies were up against."*

"It means we have been recognised for taking people into the future and not only are they learning traditional skills, things that are the bedrock of society, within an industry waiting in the wings to rebuild Britain, but they are understanding IT and the benefits of new technology. I am over the moon for the teachers at the college and also for the students who are getting the best and most innovative training in the world."

Train4Tradeskills is well known for its determination to change the world. Mr Telensky helped one of his web design students – a former Harry Potter star - realise his ambition to record songs for charity.

The businessman and philanthropist sponsored Shane Board, a diabetes sufferer, to record four tracks at Jools Holland's London studios. All profits went to Diabetes UK.

Mr Telensky also sponsors youth initiatives including the Dunstable College Student of the Year Awards, the YOPEY (Young People of the Year) Awards and recently supplied the University of Bedfordshire and a local school with thousands of pounds worth of new computers.

Many of Train4trade Skills students have gone on to find well-paid employment. Average salaries for newly qualified plumbers who can earn up to £40,000 but for those wanting to go it alone, the college also shows students how to run their own businesses.

The Government's agreed expansion of new residential properties, the increasing regulation over work in houses, the drive towards energy efficient heating systems and the implementation of the European Performance of Building Directive means a greater need for more skilled traders.

