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THE MARKETER'S GUIDE TO THE

# METAVVERSE

July 2022 // Tom Ffiske

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# METAVVERSE

*/'mɛtəvɜ:(ɹ)s/*

**noun**

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The internet considered as an imaginary area without limits where you can meet people in virtual reality (= images and sounds, produced by a computer, that seems to represent a real place or situation).

The metaverse is a virtual world where humans, as avatars, interact with each other in a three-dimensional space that mimics reality.

*Cambridge Dictionary (2022)*

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Metaverse - noun: The internet of experiences, as an evolving term that may incorporate VR, AR, or other immersive technologies in the future. The definition is still under discussion.

The metaverse will open up a new type of economy for creators.

*Tom Ffiske, Editor of the Immersive Wire*

# INTRODUCTION

People are like cats; however much you try to guide them, they tend to find their own path. Take public parks, for example. Expert city planners analyse public spaces and design curated panthers, swaying to and fro with rows of flowers along the sides. "Here is where you should go," park gates wordlessly say, as forks of paths shoot through. "Follow them, and enjoy your stay."

Do people follow them? Not really. People tend to see something in the distance and step away, walking through the grass, shrubs, or forestry to discover new areas. Over years, these offshoots from the pebbled path become trodden and lifeless, and a new way appears, formed by thousands of people who follow the same steps. Now the park has new trails to explore, none of which were intended by the city planners.

These dirt tracks have a name: Desire paths.

Desire paths appear in marketing as well. Planners plot out the customer's journey, painting a step-by-step picture that, to the team, feels blatantly obvious. The person sees the ad. The person enjoys the ad. The person clicks the link in the ad. The person learns more about the product. The person buys the product. Repeat ad infinitum.

The marketing funnel must be crystal clear, surely? But no. The person can dart into thousands of different directions, few of which are predictable. Capturing all of the directions is almost impossible, as people careen to different parts of the web to investigate a product, if at all.

How does this relate to the metaverse? The desire path for metaverse products is one of the most opaque I have ever come across. Immersive technology products are a mess of definitions, as multiple companies refer to the products with the same names but different meanings.

Social platforms, NFTs, marketplaces, AR overlays, VR worlds - all tap into the metaverse, but differently. Candice Houtekier, Founder and Director of Art Collision, agreed that you cannot mix them up into a hodgepodge of intermixing ideas; or as I like to think of it, a spicy hot pot of ingredients that rarely mix together well. Desire paths spring across the web, but all are covered by a thick fog of descriptive nouns and products that shades the path forward.

I am not a fan of all the papers in the UK, but I do think there is strength in the simplicity of the language. The more straightforward the message, the more likely it will resonate in a clear way. The simplicity may cover the intricate shades and grooves of a message, but I would prioritise penetration over nuance at the first stage. Once the person is further down the funnel, more intricate messaging can be weaved in as part of the path.

*Avoid assuming everyone's as clued up on what the metaverse is or will be.*

**NATALIE CREGAN-EVANS**  
Head of Marketing at Igloo Vision

Yet the potential is there. Much like the internet before, it is breaking down the barriers between people and products, offering a more intimate and powerful way to connect with one another. For some - like Matthew Donaruma - it is an inevitable change that will come over time. I agree, but I believe the shape will differ from what we can predict. How can we be exact with the curves and sways of technological progress? Regardless, like with any tool, it must be used appropriately.

I write the Marketer's Guide to the Metaverse with one aim: **To make clear what marketeers can do to clearly and concisely market their metaverse product.**

I want to identify the numerous desire paths that people take, and point out the best ways to give them a guiding hand as they navigate the zig-zag of tracks. The report draws from the expertise of many I trust in the industry, as I go through all the details of the funnel. We will cover the following:

**Messaging**

**Planning**

**Activation**

**Consistency**

In all of this, I really like the advice that Wojciech Pluta, the Immersive Technologies Lead at Oracle, gave to me as part of the report: "assume nothing." With such a fast-emerging area, even basic assumptions could lead anyone astray. Where possible, I ground the advice with the firm backing of facts and experience, to help people guide their way through the moors of marketing. I hope you can hold me to account for the promise.

