



# ValoClimb Case Study

Samantha Urmston, General Manager  
Laser Quest (Trafford Centre)  
Manchester, UK



## Overview

Founded when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, Laser Quest has spent its 34 years in existence using a franchised business model to blanket the UK with nearly 50 locations, thereby implanting itself into British culture. Over that time Laser Quest has become a dependable attraction for a wide cross-section of Brits. Nostalgic and action-packed, it remains a top earner for seven Prime Ministers after it was first introduced and is the Trafford Centre franchise's namesake and core offering.

Located inside one of Manchester's most popular shopping malls, Laser Quest Trafford

Centre has spent the better part of 20 years ingratiating itself into the community around it. Their other attraction, until September 2019, was a climbing wall that featured a rotating and tilting section. By all accounts, the climbing wall did its job: it kept people busy while they weren't playing Laser Quest. The two attractions together were sold in bundles by appointment and to walk-ins à la carte: the simple business model sustained everything for two decades, so when the climbing wall reached its end of life, finding a replacement would be no small feat.

They turned to the award winning and original; mixed-reality climbing wall in ValoClimb by Valo Motion. The entire equation—from employees to guests to onlookers and the team behind ValoClimb—everyone—is content with the decision and excited to see how everything evolves. Credit the talented team behind Laser Quest Trafford Centre, led by General Manager Samantha Urmston, for paying close attention to its guests for the past 20 years and executing accordingly.

Urmston and her team would be the first to say they couldn't have pulled it off if not for ValoClimb's versatility and accessibility. ValoClimb has become a powerhouse co-headliner. Walk-ins and replays for the climbing portion of Laser Quest Trafford

Centre's business have increased noticeably since ValoClimb replaced the rotating climbing wall, and together the two attractions do gangbusters for what has become the business' bread and butter: birthday parties. Laser Quest Trafford Centre averages 30 birthday parties a week and sees consistent walk-in traffic during all unscheduled time slots.



## Why ValoClimb?

When the folks at Laser Quest Trafford Centre began their search for an attraction that could entertain guests alongside their namesake laser tag, ValoClimb's fresh, original presentation won them over almost immediately. "ValoClimb is just so unique, it's like nothing you've experienced anywhere else," said Samantha Urmston, General Manager of the location confidently. "The interactive element really does immerse you into the game you're playing. Both kids and adults get in there and they just love it."

Once installed, ValoClimb continues to win over staff at Laser Quest to this day thanks to its ease of operation. "**ValoClimb is so easy to understand and operate,**" Urmston said. "We are quite time strict, so it's exceedingly important that our attractions be self-explanatory to both staff and guests so that time isn't wasted explaining things and guests can get in and get out. ValoClimb accomplishes that."

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**- Samantha Urmston**





## INTERACTIVITY = Replayable for all ages

If it were all eye candy and wow factor, ValoClimb wouldn't cut it as a permanent attraction alongside Laser Quest's laser tag game. For Laser Quest, ValoClimb needed to be more than a novelty; it needed to keep people coming back again and again. "It really can't be a one-and-done for it to work for us," said Urmston. **"ValoClimb has features like the Leaderboard and a wide range of difficulty settings that keep guests of all ages coming back to play over and over again."**

That ValoClimb successfully transforms a standard climbing wall into an interactive experience has proved to be far more than a fun trick for Laser Quest; it vastly expands the reach to ages and skill levels the ordinary climbing wall it replaced couldn't touch.

"Succeeding at ValoClimb is not only about strength and climbing skills, which means kids and adults alike will find a fun, challenging entry point," said Urmston. "If anything, the fact that ValoClimb can be different every time engages people and keeps them coming back because there are always new challenges."

When asked about how much repeat play ValoClimb is getting at Laser Quest Trafford Centre, Urmston doesn't hesitate. "Most people want to play ValoClimb two or three times," said Urmston "and the walk-ups too. There are the people who come specifically for ValoClimb, they'll just keep playing, two, three, four times. With our old climbing wall, people would climb, it would get too hard, and they're done after the first try."

