

Title: INTO THE MULTIVERSE OF THE METAVERSE - Gaming and the metaverse are inextricable linked, for better or for worse - by Wesley Leblanc - GAME INFORMER ISSUE 344 March (WITH PAGES)

Author: JackBauerWSB

Created 2022-03-11 01:47:31 UTC

Permalink: /r/GME/comments/tbewaf/into_the_multiverse_of_the_metaverse_gaming_and/

Url: https://www.reddit.com/gallery/tbewaf

"I would argue we're [Take-Two Interactive] probably the biggest metaverse company on Earth if you look in terms of revenue and profits because we're in Grand Theft Auto Online, which really, I think, defines the metaverse today," Zelnick told CNBC last November.

The Take-Two CEO is on board with video games evolving as metaverses, but he's cautious of tech companies like Meta entering the space. He said he doesn't believe Meta's vision of the metaverse is what consumers want, adding that he's skeptical people want to conduct all of their social daily video digitally.

Zelnick joins many others in the tech industry who are wary of where metaverse discussions are going, especially regarding Meta's vision of it. Even PlayStation executive Ken Kutaragi can't go behind the idea of a metaverse as it's envisioned by many today.

"You would rather be a published writer instead of your real self?" Kutaragi recently told Bloomberg. "That's essentially no difference from anonymous message board sites. Readers would isolate you from the real world, and I can't agree with that. Readers are simply missing."

While Kutaragi finds headlines like PPSU or the Meta Quest 2 annoying, others find some of their favorite video game experiences in them, like Outbunny's John Sandhu. But just because content enjoys a few hours in a VR video game doesn't mean they're ready to step on that same launch at day to compete with the real world, "take the virtual dog out for a walk," grab virtual coffee at the virtual office they drop the virtual scene," or even the one receiving "complete work in a virtual office that work says is better than your home office."

Instead, Eiche points to Roblox as an example of where the idea of a metaverse is today.

"When I look at the metaverse, I look at it as a set of different kinds of things and experiences and environments, or at least places where you could live," Eiche says. "There's an example of a space with a lot of different things, and Roblox too. You can even start to map some of the parallels between Roblox and the metaverse. If you ask me, is [the metaverse] the office? Eventually, it will be, but the thing that you think will be the office is just not going to work out because you're creating by building yourself. You're building a virtual world with walls around what you can do."



Digital Real Estate

For Sandhu co-founder and COO, Eiche says, "They will use the same avatar across multiple experiences, and so go a lot further, the metaverse is not a single company. In our opinion, it is not Meta, it's not Facebook, it's not Roblox, it's not Fortnite. It's a myriad of online virtual worlds. It's the plurality of them and this is the idea that can transfer their identity, their digital assets, their virtual belongings, their currency... to different worlds."

As many have pointed out before, this doesn't consider developers, which are the most important aspect of this idea of the metaverse. In order for your favorite weapon skin from Valorant to work in Fortnite, as patches of NFTs have envisioned, both Run Games and Epic Games would need to communicate and work out the technicalities of bringing a skin designed for one game's weapon over to a completely different game. Not to mention, and this would need to be solved in an NFT first, which is something it seems many developers would be opposed to doing on principle anyway to start, this isn't reality.

However, Eiche believes The Sandbox is already on its way to doing that. And it is, but only within the confines of The Sandbox and its ecosystem.

"In so, the metaverse... is essentially a digital parallel universe where users, human beings, will be engaging with more virtual, more immersive experiences through an avatar or 3D character that will be

a representation of itself," Eiche says. "They will use the same avatar across multiple experiences, and so go a lot further, the metaverse is not a single company. In our opinion, it is not Meta, it's not Facebook, it's not Roblox, it's not Fortnite. It's a myriad of online virtual worlds. It's the plurality of them and this is the idea that can transfer their identity, their digital assets, their virtual belongings, their currency... to different worlds."

As many have pointed out before, this doesn't consider developers, which are the most important aspect of this idea of the metaverse. In order for your favorite weapon skin from Valorant to work in Fortnite, as patches of NFTs have envisioned, both Run Games and Epic Games would need to communicate and work out the technicalities of bringing a skin designed for one game's weapon over to a completely different game. Not to mention, and this would need to be solved in an NFT first, which is something it seems many developers would be opposed to doing on principle anyway to start, this isn't reality.

However, Eiche believes The Sandbox is already on its way to doing that. And it is, but only within the confines of The Sandbox and its ecosystem.

"How these [NFT] concepts are then represented in any application... is up to a developer," Eiche says.

"Again as a developer," Eiche says, "it's why the cross-platform nature of NFTs and blockchain gaming really doesn't get far. It also prompts the question what developers are willing, and have the time, to open up a game's world to allow content from this game or that into it?"

That's a question The Sandbox and other companies diving into NFTs like EA, Ubisoft, Konami, and Square Enix will need to address. And then they'll need to answer the environmental aspect of NFTs and explain how their NFT mints aren't just a new form of microtransactions with a particularly worse spin to the form of plus-to-earn in some cases, not from this game or that into it?