Welcome to the metaverse, and thank you for reading. Let's make it a comfortable home.



**TOM FFISKE**

Editor of the Immersive Wire





# MESSAGING

The first step a company needs to take is to judge whether they should take the step at all. Not every company needs to have messaging on the metaverse. At one point I saw a cannabis company talk to me about their metaverse strategy, which is like seeing a comic store diversify into fishing. The inauthenticity reeks, and normal people will shrug their shoulders and walk away. As Nathaly Tschanz said to me, "blind activism rarely pays off."

*I've already seen people changing their job titles to Chief Metaverse Officer. When the smartphone was adopted at scale, we haven't seen people changing their job titles to Chief Smartphone Officer. The smartphone is simply a channel of communication - and I see the metaverse like that.*

**GONÇALO ANTUNES**  
Marketing Lead XR at Masters of Pie

The approach will age quickly too; in theory, having a metaverse presence might be as important as having a website. Nowadays, we don't see many businesses boast about owning a domain. Then again, a website became necessary as a tide of people logged onto computers for the first time, as a necessity to live in the digital world. The metaverse could evolve in that direction, but it is incredibly niche. It is, arguably, not a necessity - but it is something to keep an eye on.

Still, we are a long way away from a defined vision. Joel Udwin, Senior Product Manager at Niantic, aptly commented that we are not at the 'meta' stage of the metaverse yet.

Despite the noise, a lot of people don't 'get' the metaverse quite yet. Wunderman Thompson Intelligence found that only 15% of people are actually able to explain what the metaverse is. With such a division, how can a company actually chime with its messaging, when people have no idea what it even means? Why swim in the sea of discussions at all, when no-one knows what lurks below its surface?

A gulf between knowledge and understanding exists across the world; people observe the clamour of companies noisily shouting about their services, and have no idea what they are serving. On this, I agree with Randall White from agencyXcursion that we are seeing a 'bridging' of mass adoption, as we are going through the understanding phase of the metaverse.

We will not get to a core understanding of the metaverse anytime soon. A family of definitions litter the internet, and the very discussion breeds more confusion. We will see an iron-clad version soon, but for now, it only fuzzes the debate even further. So in the meantime, focus away from the metaverse and more on your core value proposition. Get to the heart of it, quickly.

Any good campaign starts with some good messaging. Homes built on strong foundations stand tall for decades, as a solid home to build a life around. Start marketing with ill roots, or an unclear premise, and everything that springs from it crumbles to dust or withers away. So start with a strong core, and build the panthers that twine towards it.

Most metaverse products I have seen are hamstrung by poor messaging or value propositions, putting the platform before the value. A few examples:

<b>A metaverse platform</b>	<b>Buy NFTs in our marketplace</b>
<b>A multiverse platform for music</b>	<b>An AR real estate game</b>

The above fails because companies put what do before how it benefits people. Music NFTs are not cool because they are an NFT; the value is the quality of the music itself, then the single ownership as a side benefit. A metaverse platform is not the draw by itself; it's the more immersive way in which friends can connect and play together. And land ownership is not fun in itself; it's the gameplay tied to it that will keep users coming back.

If I were to reword each one, I would say:

<b>The most immersive way to share experiences with friends</b>	<b>Own the music that you love</b>
<b>See your favourite bands in the best way possible</b>	<b>Compete with friends in a fun game, for the chance to win awards</b>

Or take a real example from Mira (which I really like):

- Empower your frontline with seamless remote collaboration and hands-free workflow guidance.



*Don't let the eagerness to try something new dull the impact of your message. These tools should elevate the message or experience without becoming the focal point.*

**NIKY ELLISON**

Marketing Manager at Immersive Studios and Unknown LBE

Yes, we are surviving up the Gartner hype cycle as people want to stuff the metaverse in their marketing materials, differentiating their services. We have a propensity towards overhype, which we must step away from however much we can (which Dirk Schart agrees with). But at the same time, we must recognise that there are common threads which are being used as part of the services. Though tenuous, the links are there and exploited upon.

