Virtual reality made in Chile conquers the European market

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When Juan Reyes walked into his new office for the first time, he was overcome by a strange sense of déjà vu. It was like he’d been there before. He walked down the hall and entered the showroom. Then, he climbed a small staircase to the spacious work area with a view over the rooftops of Vina del Mar. Everything was so familiar. The 36-year-old had walked through these rooms many times before – virtually in a simulation created by Yoy.

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The Yoy's office in Virtual Reality (VR)

Reyes is the founder of the Yoy software start-up. The computer scientist feels completely home in virtual reality (VR), but this simulation surprised even him. “We used our own VR when designing our office. It looks exactly the same!” The office is a milestone in Yoy’s history. “A long-awaited dream,” Reyes says, his voice full of emotion. Until this point, all company employees had been working from home. The office was meant as an opportunity for what is the norm for many firms: all working together in one place. But then the coronavirus came along and threw a wrench into the works. The new office within walking distance of the boulevard that runs along the Pacific Ocean and a stone’s throw from Rio Marga Marga, stayed empty. Little by little, it is now finally filling with life.

Germany as springboard

“If we can make it there, we’ll make it anywhere!” Reyes has adapted these lines from the famous song to describe why he participated in the Manager Training Programme (MP). And he made it in Germany. He is currently programming a business management game for an educational institution in Berlin. The institution’s managing director was a trainer at one of the seminars Reyes attended as part of the MP. Together, they have developed a digital game tailored to meet managers’ needs. The game allows executives to simulate business situations and solve them together online. Players do not need VR goggles, just an access code. Reyes wants to continue to expand internationally, and the Manager Training Programme has been useful here too. Through a contact, he was able to successfully develop a fire extinguisher simulator for Mercedes-Benz in Spain. It is used for fire safety drills in Vitoria in northern Spain. The plant there is the world’s second largest production facility for Mercedes vans. Reyes has established a subsidiary in Spain as part of the project. This first foreign office is another milestone for Yoy.

A fire extinguishing simulation

The company is developing rapidly and has hired ten new employees. With his work, Reyes is helping to ensure that fewer talented people leave the country for work elsewhere. His one wish is that he could hire even more people with different professional profiles, including more women. “A company needs to be as diverse as a zoo,” he says. He anticipates record sales for 2021 and would like to celebrate with his now 30 employees.

“Digital learning is in demand, and Corona-19 has only driven it up,” Reyes says. He has tailored his strategy accordingly, focusing less on VR and more on web-based training for industry. The advantages for companies are obvious: it saves on costs and goes beyond spatial limitations. And as Reyes emphasises: “Our safety and machine training units can prevent accidents and save lives.”

Digital cosmopolitan

Reyes is a cosmopolitan and thirsty for knowledge: “In another era, I would live in a library learning about science, technology, history and philosophy. I would spend a lifetime on each of these things.” The father of two writes for a digital newspaper, has a podcast, and his first book, a handbook for start-up founders, is coming out soon. “So others don’t make the same mistakes we did,” he says with a laugh. With 21,000 followers, he would number among the top

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