

# Going from fully VR to Virtual Assessment

Responsive product development

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| <b>Project timeline</b><br>May 2020 - September 2020 | <b>Client</b><br>Cappfinity | <b>My Contribution</b><br>Product & Graphic Design, Video Production, Web Build & Management | <b>Team</b><br>Product Designers, VR Tech, Behavioural Psychologists, Chief Product Officer |
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## Context

Virtual Reality (VR) has played a major role in the assessment centre offering by Cappfinity for a considerable time now. Authenticity is a cornerstone of the Cappfinity product offering, and VR allows candidates to be the most authentic version of themselves throughout the assessment. The business has a dedicated VR team, responsible for building immersive and engaging, industry-leading experiences that allow prospective employers to get a deep reading of their candidates truest selves. The VR assessments are an in-person offering, provided on-site by a specialist technician.

## Challenge:

The Covid pandemic was a deal-breaker for the VR assessments due to their in-person and interactive nature. It was simply impossible to deliver the assessments in the same way but the need to serve customers was still present. In an effort to address this challenge, Cappfinity undertook a major project to redesign the VR experience and delivery it digitally through their CMS and Zoom.

*Note: due to the assessments were in active use at the time of production, limited images are available to maintain the integrity of the assessment*

## Objectives

Design an immersive branded assessment experience for candidates that echoes the VR experience as closely as possible. To be delivered via supervised Zoom sessions, and therefore to be as low bandwidth as possible to prevent any potential lag or slowdown. Should this all be successful, develop the product for ongoing use to be scalable and easily replicated.

*Authenticity and energy are the markers of success for Cappfinity, and the assessment experience has to delivery on both points.*

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| 01<br>How do we create a truly immersive experience in a digital format? | 02<br>Can we make our CMS flexible enough to deliver this assessment as we want to? | 03<br>Can we make this accessible in a way that the original VR assessments weren't? |
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## Key Success Measures

### Engaged

Candidate completion data scores ranked these assessments more highly than the usual Cappfinity offering.

### Brand

The theming allowed candidates to engage with their prospective employer in a unique way.

### Scale

Thanks to the Design System, Cappfinity was able to build more at scale.

### Future

The success of the initial assessments led to the foundation of the Virtual Assessment product offering.

## 01 How do we create a truly immersive experience in a digital format?

The joy of VR is how truly immersive it is, and Cappfinity took great pride in how detailed and considered their VR assessments were. This presented a good Design challenge on this project: how to replicate that level of immersion within the constraints of what is, essentially, just a website.

**Painpoint:** it's a website, users know what they expect of these so how do we create an experience that is delightful, engaging and still ticks the basic assessment requirements. All while using a CMS that wasn't built for this and with no plan for any developmental work in the short-term.

**Proposal:** lean into rich media and graphics to create a video-game feel within the assessment. "Gamify" the experience somewhat.

**Action:** having gone through the VR assessment previously, I was able to pull on that experience and use it as the starting point for my explorations. I reached out to the VR team to get as much in the way of media assets as possible to get the sense of what they normally deliver, and then used this as the foundation for my work. Starting with pencil and paper, I sketched out the user flow, identifying potential blockers and highlighting areas for delight. I pulled on my background in Graphic Design background to develop artwork that spoke to the theme and kept the user focussed on the task at hand, building on the strong product framework I'd established. It was interesting to go back and forth between Graphic and Product Design so much within one project.

**Outcome:** the final delivery was two assessments, built on the same framework, with both heavily themed but very visually and experientially distinct. For the first time, Cappfinity used rich media, created in-house by my team, to add delight to an assessment. The level of detail and interaction within the assessments was deemed a huge success by the client and led to them renewing their contract for another two years.



## 02 Can we make our CMS flexible enough to deliver this assessment as we want to?

Cappfinity's CMS was relatively old and built at a time when the product offering was very basic assessments built by Engineering by hand. When I started working on the heavily themed and branded experiences, it became clear that we would need to develop a Design System and working process that didn't overly tax the CMS while still allowing us to deliver engaging experiences for the end-user.

**Painpoint:** slow and dated technology that was difficult to update and a mission to maintain. The back-end of the system was incredibly complex due to the nature of the assessment scoring system, and the front-end was very much an afterthought. This led to some seriously sideways thinking on how to address various design challenges..

**Proposal:** develop a basic Design System so the assessments can be easily replicated, and in collaboration with Engineering, develop a new product offering that is light on bandwidth and doesn't add undue load to the tool itself, which is easily maintainable by both Product Design and Engineering.

**Action:** for my first foray into Design Systems, I worked closely with my Engineering lead to fully understand the potential of the CMS itself. I then followed this up with considerable investigation into industry standard offerings, and worked with my Design team to shape an offering that spoke to our specific business and design needs. The goal was to make the product replicable, so the core assessment experience had to be robust and well thought through. I worked with Product and Brand Designers and Engineers to build out the platform, taking an iterative approach with rigorous testing to failure to enable improvement. Considerable work went into finding the sweet spot with image and media on the assessment to allow it to be as immersive as possible while still being a light enough load to not impact delivery. This suited my Graphic Design skills while still serving the needs of the product itself.

**Outcome:** post-assessment user data was compared to that from the original VR assessments as well as the more traditional offering. It was determined that the themed virtual assessments had a comparable completion rate but greater engagement scores and more positive feedback from candidates. This was deemed a marker of success and the product was pushed into the regular rotation, and not just as a Covid-times alternative to the VR offering.

*Cross-functional buy-in and effort was at the heart of succeeding on this project. Without Engineering buy-in, Product Design would have been unable to deliver on the project and user needs.*

## 03 Can we make this accessible in a way that the original VR assessments weren't?

Accessibility was one of the biggest challenges faced by Cappfinity's customers: frequently measured and used as a KPI for the assessments themselves, specific and stringent accessibility measures were placed on all product offerings. Candidates were asked upfront about their accessibility needs and could bypass the assessment accordingly, but we tried to make the assessment experience as accessible as possible for the majority..

**Painpoint:** the original VR assessments were only suitable for able-bodied candidates, and digital assessments can be inaccessible through their complexity. The goal is to make the assessment takable via basic assistive technologies.

**Proposal:** engage with a disability access charity to run a thorough audit of the product and implement the suggested improvements.

**Action:** working directly with the disability access liaison, I developed a framework for accessibility within the product that served as a baseline. The decision was taken to develop the product to be accessible via screen-readers, and to provide an alternative de-branded experience for those candidates with specific cognitive difficulties. I worked closely with Engineering to build out the product and ensure that the code allowed us to hit these objectives. From a Design standpoint, I undertook a strict testing and assessment drive to cover as many facets as possible and better incorporate the guidelines into the tool. Meaningful tool tips throughout, text size increased to 18px as minimum, and closed captions were added to all rich media, with a fully grey scale version of the assessment available to those candidates with colour blindness.

**Outcome:** while not fully accessible, the end product was a marked step forwards for Cappfinity. Candidates who sat the assessment and self-declared as needing special accommodations reported that the assessment was more straightforward to navigate than expected, and certainly more accessible than the original VR assessment.