VR worlds became metaverse platforms, for example. But the companies that stand the test of time will be those that use the trend in an integrated and genuine way, and clearly articulate that vision to people. Faye Lockier, Global Communications Director at Ultraleap, put it perfectly: “[Avoid] forgetting about the human element.”

The human element. That is what it goes down to. Not the superfluous buzzphrases and obscuring terms that cloud, not clarify. The sheer directness of human experiences, distilled to a phrase as clear as spring water. I understand why people get swept in the rush of a technological trend, but it ultimately comes down to how it impacts us as people. I'm aware that I am repeating the point, but it must be emphasised; the vast majority of insights I received as part of this report focused on clarity, and it's the most persistent problem marketers are seeing today.

If you need help articulating the vision, speak to someone outside the team. If possible, bringing customers into the debate and product development process illuminates areas the team can build on. But even if that is not possible, it's important to get another voice to see if the message chimes with the community. Clay Walsh, the Head of Marketing, XR at Autodesk, finds that speaking to internal voices helps to “validate the details” before going to a wider audience. And building on it further, Amy Stout - the Creative Director of Futurus - found that internal departments got excited about the project and wanted to step in. Championing the technology internally tends to open doors.

In the end, we must go down to the basics. The metaverse sprang from science fiction, twirling its branches beyond the pages of Snow Crash. We are now well beyond science fiction, as we see the fringes of it peek at the horizon. Ground the proposition in the cold ground of reality, not fantasy.

*Be realistic about what your product or service offers and focus on the key benefits rather than just slapping “metaverse” on it for the sake of some short-term visibility and potential gains.*

**SAM WATTS**

Immersive Partnerships Director, Make Real



Be absolutely sure you can contribute to the conversation legitimately.

We are still in the understanding stage of the metaverse, as few truly understand what it is.

The metaverse is a tool, not the solution. Use it to demonstrate genuine value for people, not as a gimmick.

Showcase the value you give to customers, rather than detail how you do it.

# PLANNING

Once we sort the messaging, the next step is to plan the approach for campaigns. Now the foundations of the home are ready, it is time to plan out where the bricks will go and how the wiring ties the home together.

I've seen many companies rush the planning step to hop on the trend as fast as possible, as did Andrea Roberto, the Co-Owner of Augmenta. We both agree that things need to go at the right speed. Yes, there is value to striking a trend while the iron is hot, and then becoming the heart of the conversation. But now the ship has passed, and now companies are more likely to succeed if they shape their offering to the market in a steady and precise way. Strapping the metaverse as a sticker on the side of a VR product is pointless, and people will look right through it. Take your time, and ensure that the messaging is on point before executing a campaign.

*Your purpose is at the core of what your experience offers. It's far deeper than its features. A purpose can be used as your guide to determine which elements are included in the final experience, through to the marketing and communications tactics that will work hardest at connecting messaging about your product or service with the audiences who are most likely to be engaged... and buy into it.*

**LAURA MINGAIL**  
Founder, Archetypes & Effects

Granted, a fair few VR companies I know suddenly found that they can genuinely contribute to the conversation. With their natural position and leadership, they found that they can move more quickly and easily. And that is fine! But in those cases, there is a genuine connection to the discussion where they can, with their expertise, give an in-depth insight into the space. Authenticity is important.

Val Vacante, Director of Strategy, Product Experience and Innovation at Merkle, pushes hard this test and learn point: "The metaverse isn't quite here yet and is evolving, so elope with it by creating an ongoing pipeline of purposeful experiments that solve real consumer problems to test, learn, and grow the business."

How to experiment? Start with an incubation group of passionate employees, and carve out time for them to experiment with the technology on company time. As they identify new approaches, execute a solus campaign that incorporates their learnings as part of a cohesive package. Deploy it to a community while making it clear that it is an experiment of sorts. Then once done, collect feedback and iterate on the idea.