## Let's talk games

Valo Climb's nine games are fully fleshed-out experiences that are quite distinct from each other. As a result, there's no telling which titles will be popular in a particular location. For Laser Quest, Whack-a-Bat is a big favorite! Whack-a-Bat is just like old-school Whack-a-Mole except vertical, and instead of a mole, you're beating down a mischievous little bat who, thanks to ValoClimb's incredible game engine, is infused with a ton of devious personality.

"Whack-a-Bat works well with everybody!" said Urmston. "Everyone who plays Whack-a-Bat on ValoClimb likes the concept of the game and the way the difficulty increases as you get better at it." Another big ValoClimb title for Laser Quest is Flash, a relatively simple game that pits the climber against the clock as they touch a set of 10 goals in sequence.

Flash is fully customizable by the location using Valo Motion's game management system location admins can design new courses specifically for their guests, and as the name indicates, the game goes nuts when the player wins, drawing even more spectator attention.



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– Samantha Urmston

## The attraction that sells itself

One aspect of ValoClimb that pleasantly surprised the decision-makers at Laser Quest Trafford is all the free marketing that comes with it. Every ValoClimb game is like a bright, flashy billboard (with music and sound effects!) beckoning passersby to investigate.

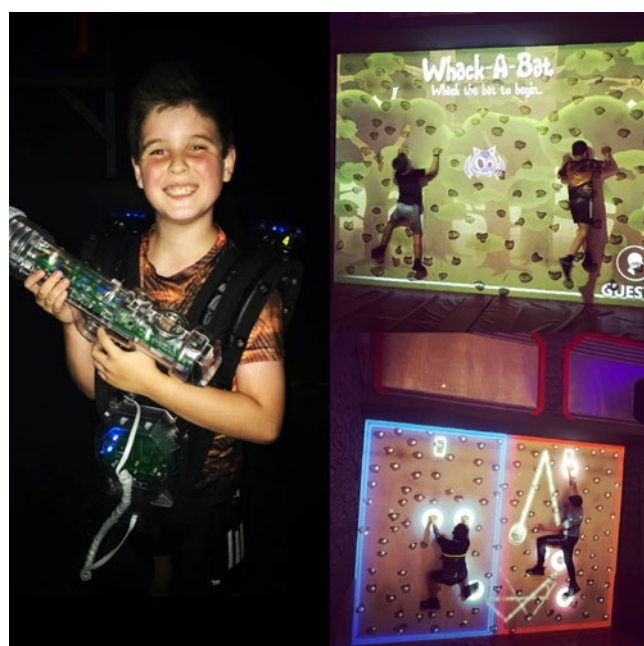
“We’re in a popular shopping center, so when someone’s playing ValoClimb the sound of the game and the cheering onlookers echoes into the mall and makes people say ‘what is that, sounds like fun,’” said Urmston, “and then it looks so great when they see it. ValoClimb really does attract our target audience.”

Urmston has been so happy with the business ValoClimb has drummed up for itself that she further expanded her point, specifically calling out ValoClimb’s video selfie feature yet another way ValoClimb helps sell itself.

**“Visually, ValoClimb looks so amazing that it captures anyone walking by,”** she said. “and then once they play, they email themselves a video of their game, which is another level of marketing built right into ValoClimb. People send those videos to their family or post them on social media, and that can only have a positive effect on our bottom line.”

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**ValoClimb is great for birthday parties! It'll play Happy Birthday at the end of a game, and you can put the birthday person's name up on the screen. Kids and adults, everyone loves that.**

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## **Stellar support for the win**

A recurring theme with Laser Quest Trafford Centre is a topic that has become ubiquitous across locations for Valo Motion: top-notch customer support. Since ValoClimb first went live there have been very few technical issues, and anything that's come up has been resolved with Valo Motion's characteristic speed and thoroughness. "I have nothing but positive things to say about Valo Motion's support," said Urmston. "I've had few technical issues and they always get the issue fixed very, very quickly."

## **But is it good at parties?**

Impressive technology, bells, whistles, and flashy graphics are great features, but how is a fancy climbing wall going to corral a bunch of sugared-up 8-year-olds at a birthday party on a Saturday afternoon? As it turns out, ValoClimb is Laser Quest Trafford Centre's secret party weapon. "ValoClimb is great for birthday parties. It'll play Happy Birthday at the end of a game, and you can put the birthday person's name up on the screen," Urmston said laughing, "kids and adults, everyone loves that."

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