

# HVAC Manufacturer GREE Demonstrates a Scalable New Training Model with Online 3D Simulations



## Key Successes

- Increased webinar attendance to 600 participants, surpassing the 20-person average for in-person sessions.
- Eliminated \$1,500 to \$3,000 in weekly Trainer travel costs.
- Increased participant engagement, continuing to attract high numbers.
- Scaled and sustained a new web-based training model.

## Summary

- GREE shifted from traditional in-person training, typically hosting 20 participants per session, to dynamic webinars that initially drew 600 attendees and now maintain an average of 50.
- They eliminated trainer travel expenses of \$1,500 to \$3,000 per week, significantly reducing costs while transitioning to a virtual training model.
- The move to webinars allowed GREE to scale training effectively, reaching a broader audience and adapting seamlessly to remote learning environments.
- Despite the change, the training continued to meet high standards, with content approved by NATE and receiving enthusiastic feedback from participants.

## About GREE

- Founded in 1991.
- Largest residential air-conditioner manufacturer globally.
- Known for constant innovation and maintaining a competitive edge through R&D.
- Made a significant investment in VR and 3D training modules with Interplay Learning in 2019.
- Pioneered the use of digital training systems in the mini-split industry.

## Training Goals

- Transition from in-person to virtual training to adapt to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Increase accessibility and scalability of training sessions.
- Maintain high training standards and engage a larger audience.
- Utilize advanced simulations to enhance training effectiveness and participant interaction.

## Training Challenges

- COVID-19 travel restrictions and bans on group gatherings disrupted in-person training sessions.
- Need to quickly adapt the training model to remote delivery.
- Initial skepticism about the effectiveness of webinar-based training compared to traditional methods.



## The Largest Residential Air-Conditioner Manufacturer in the World

Founded in 1991, GREE Electric has grown to be the largest residential air-conditioner manufacturer in the world. The company has worked to maintain an edge over competitors through constant research and development. In 2019, GREE invested significantly in VR and 3D training modules, partnering with Interplay to create a custom, fully operational GREE residential mini-split and life-like tools.

As the first mini-split manufacturer to create this type of digital training system, the company aimed to further its reputation as an industry leader. While initially intended to function as a training aid for the attendees of live training sessions, it quickly formed the backbone of GREE's webinar-based sessions.

### Pivoting to Web-Based Training

Gerry Wagner, the Lead National Trainer for GREE residential mini-split systems, travels about 32 weeks of the year as a technical trainer. Throughout his career, he has trained groups of HVAC professionals in 47 states, seven provinces, and four countries.

In February 2020, Gerry Wagner saw trouble on the horizon when COVID-19 shutdowns began nationwide. For a traveling trainer, a ban on travel and group gatherings was devastating news. The HVAC industry relies on regular training sessions to keep professionals up-to-date on equipment installation and troubleshooting, and the potential loss of dozens of training sessions was a huge hit.

As it became clear that business as usual was no longer an option, GREE got to work with Gerry to create webinar-based training sessions to replace the in-person training sessions he would normally be holding.

In a matter of weeks, Gerry was hosting webinars for technical training, with Interplay's simulations, adding a field-like dimension to the sessions. Before the pandemic shutdown, Gerry claims to have scoffed at the webinar concept. Having now embraced it, he laughs at the notion that "You can teach an old dog new tricks."

Luckily, however, both Gerry and GREE were in the fortunate position to pivot quickly and modify their training sessions to fit the changing circumstances. GREE's industry-leading decision to create custom sims with Interplay quickly became more significant once training shifted to the remote world.

The quick pivot to webinar-based training featuring Interplay's custom simulations has been critical to keeping training alive. Gerry's virtual sessions have proven popular, cost-efficient, and highly scalable, forever changing his training model.

While the in-person curriculum was typically 4 hours long, it's now split into two shorter webinars, each using the 3D sims Interplay created for GREE. *"The software that Interplay created for us brings an element of fun into it,"* explains Gerry. *"The audience loves it, and each webinar participant receives an email from Interplay within a day of the session so they can sign up to use the software whenever they like. If they have VR equipment (even if they don't, their kids probably do), they can use the 3D modules as well."* When participants sign up for the training, they gain access to the GREE sims to put into practice what they learn in the webinars, reinforcing their skills.



## Greater Attendance and Engagement

Gerry's webinar-based training has been massively successful. For the initial run, a jaw-dropping 600 participants registered—an outrageous number, considering that the average in-person training hosts about 20. Amidst the stay-at-home orders, Gerry could still fulfill his regular training duties: GREE distributors hosted seminars for their customers, and Gerry showed up (online), ready to go live to his crowd. This gave distributors the feeling of control while allowing them to offer something unique to their customers.

As cities opened up, the numbers dropped to 300, then the 100s, and are now stabilized, averaging 50 or so per session. But at the end of the day, these numbers show that online attendance can reach more people than traditional in-person sessions ever can.

Additionally, GREE is saving a lot of money on travel. Gerry's weekly travel expenses range from \$1,500 to \$3,000, adding to a significant annual expense. Aside from cost savings, this webinar-based training is excellent for maintaining strong relationships with vendors and customer-building. *"We are getting very good reviews about the content of the webinars,"* says Gerry. *"People are appreciating them, viewing them, participating in them."* Since the courses are also NATE-approved, the content aligns with the industry's highest standards.

Despite missing the human interaction of in-person training sessions, Gerry is certain that no matter what happens in the world, he will continue to use webinars in addition to training in person. The scalability of this type of training is undeniable. *"The numbers don't lie. The attendance on webinars far exceeds those in live trainings."*

Even during a global pandemic, Interplay has made high-quality technical training possible for this HVAC titan in an essential industry.



Jerry Wagner

**Schedule time with a training expert to learn more.**

**Contact: [sales@interplaylearning.com](mailto:sales@interplaylearning.com)**

Existing customers please contact:  
[customersuccess@interplaylearning.com](mailto:customersuccess@interplaylearning.com)