At the core of design thinking is the constant cycle of the prototype process. Build, experiment, and integrate feedback constantly until, finally, you have a product that's ready to be deployed. The same goes for marketing.

*Test, try, and optimise. It's key to a better understanding of your target or future potential audience behaviour within the metaverse, and adapting your marketing mix accordingly.*

**NATÁLIA RAJNOHOVÁ**  
CMO of YORD

Again, do not simply point to the fact that you are a metaverse company, as the sole reason for people to pay attention. The company is worth more than a (potentially) transitory trend, and must serve value that lasts years, not months. Get your core value proposition pinned down, and then showcase how you help others.

At times, you may feel that you are being too 'obvious' about your product. "Isn't it too blatant or simplistic?" some may ask. Not so. Marketeers can be so immersed in their own worlds that they use terms that may seem obvious to colleagues, but few to those outside the boardroom. Even if it's not the wording you would use, it needs to match the audience you are reaching. "It is your responsibility to guide them every step of the way," said Alan Smithson, Co-Founder of MetaVRse.

For example, I personally found myself using 'influencer' outside of work from time to time, and my non-marketing friends baulk at the term. People don't see TikTok recommenders or Twitch personalities as influencers; just people they admire and trust. The word itself captures what they are, but the term itself feels hollow outside the marketing sphere.

The bubble can be difficult to pop out of; fill a room with marketing professionals, and what makes sense in a brainstorm may not make sense in real life. Speaking to people outside of the room, to check on how things sound, makes sense as a firm step. I always have people who are less familiar with XR check my content, to ensure the message can carry further.

Take IoT as an example. The technology followed the same path, and found success when using the right wording. Michael Guerin, the CEO and Founder of Imvizar, found the same based on his own work: "The success of IoT happened when that industry stopped calling it IoT. Now a warehouse manager buys a 'maintenance and monitoring system,' which tells him/her the occupancy, temperature etc. [There is] no mention of IoT / LPWAN / the connectivity etc, just the impact to the client or user, and simple language non-industry people use."

Finally, don't shrink away from mutually-beneficial partnerships. The metaverse encapsulates interoperability, where differing worlds can interact with one another. The same open spirit bleeds into marketing partnerships as well, to help both companies grow. In many cases, 1 + 1 = 3.

My favourite example of this was Epic Games and WPP working together, where one side will become educated on the metaverse, and the other will use its tools to create marketing services. Mutually beneficial and powerful, it all comes together to create a neat bow.

If you happen to represent a metaverse platform that is interoperable, then double down on it! Elena de Sosa, VP Partner Development at Geenee AR, recommends (rightly) that the projects should work together closely to benefit from a network effect. Think of Fortnite, which grew faster and faster when friends brought in other friends, and so on and so forth. See also the drastic rise of Ready Player Me, whose portfolio of partners exploded with their open approach. Interoperability is a competitive advantage.

Don't rush the planning to capitalise on the trend.

Again, focus on the service rather than the label (metaverse).

Make the value proposition as clear as possible, even if it seems obvious to the marketer.

Plan to prototype as well, if needed, via smaller experiences.

Integrate interoperability as a competitive advantage, to benefit from the network effect.

Use simple language; 'metaverse' doesn't need to be mentioned to convey value.

**KEY  
LEARNINGS**

# ACTIVATION

Showcasing a metaverse experience is incredibly difficult. Flashy visuals can excite potential consumers, but they can be burned by the reality of the product if it does not meet high expectations.

Magic Leap is a classic example; the company released a video of a whale cresting a wave and falling to the wood-panelled floor with a splash, as spectators gasped in awe. The company shot up to be one of the most famous unicorns of the decade - before refreshing its approach when expectations never met reality.

Imagery is important as well. Stock images of VR are a complete joke in the industry; some use a Samsung Gear while reaching out, while others are on the train, or in the middle of nowhere. None of them is realistic, or places the person in a context that makes sense. The stupidity of the imagery only harms the brand, not help to demonstrate the value.

