

Augmented Reality (AR), Gimmick or Game On?

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There's been a lot of talk about augmented reality (AR) lately. We've all seen the great examples from companies like Ikea and heard the buzz about Google Glass. But still we hear some marketers call AR a gimmick. They liken it to the buzz a couple of years ago about QR codes. While QR codes offered marketers a way to move audiences from a print piece to a digital call to action, AR fundamentally changes the way we interact with audiences.

These media-rich experiences allow not just viewing, but interacting with animation, graphics and links to relevant content. And we know that if we can communicate with someone through an interactive experience, we have a higher likelihood of continuing a dialogue or fulfilling a customer need.

AR has been on our radar for several years, and it has come a long way in that time. The tools and standards are now in place and are widely accepted. Mobile device manufacturers continue to add functionality that deepens the AR experience. The technology is here. It's relevant. And it's too big to ignore.

Why AR? Why now?

Mobile devices have radically changed the way we communicate with each other. They're changing our laws. They're changing our culture. They're becoming the gateway to everything media.

Adoption rates are staggering, and have led to some pretty startling statistics. From smartphones to tablets, these ubiquitous devices are capturing more and more of our time. From reading email, searching the web, listening to music and watching videos, they keep us engaged every single day.

If the average consumer is spending this much time engaged with these devices, it makes sense to have content ready to be delivered through that channel. It's also clear that businesses need to adjust their marketing communications spend to deal with this new mobile reality.

The AR Opportunity

The fact is, AR is already being integrated into a wide range of marketing and business applications, whether it be publishing, training, advertising, billing statements or direct mail.

AR offers a way to move someone from a traditional printing communication to a mobile or interactive experience. Because it keeps print relevant, companies like Canon Solutions America are leading the charge in the print industry by incorporating AR into their marketing strategy.

Where AR has really taken off is at the point of purchase. Think about a product or a package. What if you could walk in a store and see what's inside the package without opening it. What if interact with it or see a demo of the product in use?

The potential tie-in with social media is unmistakable. Word of mouth advertising has always been an important component in the success of a product or brand. If AR can help create a positive experience that helps consumers connect with your brand, those consumers are likely to share the AR content through social media.

6 Content Considerations

So how do we integrate a mobile strategy into our current marketing mix? Here are a few things to consider when creating, managing and deploying content for the small screen.

1. Develop roadmaps to diagram what each experience looks like and how you will move your audience to the next step.
2. Define how you will deliver on requests for more information. In the past it might have been a brochure. What does that look like for mobile?
3. Train or recruit content creators who know how to move audiences from one medium to the next.
4. Determine how you will manage and publish assets and the creative aspect of asset development.
5. Brainstorm new ways to present information in a 3D space as opposed to 2D.
6. Start thinking about the mobile app as the new inbox.

Consumer expectations are rapidly moving to a place where they will expect printed 2D or 3D objects to contain linkages to AR content. Whether we are holding it in our hands or wearing it on our person, AR will change the way we interact with electronic devices. It's not just a gimmick. Very shortly, we'll all just expect the things we come into contact with daily to have additional experiences waiting for us.

Watch some applications for AR at x1.ltd.uk/smi-articles/augmented-reality.html

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