

Are we Zooming towards the metaverse?

 By [Kevin Welman](#)

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Arguably, the biggest industry trend to come out of the pandemic is an ever-increasing reluctance and even inability to create and forge personal relationships.



Source: www.pexels.com

Client meeting? Hop onto Zoom or Teams. Shopping? There are apps for that, and your groceries will be at your door in an hour. Dating? Apps for that, too. Entertainment, sports, news ... all app-driven. Even art galleries offer immersive online experiences.

You can sit on your couch at home and view the Picasso Museum's exhibition without struggling to understand what a Spanish guide might be saying.

So, Covid has made us insular. And then there's the other buzzword of our time: this thing they're calling the metaverse. If you think about it, the metaverse has actually been around for a while. Every online touchpoint is an entryway to the metaverse. As the communications industry, we now need to figure out what the metaverse means for our clients and how they interact with their clients.

Firstly, we have Mark Zuckerberg owning Meta, which is so much more than just Facebook. In their words, they're 'moving beyond 2D screens and into immersive experiences like virtual and augmented reality, helping to create the next evolution of social technology.' We have Elon Musk spending \$44bn to buy Twitter because 'having a public platform that is maximally trusted and broadly inclusive, is extremely important to the future of civilisation.'



What will Elon Musk's ownership of Twitter mean for 'free speech' on the platform?

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So, we have huge players investing in communications – it's just not communications as we know it. And, if Musk is to be believed, it's communications for the greater good.

But these social media platforms (which theoretically form part of the metaverse) are already being held responsible for the rapid and irresponsible dissemination of fake news.

Will their security measures become stricter? What will happen to traditional media channels, like broadcast news? Will the public be expected to know the difference between what's real and what isn't? And as people move more and more towards a less personal life, how much will we be forced to interact online?

Ultimately, if you're not intimidated by new jargon, you'll see that the metaverse has actually been around for ages. We've been living online for years already. It's just the depth of our digital immersion that's going to vary.

As communicators, we need to figure out how to create and place messaging in the metaverse that's still authentic and relevant, and how to engage with our audiences in entirely new ways.

How do you place products in a non-fungible world? How do you take your existing audiences into virtual environments? How do you manage, and grow, your reputation with someone you only know as an avatar? We don't have the answers yet. But what a time it is to be alive.

ABOUT KEVIN WELMAN

Kevin is a co-founder and director of ByDesign Communications, with over twenty years' experience in corporate communication strategy, media strategy, social media strategy and crisis counselling...

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