

Meet Karta, the Metaverse studio making brands playable

As part of our quick founder questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Erik Londre, CEO & Founder of Karta about the Metaverse, gaming, and doing work that makes you proud.

Temps de lecture : minute

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What was the catalyst for launching Karta?

Between 2016 and 2020 I worked as Head of Events at Fnatic - a major global esports team. I was travelling the planet creating real-life brand and fan experiences targeting gamers. Expo booths, pop-up shops, parties, that sort of thing. I loved it, I went to all these incredible esports events and got to travel the world. It was brilliant.

As the pandemic hit, all of that stopped. So I started looking into how we could use the games our fans were playing as virtual venues for experiential marketing. I convinced the Italian coffee brand Lavazza to let us do an Italy/coffee-themed Fortnite map. But I was sure that Epic Games, the owners of Fortnite, would never let us put Lavazza logos and products in there without paying them a huge sum. When I found out we were free to add any IP, logos or products we had the right to use I came to the conclusion that would change my life and lead me to quit my job and become the founder of Karta.

If brands knew they could be in the World's most popular video games without paying millions in

licensing to their publishers, they would all want to be there.

I am glad to say that I was right. In 2020 my Lavazza campaign was one of 11 activations across Roblox, Fortnite and Zepeto. Today there have been over 800 brands activating across those platforms, and Karta is now a company with 34 employees.

Tell me about the business - what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

Karta is a Metaverse studio that works across three UGC Gaming platforms – Roblox, Fortnite and Zepeto. We build, market and monetise brand experiences for top brands like HUGO BOSS and Spotify, and fan experiences for superstars like BLACKPINK and Nicki Minaj. We also have large virtual fashion operations and have sold over 5M wearables across all of our projects.

‘We make brands playable’ - that is our slogan, and that is what we do. We take inspiration from who our clients are, what they do, what they stand for and what they want to communicate and deliver that through gamified experiences.

But as you already figured out, Karta is a company founded on a vision of the future rather than a vision of a specific product or service. We believe that more and more of human life will be played out inside of virtual worlds and this will inevitably change every industry that needs to engage young people. Big changes like that mean big challenges and opportunities. We are trying our best to find those solutions and capitalise on the opportunities.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

In 2021 we incorporated the company and started off as an agency. In 2022 we landed our first client – Unilever and worked with third-party developers to build a very successful Roblox project – Sunsilk City. It has now had over 57M visits.

We realised quickly that we needed to bring production in-house and become a studio to deliver a good client experience relying on third-party developers. We also realised that we wanted Karta to be the creator and builder of these experiences. Not just enablers.

We started building out our Roblox Studio and a Fortnite studio, and now we have made various successful experiences within these platforms with multiple worldwide brands. Our biggest achievement to date is creating the TWICE Square experience for the k-pop band TWICE, which has become the most-visited music experience in Roblox history.

Tell us about the working culture at Karta

It has a lot of heart. People care about what we do and what we are building. Something that makes me immensely proud. We like to think we are good people with good values. But we do not always get it right.

Building culture is not easy, and it never stops. It always has to be nurtured, balanced and improved. In the beginning we wrestled with Karta feeling more like a loving but dysfunctional family rather than a high-performing team. It has gotten a lot better. But the work never stops.

One of our key values is *Joy is contagious*, we believe that if you do work that makes you smile, it is likely to make other people smile too. Regardless if you do game design, creative development, writing code or

building a complex spreadsheet. Do work that makes you proud!

How are you funded?

We raised a pre-seed round of £830K led by a London VC called Game Tech Ventures. Other investors include Gary Vaynerchuck-backed toy/IP company Toikido, and the former manager of Swedish House Mafia – Amy Thomson. We're also going into a new funding round, where we aim to expand and introduce new opportunities for our studio.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Staying focused in an emerging space with silly amounts of opportunity is challenging. Karta can be so much and it is easy to get sidetracked. This is an ongoing challenge that we are dealing with constantly, but also getting better at managing our opportunities.

How does Karta answer an unmet need?

It is simple really. Brands need to be where the audience is, and they are playing video games. We help them show up there in the right way at the right place.

What's in store for the future?

We are expanding our efforts in building original IP, we are working on a paid media and advertising play and we are figuring out how to keep all those initiatives working together.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

- Try to like all aspects of running your business. They are all pretty interesting when you get into them.
- Refrain from thinking the stuff you have yet to learn are things you are not good at. Watch some YouTube tutorials and read some books.
- Hiring is tedious and time-consuming but hiring debt is worse. Run proper processes!

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

Minimum gym three days a week, maximum two cups of coffee per day!

Erik Londre is the CEO and Founder of [Karta](#).

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