Instead, focus on what people will 'feel' when using the product. A hard approach, but one that also helps to clearly communicate the value that a company can bring. If you are creating an AR experience to train an engineer, then it will help them be more informed in the factory. The purpose of AR isn't that it is new and trendy; it leads to a genuine impact in retaining knowledge when learning a new skill.

Speaking of skills; it is an open truth that immersive tech skills are in high demand at the moment. Customers deserve the best experience, if only to ensure they are as frictionless as possible (or as Luis Bravo Martins would say, help them navigate the complexities of it).

*The ideal customer experience has clear, engaging communication at every stage of the customer journey - especially post-acquisition.*

**HALEY LIERMAN**

Head of Marketing, Mira

As a sub-point of the activation, automate elements of it as well. If 'achievements' can be tied to the experience, then people will gamify it and, potentially, enjoy it more. Jade Kwan, Design Manager at Duality Robotics, recommends looking into automation tools to help with the process.

Once the experience is over, consider giving something as a reminder of it. The key is to draw them back in, as a potential long-term customer; a small gift goes a long way to keep the company at the forefront of the mind, once it's done and dusted.

Dr Matthew Freeman, Founder & Director at Immersive Promotion Design, found some success by building AR filters as mementos for VR experiences, which their friends can see afterwards. I love this approach, as it keeps the same vein of immersion - just in a way that can work across social media as well. I trust his approach as well: "[We] ultimately found that not using tech-specific language (e.g. not using terms such as "VR" or "AR") in comms materials like press releases opened up audience engagement by up to 40% in some cases."

As previously said, it comes down to how you use the tool. Use it well, and success will follow.



Don't overhype the product with pre-release materials and video; ground it in reality.

Automation tools are your friend to help collect information about the campaign together.

Be careful with the imagery, only using ones that truly show the product in action.

Ground the people in reality, showcasing how they feel while using it.

Use language like VR or AR, which may be more accurate than the metaverse.

Consider a gift that can work after the activation, to keep it at the forefront of people's minds.





# CONSISTENCY

I have seen companies use the 'metaverse play' as a one-time hop for PR purposes; a shameless way to get clout in the press.

Sometimes they work, like a boulder being tossed into a pond; waves are made, people notice, and companies receive their fifteen seconds of fame. But the waves dissipate, the rock drifts to the bottom, and the serene surface looks undisturbed as people look away. Momentary campaigns lack the power and potential to drive a community of people wanting to engage with you.

Take Nikeland. The company supported its Roblox world with constant updates and activities, with options to buy NFTs of their seminal shoes. Nike did not create the land and leave it be; it was supported for months, not days. The success of the location is clear, as Nike is often cited as a case study for a great campaign; over seven million people visited it so far.

At the same time, some companies are so on the fringe that they want to experiment, dipping their toes in the water of discourse. Little experiments make sense, as companies get a feel for the debates' edges and see where they fit in. An NFT drop here, a visit to the metaverse there - all is fine to do. But I would set expectations as early as possible, so as to not mislead people. "We want to understand the field better" is fine, so long as it is clear. But don't imply it is a long-term strategy; one experimental leap could be misinterpreted as a weak start to a campaign.

A core part of the web3 movement is community. Passionate users congregate on Discord to share their passion, and meet new friends from across the world. The same engine powers many communities. I have worked at previous companies that recognise the importance of their users, and cultivate an open connection with them where possible. The approach is not salesy; it is a simple feedback loop of listening to them, while sharing the same passion together. Gabriela Ciobanu, Marketing Manager at Inowize, says that the metaverse is user-driven; I would go beyond and say it is the very beating heart of it.

So focus on the community. Create a way for people to come together, such as a Discord server, and ensure it stays active with daily activities. The positive word of mouth spreads further, and more people will come to the product over time.

