

Content marketing in the metaverse

In the past, businesses could get away with creating one piece of content and blasting it out to their entire audience. But things have changed with the rise of social media and the internet.

Temps de lecture : minute

12 October 2022

Now, we live in the dawn of the age of the metaverse. In this era, virtual and augmented reality are no longer the stuff of science fiction novels or academic research. They're becoming a more serious way to talk and interact with one another. What does this mean for businesses? What does it mean for marketing? And what does it mean for content marketing in particular? Keep reading to find out!

What is the Metaverse?

The metaverse is a term coined by science fiction writer Neal Stephenson in his novel Snow Crash. It refers to a parallel, computer-generated universe that exists within the internet. In the metaverse, people can interact with each other and with businesses in a more immersive way.

Content in the metaverse is different from the type of content we share online today. The metaverse is a three-dimensional, virtual environment that allows businesses to create an immersive experience for their customers, meaning they'll have to create interactive and engaging content. It can't just be a piece of static content anymore. It needs to be something that people will want to come back to again and again.

Businesses can use the metaverse to create virtual storefronts, product

demonstrations, and interactive *customer service experiences*. The possibilities are endless.

Is the Metaverse already here?

The metaverse is still in its early stages, and the concept defined above does not yet exist. Experts agree that it's unlikely to reach the required cross-platform interoperability any sooner than ten years. Because there are many technical difficulties to be addressed and numerous global tech corporations invested in dominant technology exploitation for personal gain, what form the metaverse takes isn't easy to guess.

However, we are seeing the beginnings of a metaverse in several places. One example is Second Life, a virtual world created in 2003 that is still popular today with over a million active users. In Second Life, people can create avatars and interact in a three-dimensional environment. There are also businesses in Second Life, such as banks and stores, that people can visit.

Other examples of proto-metaverses like Second Life include Decentraland, Roblox, Worlds Of Warcraft and Sandbox, to name only a few. Each is unique in its own way and offers distinct kinds of experiences to its users.

Some key traits of the future Metaverse

1. Multiple immersive environments. The metaverse will likely comprise multiple virtual worlds or environments people can visit. Each setting will be immersive and realistic (or not) in its own way, and they'll all be interconnected. This will be similar to how today we can access one website from another through a hyperlink.
2. The metaverse is always on. Like today's internet, the metaverse will be available 24/7, 365 days a year. People will be able to visit anytime

they want and stay for as long as they like.

3. It spans the virtual and physical worlds. Some companies, Apple included, are betting on a metaverse that is more augmented reality (AR) than virtual reality (VR), effectively bridging the gap between the virtual and physical worlds.
4. It is powered by a functioning virtual economy. The metaverse will have a functioning virtual economy, and businesses will be able to use it to sell products and services. The virtual economy will be powered by a cryptocurrency, such as Bitcoin and Ethereum, and non-fungible tokens or NFTs.
5. Virtual identities. In the metaverse, people will have virtual identities that they can use to interact. These identities will be based on their real-world counterparts, but they will be able to change them as they see fit. This also creates virtual communities where people can get together based on shared interests.

What does this mean for businesses?

This is the million-dollar question (quite literally). For one thing, it means that how we market to our audiences is changing and will continue to change in the foreseeable future.

To compete in this new landscape, businesses need to start thinking about content marketing in a whole new way. This includes everything from the type of content they'll need to create to how that content is delivered and how the audience will interact with it.

Even companies that don't seem like a good fit for the metaverse, like personal finance advisory firms, for example, can use this new medium to reach their target audience more effectively. An interactive infographic in VR space where users can tweak and play with graphs and data could be an immersive way for you to teach low-income parents about the Canadian child benefit or other tax rebates they may be entitled to. The

key is thinking outside the box.

What will content look like in the Metaverse?

Content in the metaverse will be anything but traditional. Below are some of the characteristics of the content that businesses will need to produce for the metaverse:

Highly Immersive Content. Immersive content means that content will be so realistic and interactive that it will feel like you're actually there. This is made possible by technological advances such as VR and AR.

Thanks to these technologies, businesses will be able to create more realistic and engaging experiences for their target audience than anything we've seen before.

VR and AR technology are also in their early stages but are developing quickly. While best-in-class hardware goes for thousands of dollars, well-performing mass-market gear is already available for under \$100. Businesses need to start thinking about how they can leverage these technologies and create content optimised for either end of the hardware spectrum, depending on their target audience.

Highly Personalised Content. The metaverse presents a unique opportunity for businesses to connect with their customers on a more personal level. Through highly immersive content, companies will be able to communicate with their customers at an emotional level. This emotional connection will be more powerful than any other form of marketing, leading to more customer loyalty and engagement.

For instance, imagine you're a customer considering buying a new car. In the metaverse, you could go to the dealership and test-drive the vehicle before you buy it. You'll also be able to customise your car to your heart's

content, drive it in any virtual street you can think of, and even take some friends along for the ride.

This level of personalisation will be much more effective than any traditional marketing campaign.

Augmented Reality content. Augmented reality is a technology that allows you to overlay digital content on top of the real world. For instance, you could use augmented reality to see what a piece of furniture would look like in your home before you buy it, precisely what Ikea is using this technology for in the present. AR could also help identify potential threats in your real environment by outlining or highlighting these threats when you look at your surroundings through a set of AR goggles.

In the metaverse, businesses will be able to use augmented reality to create experiences that are even more immersive than traditional VR. This is because AR allows you to interact with virtual objects and other metaversians while seeing and interacting with your real surroundings.

Take the same example of a customer considering buying a new car. Besides being able to give it a virtual test drive, with augmented reality, you could also see what the car would look like in your driveway before you make the purchase.

