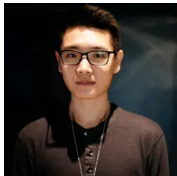


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From storytelling to storyliving: How Samsung is building its metaverse for tomorrow

An interview with Samsung CMO Michelle Crossan-Matos about the company's evolution in the metaverse.



Written by **June Wan**, Tech Editor on July 8, 2022



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Image by Samsung, Edited by June Wan/ZDNet

"Who here owns more than three Samsung products?" Michelle Crossan-Matos surveyed the crowd. To my surprise, a charitable show of hands goes up -- from fans, journalists, executives, and attendees at Samsung's NFT.NYC event.

Since its inception, the Korean electronics company has thrived in the consumer and enterprise spaces, with 72% of U.S. homes having one or more of its products. Interbrand currently ranks Samsung fifth-highest in terms of brand value, right behind Google. That's not too shabby for a company that originated as a grocery store.

In its pursuit of greater brand awareness, Samsung has spent the past six months testing the digital waters of the metaverse, virtual platforms that more and more companies are seeing growth opportunities in. For a deep dive into the company's newfound frontier, I spoke with Michelle Crossan-Matos, the Chief Marketing Officer at Samsung Electronics America.

The following interview has been edited for clarity.

It's a pleasure to have you, Michelle. I'd like to start at the beginning of this Samsung metaverse journey. What was the aha-moment that inspired the company's foray into Web 3?

It's very moving for me when I think about how this all started. I was raised in a poor neighborhood in Scotland with not much education. While it took a mix of hard work and luck for me to get out, I constantly think about the kids that I grew up with -- the ones who weren't as fortunate.

Our first venture into the metaverse was Samsung 837X, a virtual experience that replicated Samsung's flagship office in New York City. Beyond giving the youth that

inspirational feeling of being on the streets of NYC, I wanted to create a place where they could learn about the innovations and goodwill in technology. That was the reason why we pursued the metaverse, to be honest. It gave this building (Samsung 837) a chance to be in every kid's bedroom.



By tapping into Decentraland, users can explore Samsung's New York City HQ virtually.

Image: Samsung

There's certainly been an influx of tech brands over the past year, big and small, getting more involved with decentralized platforms. What makes Samsung's strategy any different?

There's a major thing that we're doing differently: we're on different platforms. This is a multiverse of metaverses strategy; Roblox, Fortnite, Decentraland (837X), and now Discord. I remember hearing about this multiverse idea at first and thinking what a tongue twister it was but also the sheer impact and reach that we were about to achieve.

The conversations that we have in the metaverse aren't about product features per se. We're about how they ladder up to our greater and bigger priorities. How many

se. It's about how they ladder up to our greater and bigger priorities. How many sustainability campaigns have you seen in the metaverse? Visitors who come onto Samsung 837X can learn about how we're repurposing technology, upcycling, and taking initiatives that better the planet. We're educating in the metaverse and, hopefully, empowering our users as well.

Also: Samsung broadens Web 3 presence with Discord launch

Let's talk more about this multiverse of metaverses. In the past year, you've hosted a viewing party for the Galaxy S22 launch on Samsung 837X and, just recently, a virtual concert on Roblox. What were your expectations going into the events?

I would say that we had humble expectations but were hopeful at the same time. Prior to hosting the virtual events, we had benchmarked similar activations from other brands -- musical performances, gamified experiences, and all. The thing was that we were five times the size of those brands. By leveraging our existing marketing channels, why couldn't we be a little more ambitious?

During the weekend of our Galaxy Superstar event in Roblox, there were more than one million users on the server. Imagine having one million people walk into your storefront? It's been a fascinating journey thus far, and the reception has only made us more and more eager to do bigger things.

Samsung partners discuss what the metaverse has to offer in a live panel.

Image: Samsung

What would you say has been the biggest challenge with expanding into the metaverse?

Part of what excites me about the metaverse is the unfamiliarity and untapped potential of it. We're constantly learning how to best interact with our consumers, testing different platforms and vehicles, and ultimately learning and growing as a team. So while it took us months to prepare for our first activation during CES this year, it's been a constant learning experience for everyone involved.

Do marketing strategies in the real world apply to virtual ones?

On the whole, yes, because the consumers that we're targeting are largely based on the information that we've already gathered from social channels (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.). I did, however, opt for organic marketing versus paid because I wanted to see the true potential of the metaverse. Paid campaigns kind of fabricate the numbers, so when I saw the billions of impressions generated by in-house sources alone, I knew that we were on to something.

We've also discovered that certain channels seem to respond better to metaverse messaging. Twitter, weirdly, has been the most successful of all.

Inclusion through customization is a key part of Samsung's metaverse.

Image: Samsung

Do you have any advice for businesses who are on the fence about metaverse integration?

If you're planning on starting your own metaverse, here's my advice: be bold, spend the time to read, research, and understand the concepts within, and stay true to your brand. Companies may have doubts about the venture, but the truth is, if your customers are there already, why shouldn't you be?

Years ago, when I was an assistant brand manager, we used to always ask, "Would your granny understand that?" when brainstorming ideas. In the metaverse, the stress test now changes to "Would your kids understand that?".

More: Is your business ready for the metaverse?

Finally, I have to ask, what's next for Samsung's future in the metaverse?

We want to do much more in the metaverse. That's for sure. We know our strategy, so now it's a matter of making these activations more engaging and innovative and timing them with tentpole events like Unpacked. And we're going to take it a step further soon with offline and online quests, creating an interaction between physical and virtual worlds, so you'll have to keep an eye out for that.

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