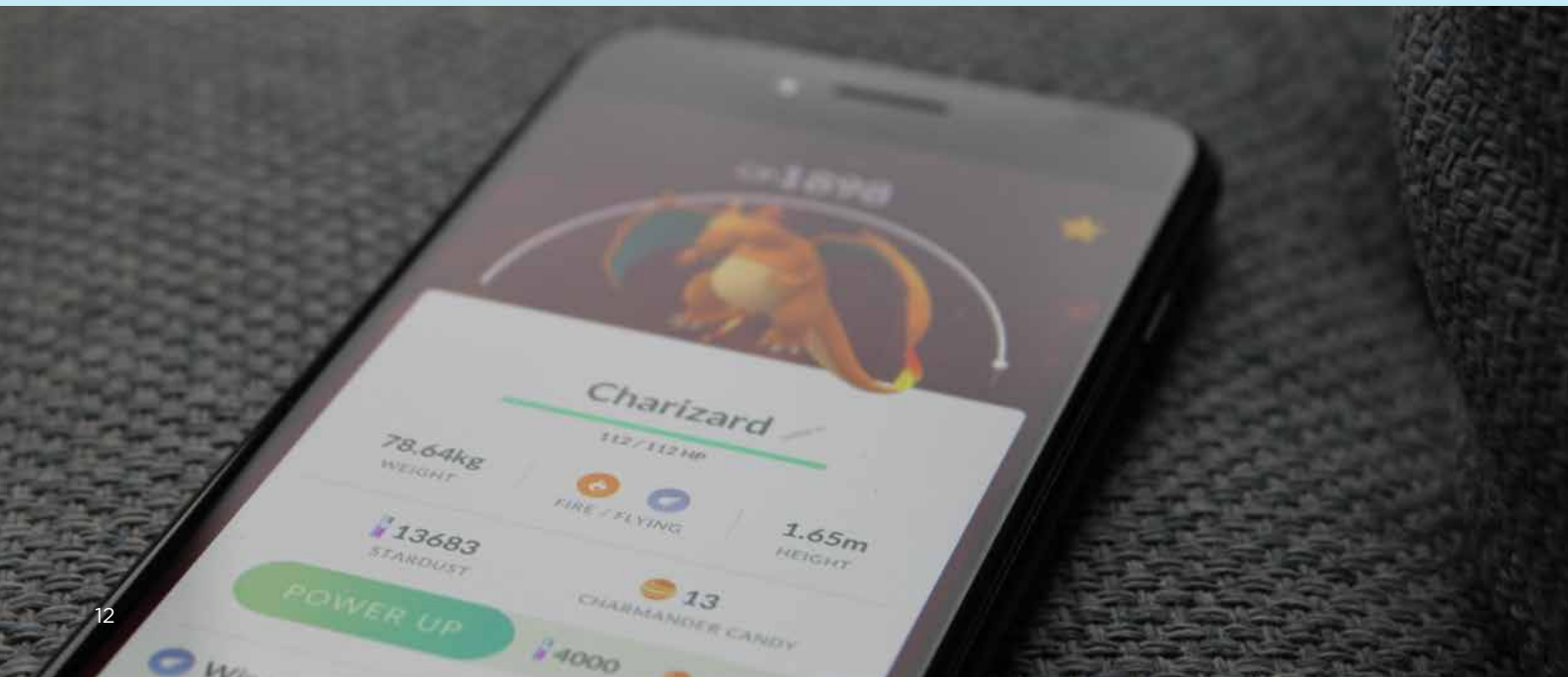
The same goes for tapping into other communities too; Ruby Quince, Creative Director at Hill+Knowlton Strategies, argues that companies must earn their way into the group, where possible. Anything fake or transactional will burn bridges, not build them. Such consistency takes time and effort. But the benefits are seismic for any company that knuckles down and nurtures its most passionate customers.



One-off experiments are fine, so long as your audience is clear.

If it is a consistent campaign, plan months in advance; you will reap massive awards if you do so.

Cultivate your community; your fans are your most powerful allies.



# CONCLUSION

What is clear is that the appetite for immersive and interactive experiences is there. By staying rigidly customer-focused, companies can expect to thrive over the long-term.