Eiche, Eiche's positive outlook



In The Sandbox, players can download virtual assets of their own and freely sell them to other players using cryptocurrency.

on this idea of the metaverse, there's the inherently negative aspect of all this. Blockchain games and NFTs have drawn heavy criticism in the industry thus far due to their part in ongoing environmental damage. Plus, many view NFTs as scams, or at least scam-like in nature.

PERIOD, released a 2021 blog post last July that said after switching to Polygon's Layer 2, the game was able to reduce its carbon footprint of NFTs by up to 99 percent. As many have pointed out before, if a carbon footprint was already 200 times greater than what we as a society already create, decreasing said footprint by 100-fold doesn't necessarily mean it's good for the Earth - it's just not as bad for it as it used to be. And even if an NFT transaction in some games, there are still other concerns surrounding NFTs in general like true ownership, whether the content was stolen before it was minted, and more.

Eiche and many others are critical of the NFT-powered idea of the metaverse. There are two reasons why the metaverse generates debate after debate, according to Eiche, and the first is the idea of striving for a better connection. The second, though, is more cynical.

"It's an answer for money, and it's the next big hand-ground for greed," Eiche says. "A company might say, 'Oh crap, we may not have our social media or maybe you are a company that did win social media [Facebook/Meta] and you're like, 'Wow, we can't lose the next one, right? That's the cynical answer.'"

Eiche hasn't on something that every person Game Informer spoke to touched on like it is here is, the metaverse is going to happen. What it looks like is self-interest, and when it actually arrives is not, but as Pineson points out, it's going to keep coming around.

And it's likely to have a different definition each time like in the '90s and the 2000s that provided it, the metaverse grows in concept along with the expansion of the internet and gaming as we know it. Before we could totally enter virtual reality worlds, the metaverse was all about VR. Now that VR is here, the metaverse needs to be more. Which is why that when we finally achieve the metaverse the '90s always hypothesized that it wasn't just as quickly gone as VR, leaving users wanting more, much in the same way MMORPGs, weblogs, and social media platforms do today? The metaverse is a destination many are after, but as it stands today, it's nothing more than an endless chase. Which company crosses the finish line first will depend on whose definition of the metaverse was, the eventual endgame, agree upon. ■

QUICK TAKE

I've already said a lot of things about the metaverse, but I want to say one more thing. The metaverse is a great thing for end-users. Plus, I've perfectly fine with keeping my virtual avatar in the metaverse, the eventual endgame, agree upon. ■

Into the MULTIVERSE of the METAVERSE

Gaming and the metaverse are inextricably linked - for better or worse. BY WESLEY LEBLANC

D

Depending on who you ask, the metaverse could be any number of things. For some, it's highly centralized around gaming, existing as an MMO-like experience. For others, it's a virtual workplace or a digital version of the world we already live in. The most commonly accepted version of the metaverse, though, is something that resembles *Ready Player One*, where all of your favorite characters, friends, and family members interact with each other in a 3D virtual world. Or at least, that's the most idealized vision for what the metaverse could be.

Of course, that's not a reality at the moment and the closest something's come might be Epic's juggernaut free-to-play battle royale game, *Fortnite*. But long-running MMOs like *EQ2* and *EQ3* Online might be just as close to what the metaverse may become: a virtual world where players become entirely different people living completely different lives. They might be the commander of a space fleet fighting a war to colonize planets prime for resources, or they might be a simple trader on a peaceful planet.

For CCP CEO Hilmar Pétursson, conversations about the metaverse are nothing new. In conversation, you can sense the blast outlook he has on the idea - not because he isn't interested in it, but because they are the same ideas he's heard dashed in gaming circles since the 1992 release of *Star Trek Online*, a foundational sci-fi novel that set a precedent (not necessarily the precedent) for what a metaverse could be, even going as far as to coin the word "metaverse."

"We basically had the whole concept of the [metaverse] in *Star Trek Online*," Pétursson says. "It was the first vision of the metaverse type, and there were plenty of companies doing this. What we were basically envisioning was to take the internet to 3D, the web being the 2D internet. Then we wanted to build the 3D internet in VR, and if you look at the latest kind of spatial dialogue around the word 'metaverse,' it is almost like nothing has changed."

Pétursson is alluding to an ongoing discussion that's been brewing for years, heightened when social media giant Facebook changed its name to Meta and highlighted a possible work-focused metaverse. Pétursson isn't interested in this concept. For him, the metaverse can be and should be so much more. Game *Fortnite* recently split to four different companies, either developing metaverse games or developing game-related software. Despite all these outlooks on the metaverse, there was one commonality: it's about agency.

Illustration:
Petrus Research (left)

Becoming Whatever Or Whatever You Want

Following the release of *Second Step*, the word "metaverse" was thrown around just as haphazardly as it is today. In its earliest use, the metaverse was a hyper-real digital world. So real that, for example, if your online avatar was hacked with a dangerous virus, you might experience actual brain damage. Companies like Meta and Facebook and Immersion Corp. pushed their own ideas of that metaverse, with less brain damage, but technology in the '90s proved too primitive to bring it to life.