Democratic content. The metaverse will be a more democratic platform than the traditional internet. Many see the new Web 3.0 as an evolution of social media into VR space. Experts agree that user-generated content (UGC) will likely be king in the metaverse. This means businesses will no longer have total control over the content created about them.

Instead, customers will be able to create their own content about businesses. This could include reviews, ratings, and videos, as they do now, but also VR and AR experiences related to your products and services for other metaversians to try.

USG content can become a blessing or a curse, depending on how you approach it as a business, no matter what industry you're in.

Collaboration will be crucial for success. Creating VR experiences is not something anyone can whip up in a couple of hours, like writing a blog post. This will be a time-consuming and expensive process. Businesses will need to collaborate to create successful metaverse-oriented content marketing campaigns cost-effectively.

For example, imagine you're a clothing company and want to launch a new line of clothes. In the metaverse, you could partner with a virtual reality company to create an immersive experience for your customers.

How will content marketing work in the Metaverse?

Now that we've discussed how content will change in the metaverse let's talk about how businesses can start creating content for this new medium.

Based on the characteristics of metaverse content that we shared above, here are a few general tips that you, as a business, will need to follow:

1. Create highly personalised experiences for your customers. This will require hard work and creativity to make content unique, attractive and memorable.
2. Use VR and AR to make those experiences immersive. Companies will need to master tools like 3D-CAD software, Unity and Unreal Engine to create and host interactive virtual worlds and content for their users to enjoy.
3. Encourage your customers to create metaverse content about your business. Harness the power of UGC by holding contests and giveaways for content created in the metaverse about your brand.

4. Collaborate with other brands. Collaborating with metaverse influences and other businesses to create unique experiences that reach a wider audience will be crucial for success.

How the Metaverse is changing the rules for content marketing

The metaverse is already starting to change how content marketing works, and we're only in the first wave of engagement. Companies that were early to jump into this new space are already seeing success and providing lessons for others to follow.

The critical elements of marketing in the metaverse resemble those of designing authentic and *compelling brand experiences* in the physical world, but they can be applied very differently.

Here's what the current landscape looks like, as well as how organisations may approach metaverse marketing in the future:

Back to square one in terms of marketing goals and strategies. The first thing to understand is that the goals and strategies for marketing in the metaverse will not necessarily be the same that you, as a business, are using today for your digital marketing efforts.

When embracing the metaverse, the main objective for most traditional brands won't be driving sales, seeing as how purchases of virtual items are still much smaller than sales of physical ones. Instead, the focus should be on rebranding as a metaverse-competent company, similarly to how Facebook rebranded to Meta (although not necessarily going to such an obvious extreme). Doing this early on will position your company to compete with *metaverse-native* businesses in the future.

This will necessarily take you back to square one in terms of branding,

where brand awareness, not sales, is the top priority objective of your marketing campaigns.

For example, suppose you're a crypto platform that has been running for some time in Web 2.0, and a new company starts their business directly in the metaverse. In that case, metaverse-native users like GenZs and future generations will likely choose the newer brand simply because it's more natural to them and you seem outdated. But if you start creating awareness for your brand today and pose as a strong metaverse company, new metaverse-native competitors won't have that much of an advantage over you.

Some brands have already started to experiment with this approach. For example, IKEA created a virtual version of its store in the game Animal Crossing: New Horizons. In the IKEA store, players can browse furniture, try out products, and even get help from an avatar of an IKEA employee. The goal of this experience is not to make immediate sales but to build awareness and interest in the IKEA brand, particularly among younger generations.

Avatar type will be a new characteristic to look at in your target audience. Another critical consideration for businesses in the metaverse will be avatar type. Avatars are the metaverse equivalent of your profile picture. Just like people today take different approaches to their profile pic, people in the metaverse will use different types of avatars depending on how they want to present themselves online.

Some people prefer avatars that look just like them, while others choose to create entirely fictional characters. You can use these avatar types to target specific market segments with specific types of content. This avatar-specific content can be anything from the avatar itself to branded accessories for people to show off in the metaverse.

For example, businesses might create avatars that appeal to a particular customer demographic. You could make avatars similar to famous cultural figures or create avatars with features known to appeal to a specific group of people. By doing this, businesses can ensure that their marketing message reaches the right audience.

A seamless customer journey will be more critical than ever. Like in the physical world, businesses must focus on creating a seamless customer journey. In the metaverse, this means designing an experience that is easy to navigate and provides customers only with the information they need at each step.

This could involve designing different experiences meant to be seen in a specific order that should be clear for the user when they dive in. You would want the experience to be intuitive and easy to understand, with no dead ends or frustrating moments.

Flexibility gains even more importance in the metaverse than ever. Finally, it's important to remember that the metaverse is still under development. This means that things will likely change rapidly and that businesses must be prepared to adapt.

For example, new platforms and technologies are constantly emerging, so businesses must keep up to date on the latest trends and developments. Additionally, how people interact with the metaverse will likely change over time, so businesses must be prepared to adjust their approach and technology accordingly.

By being prepared to adapt, businesses can ensure that they are always ahead of the curve and that their content marketing message effectively reaches the right people.

The bottom line

The metaverse presents a unique opportunity for businesses to connect with customers in new and innovative ways. To succeed in the metaverse, companies must focus on creating content and experiences that are easy to navigate and provide customers with the information they need. Additionally, businesses must be prepared to adapt as the metaverse evolves.

By following everything we've discussed in mind, businesses can ensure that their marketing message is reaching the right people and that they are always ahead of the curve.

Article by Jordan Bishop