David Ripert, co-founder and CEO of Poplar Studio, has found the same as part of his work. On a basic level, the way we do marketing has not changed with the metaverse. We still need to consider the full range of earned, owned, and paid media as part of a cohesive strategy. Publications are not writing stories in the metaverse; people are not spending all their lives virtually; and not all brands do not need to implement a cohesive metaverse strategy yet. It all comes down to the core principles of marketing - the report just removes some of the fog that clung to it.

Yet at the same time, we are seeing new opportunities open up as well. While the metaverse is still ill-defined, we know for certain that it is an evolution of the internet that we have today, incorporating experiences alongside the wealth of global information we can access. The prospect is both exciting and daunting; exciting because it opens new ways to connect with one another, and daunting because we will enter uncharted territory once again. The metaverse brings specific nuances to marketing, which we must bring to our work.

*The rules of marketing have not changed just because the channel has evolved.*

**JO EYRE**

Head of Content and Communication at Omnipresent

Ironically, I believe that few services can top in-person experiences. A YouTube video of the Saharan Desert cannot encapsulate the majesty of a clear sky in the vivid heat. Meeting an avatar of a friend beats Zoom, but neither compares to hugging them after not seeing them for a year. On paper, AR glasses bring people back to the real world while adding contextual information - but that is pure speculation until we see a pair that meets the promise.

Marketeers have a responsibility to communicate, not mislead. I hope that responsibility persists as the metaverse crests the hype curve.

# THANK YOU

**Sam Watts**, Immersive Partnerships Director, Make Real

**Randall White**, Founder, agencyXcursion

**Alan Smithson**, Co-Founder of MetaVRse.

**Andrea Roberto**, the Co-Owner of Augmenta.

**Natália Rajnohová**, CMO of YORD

**Michael Guerin**, the CEO and Founder of Imvizar

**Candice Houtekier**, Founder and Director of Art Collision

**Dr Matthew Freeman**, Founder & Director at Immersive Promotion Design

**Niky Ellison**, Marketing Manager at Immersive Studios and Unknown LBE

**Clay Walsh**, the Head of Marketing, XR at Autodesk

**Jade Kwan**, Design Manager at Duality Robotics

**Elena de Sosa**, VP Partner Development at Geenee AR

**Ruby Quince**, Creative Director at Hill+Knowlton Strategies

**Gonçalo Antunes**, Marketing Lead XR at Masters of Pie

**Faye Lockier**, Global Communications Director at Ultraleap

**Wojciech Pluta**, Immersive Technologies Lead at Oracle

**David Ripert**, co-founder and CEO of Poplar Studio

**Gabriela Ciobanu**, Marketing Manager at Inowize

**Val Vacante**, Director of Strategy, Product Experience and Innovation at Merkle

**Amy Stout**, Creative Director at Futurus

**Haley Lierman**, Head of Marketing, Mira

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**Matthew Donaruma**, Principal at MDonaruma.com

**Dirk Schard**, Director Growth & Marketing, Augmented Reality at PTC

**Natalie Cregan-Evans**, Head of Marketing at Igloo Vision

**James Watson**, Chief Marketing Officer at The Glimpse Group

**Laura Mingail**, Founder, Archetypes & Effects

**Luis Bravo Martins**, CMO, KIT-AR

**Nathaly Tschanz**, Programme Director of the Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) Virtual and Augmented Reality Management and lecturer for Immersive Technologies at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts

Brands are excited about the metaverse. And they should be - there are some great opportunities out there. But, simply sending something into the metaverse isn't enough. We work with clients to help them understand what the metaverse could mean for them. Whether that's using it as a platform to reach their goals, partnering with another brand who can help them leverage its potential or having a viewpoint on what it means for our future work and play, we bring insights and ideas to the table that don't just jump onto the metaverse for the sake of it, but use it in the most effective ways.

As well as working with brands developing the technology that will enable the metaverse, we've launched campaigns for others within it and helped a range of companies develop a perspective on what the metaverse means them.

If you've read this guide and think the metaverse holds potential for your brand, get in touch and we'll help you work it out.

Contact David at  
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to discuss further.

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