The idea subsided until innovation in the early 2000s, when games such as *Second Life* and *PlayStation Home* revolutionized the discussion once again. By then, MMOs like *World of Warcraft* and *EVE Online* were in the hands of gamers and becoming more popular, and while metaverse discussion had calmed since then, the term "metaverse" could have only been swapped with "MMO." Fast forward 17 years, and Pinterest is aware that the metaverse discussion of the '90s and then the 2000s are resurfacing. And yet, he thinks we're still another 25 years off from the metaverse everyone pictures in their head.

While the term "metaverse" remains distant as a cultural as it has in years past, it's potential to transform the world, or at least gaming, is evident.

"The idea of the metaverse is an attractive [concept] that has something where you will have more agency, which is what we want," Pinterest says. "Why do people go and play games online? It's about the power fantasy. I want to build a space engine [in real life]."

In *EVE Online*, though, he can and millions of players do because at the heart of the game is agency, the same agency that might prop up the metaverse one day. If you were to build a space engine in *EVE Online*, the developer needed to do that in there. If it doesn't interest you, there's plenty else you can do.



However, discussions about the metaverse such as this carry with them a sense of irony. The metaverse is about agency and power fantasies, and doing what you didn't think possible. Because the metaverse isn't really a thing beyond a loose word Silicon Valley especially lives right now, you can say "the metaverse is this" or "the metaverse is that" and you'll be right, because it's whatever you want it to be. Considering video games have been providing us the stories and gameplay of people we wish we were (or want to be) for decades, the idea of the metaverse as it's largely viewed today makes us ask: is the

only difference between video games on all levels and lines and the metaverse a theory cyberpunk-super hero headline that puts us into virtual reality? The more companies like Meta input into the discussion, the more it certainly seems that way.

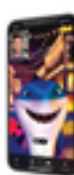
Andrew Riche, the COO of Oculus VR, the studio behind VR titles like *Half: The Journey*, has a view similar to Pinterest's assumption of agency and why the idea of the metaverse is not just interesting, but powerful.

"People want to feel connected, right?" Riche says. "I think the pandemic has accelerated this in that we understand the lack limitations of video that [seems to be] real. Facebook was good enough, but now that we're really bad at only on it, we understand that there has to be something better, and I think the metaverse is a place right now where... we can find that connection."

But our grandmothers aren't going to log in to something like *EVE Online* to gain a better connection to us. They probably need a different kind of user interface to feel what *EVE Online* players feel when playing together — something that makes Facebook's view of the metaverse as it already exists, enhanced by new technologies.

Facebook's Avatars is an advanced avatar that people can use on video calls or streams. And these aren't just simple avatars — they blink, and track your eyes, facial movements, and even, in fact, there's an element of fun to it all. But at the heart of what Facebook is trying to do is a desire to help people be who they want to be.

"I think that being able to overcome your anxiety by becoming somebody else is really important [in this digital age] and having a tool that enables people to do that is really important," Zuckerberg says. "There's also the more philosophical side of things: what's real and what's better than real? We create hyper-reality. It's why we prefer things with a brighter side. That's why we prefer most things. That's why we are so easily hooked on unrealistic beauty standards that you do in



Pinterest. These super-realistic avatars actually work very well in our brains and hyper-reality plastic these things."

The metaverse as it exists now isn't hyper-reality, but it's a result of this vision, Zuckerberg says. Avatars in there are most people where they're reality, and that's the point. If they're more comfortable as a dragon

in the metaverse, Avatars seems to have a more ready-made for them.

"For me, this is progress towards a better form of communication that we can't do in our human form," he says.

The possibility for what one person needs to obtain that connection versus another person as theoretically endless, and Riche believes that's why there are 50 different "metaverses" out there right now.

Whose Metaverse Is It Anyway?

Microsoft Gaming CEO Phil Spencer sees metaverses as varying from one person to the next, too, although he's not quite sure a metaverse is anything more than the virtual space we've been playing in for decades.

"I definitely see the metaverse as an extension of what gaming has been doing," Spencer said. The *New York Times* in a recent interview. "I think as we look at the world's going online [and] hybrid with environments, where we might have some of our connections together in one place [and] others that are on the other end of a call, we look at these virtual spaces and [apply] some of the things that we've learned in video games of people coming together... to achieve tasks."

Spencer said that at Microsoft, the thinking in the metaverse is very much about taking what the company has already learned about online interaction and applying it to what the next evolution of, say, Microsoft Teams, might be. The *New York Times* also believes that it's important to acknowledge that for many growing up today, video games are the place to work and find social connections. Instead of playing on a playground after school, friends might meet up in an online game.

For the generation growing up with games, Spencer believes the metaverse will be a much more unique to group. Take-Two Interactive CEO Strauss Zelnick would agree with Spencer's belief that video games already exist as metaverses.

