


# The Metaverse: It's Time for Action

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**“The Metaverse has the potential to be a disruptor”:** Effective horizon scanning means being aware of upcoming trends. The Metaverse is a disruptive force coming ever closer – how will you harness it for your business?

*Snow Crash*, written in 1992, was novelist Neal Stephenson's futuristic depiction of how a fledgling Internet could form. It was here that the term “Metaverse” was first floated, used to describe a computer-generated reality where people and things coexisted.

Talk to a few professionals who are knowledgeable about the Metaverse, however, and it's likely you'll discover that there's not yet full clarity around this evolving concept. These uncertainties can leave many of us feeling vulnerable, which, in turn, can cause us to gloss over it and let it pass us by.

Despite what we might read, the value from the Metaverse may be less about technologies per se, and more about the human interactions it empowers. The Metaverse holds exciting possibilities to increase human connectivity across new, technologically enabled landscapes. The opportunities it affords to us are significant, effecting not only change in society and business, but in our personal lives. As a leader, this ought to jolt us into action.

## What is this powerful “human” potential?

The pandemic has opened up our minds to the potential of technology – for example, through remote working – and fundamentally changed opinions about work, with many realising that a blended presence, both physical and virtual, might be closer to meeting their needs.

Some boldly assert the Metaverse to be an enabling space for the next natural (r)evolution of the Internet. To an extent, we are seeing this in the financial sector with cryptocurrencies, in relation to ownership rights with Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) and in commercial areas with smart contracts. While it is inevitable that some of these may fail, what's clear is that the Metaverse has the potential to be a disruptor.

By reframing the Metaverse as a business-oriented space for enhanced human connection, rather than a place reserved only for a select few, its potential becomes clear. While the internet was designed as an asynchronous, text-oriented environment, all indications are that the Metaverse will be intensely visual, not textual. Plus, as it will operate in real-time, it will enable spatial relationships between users and their different worlds, facilitating instant connection, interaction and feedback.



[The Metaverse is a more] unified way for people and things to interact in a virtual and spatial capacity

Dr Ian Hughes, Chair of the BCS Animation & Games



Image: Shutterstock/Athitat Shinagowin

Development continues quickly within the Metaverse space, both in terms of economic investments and physical activities. Despite its “early doors” status, we have preliminary insights which suggest that the Metaverse will involve:

- a continuum rather than a destination;
- more persistent, immersive environments, whose landscapes blend the real and virtual;
- user-friendly visual technologies to help users navigate, access and operate within those environments, functionally and effectively.

The hope for the Metaverse is that, by immersing users in appropriately engaging environments, it will enhance our potential to make deeper personal connections. Those connections will encourage greater collaboration, complementing our personal potential for individual creativity. After all, aren't connection, collaboration and creativity critical keystones for our 21st century world of work?

- [Skills, tools, mindset: cracking post-Covid collaboration](#)

## Time to engage: No time like the present

As a leader and learner, now is a good time to begin to engage. No matter how ill-defined the Metaverse might currently be, and despite the technological clarity it might lack, three things are certain:

- Many of us will cross paths with the Metaverse in the future.
- What's more, this intersection will most likely be sooner than you might have imagined.
- Upon this coalescence, our lived and felt experiences will be that much more positive.

As a manager, **here are a couple of areas which you can invest in** to improve your personal growth, and unlock the Metaverse's more human side.

### 1. Engage your curiosity to explore the Metaverse a little more

Letting curiosity roam is a great first step in making more sense of what the Metaverse can mean to you. Lean into it, read articles, watch videos, attend webinars, and reach into your personal network to talk to those who've already had exposure. What does it mean to them? Why do they use it? Where do they find value? How does it require them to operate differently? Approach it knowingly.

### 2. Reflect on how you'll choose to “show up” as you connect, relate and build trust

As a unified space for virtual interaction, the Metaverse will likely demand cultural norms that differ from those seen in today's virtual platforms. Like how forms of VR have been seen as a way to foster diversity and inclusion, the Metaverse also proves a relational space.

However, as people are going to pay much more attention to your personal identity, take the time to consider how you'll align across each of the differing communities. Bring your authentic self to each, share a predictable personality with all, and present a recognisable, common image throughout. People want to connect with your human side, not your “camera off, muted mike, grey standard avatar” side. So, establish your presence with a clear identity; show up, and step up.



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