Hospitality and Tourism: Exploring AI & enhancing Soft Skills with Bodyswaps Session Plan

Overview:

In the fast-paced world of hospitality and tourism, technical skills get you in the door, but it's your soft skills that keep guests coming back. This interactive outreach session invites students to explore the human side of hospitality through Bodyswaps, a cutting-edge VR platform that transforms how we learn communication, empathy and leadership.

Participants will step into realistic scenarios, from handling a difficult guest to navigating team dynamics and practice responding with confidence. With instant AI powered feedback and a safe space to learn from mistakes, Bodyswaps empowers students to build emotional intelligence, hone customer service skills and prepare for real-world challenges in the industry.

Whether you're curious about a career in hospitality or looking to sharpen your interpersonal skills, this session offers a glimpse into the future of learning, where you don't just watch or listen, you experience.

Audience: College/Access to HE
Class Resources Required: Access to internet-enabled computer and projector. Access to Bodyswaps.com
Proposed Session Plan: 1.5 hour session

Learning Objectives	Learning Activities
By the end of the guest talk, students will be able to: LO1: Analyse the impact of AI and automation on tourism and hospitality careers LO2: Identify how digital transformation is reshaping customer service roles in the industry	**Welcome and Introduction (10 mins)** • The changing landscape: How AI, automation, and digital transformation are reshaping tourism and hospitality • The human advantage: Why soft skills are becoming MORE valuable, not less • Future-proof skills: What employers are looking for in the next generation of tourism professionals • Introduction to Bodyswaps and experiential learning for career development

LO3: Explain the distinction between tasks that can be automated and those requiring human skills

L04: Evaluate the opportunities and challenges AI presents for future tourism professionals

Curriculum Mapping:
NCFE Units

Unit 02 – Customer Service in Travel and Tourism (primary)

Unit 03 – Preparing for a Career in Travel and Tourism (primary)

Unit 06 – Hospitality in Travel and Tourism

Unit 29 – Leadership and Human Resources

Key message: Technology handles transactions; humans create experiences and connections. Today you'll experience BOTH sides.

Starter – Q&A Discussion (10 mins)
- How many of you have experienced delays or service disruptions while traveling?
- Have you ever tried to resolve a problem using a chatbot or automated system? How did it go?
- What can AI do well in customer service? What does it struggle with?
- When have you felt the need to speak to a "real person" instead of a bot?

VR Simulation Activity "Travelling on the Train" (20 mins)
Bodyswaps Scenario: Customer Experience Training

Context: Jeremy is traveling home after a week away. He's tired and his partner is relying on him to look after the kids later while they go to work. Unfortunately, there seems to be some kind of hold up on the line.

Student challenge: Do you have the customer service skills to:
- Help him to remain calm?
- Make him feel welcomed by the rail network?
- Help him to feel in control of his journey again?

Setup:
- Have VR simulation on big screen

- Students use buzzer in each group to use microphone to calm and reassure passenger
- Focus skills: Empathy under pressure, emotional intelligence, de-escalation, service recovery, managing customer anxiety

Activity Group Reflection (10 mins)

☐ What human skills were essential in this scenario?

☐ How did emotional intelligence change the outcome?

☐ What would have happened with an automated response/chatbot?

☐ What specific phrases or techniques worked best?

☐ How does this relate to careers in hotels, airlines, cruise ships, or attractions?

AI Chatbot Testing Activity – "Can AI Handle Jeremy?" (15 mins)

Purpose: Students interact with an actual AI-powered customer service chatbot to handle the Jeremy train delay scenario, experiencing first-hand what AI can and cannot do.

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Facilitator introduces the scenario: "Jeremy is stuck on a delayed train. He's tired, anxious about getting home to watch his kids while his partner goes to work, and increasingly frustrated. A rail company has deployed an AI chatbot to handle customer complaints during service disruptions. Let's see how well it works."

Students use:

- Tablets/phones with access to a customer service chatbot app – via QR code

- Jeremy's character profile on whiteboard with his emotional state and concerns
- Observation worksheet to record what happens

Group Observation & Analysis (5 mins)

Facilitator leads real-time discussion while students share screens/examples:

Prompt questions:

- How did the bot respond to Jeremy's anxiety and emotion?
- Did it provide useful information?
- What did it do well?
- Where did the conversation feel unsatisfying or robotic?
- Did Jeremy feel "heard" and "understood"?
- At what point did you wish you could speak to a real person?

Plenary Escape room

Facilitator announces:

"Before you leave today, you need to unlock your Future-Proof Career Code. This 4-digit code summarises everything we've learned. Work together to solve 4 quick clues—each clue gives you one digit. Get the code right, and you'll unlock your next steps in building an automation-proof career!"

The 4 Clues (Students solve these in pairs/groups)
CLUE 1: The Human Skills Count

"In our VR scenario with Jeremy, how many HUMAN skills did we identify that AI cannot replicate? Count them: Empathy, Emotional Intelligence, Active Listening, De-escalation, Creative Problem-Solving, Genuine Reassurance"

Answer: 6 First Digit: 6

CLUE 2: The AI Truth

"True or False: AI will completely REPLACE human customer service professionals in tourism and hospitality."

- If TRUE = digit is 1
- If FALSE = digit is 0

Hint: Remember what the chatbot COULDN'T do for Jeremy!

Answer: FALSE (AI augments, doesn't replace) Second Digit: 0

CLUE 3: The Success Formula

"To be future-proof, you need how many key components? Tech Skills __ Human Skills = Career Resilience"

What mathematical symbol goes in the blank? Count the letters in that symbol.

- PLUS (+) = 4 letters
- TIMES (×) = 5 letters
- AND = 3 letters

Answer: PLUS (+ sign) = 4 letters Third Digit: 4

CLUE 4: The Bodyswaps Mission

"How many learning outcomes did we achieve today?"

Remind students of the objectives:

1. ✅ Understand importance of soft skills in AI-driven future
2. ✅ Apply customer service strategies through VR
3. ✅ Reflect on performance and identify skills gaps
4. ✅ Explore how tools enhance employability
5. ✅ Critically evaluate AI strengths and limitations

Answer: 5 Fourth Digit: 5

THE CODE: 6-0-4-5

Summary & Next Steps (10 mins)

- Recap of session objectives

- Encourage students to explore ways to enhance their soft skills

- Share resources and insights into what we have to offer at HE.

- Future prospects

Use the module overview how the tech is integrated into the curriculum. (Professional practice).