

Exhibiting with VR and AR: What we learned

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Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are sophisticated technologies that have the potential to change the way we do many things, especially in the field of marketing. This is because of their ability to - as their names imply - alter our realities, either through adding to, or augmenting, them (AR), or by re-creating alternative, new ones (VR).



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Feeling curious about how these tools could be used, exhibition, events and retail display specialist, Scan Display, decided to test them out at Madex 2017, the marketing, advertising and design expo associated with Markex. BizAR Reality, an interactive software development company, was consulted and provided two different products.

For a playful, interactive experience, an AR photo booth was set up for visitors to place themselves into different scenes on a large screen. This technology operates much like a green screen, only it doesn't require an actual green screen or any background, so is more flexible in how and where it can be used.

A second device was the Markit AR app, which was used to showcase one of the company's best-selling retail products, the Modular Retail Kiosk (MRK). The MRK is large, and therefore not easy to exhibit within a limited space. But by using the

Markit AR app on an iPad, stand visitors could scan an image of the MRK and then explore it in 3D and from different angles, with both an AR and VR setting.

Justin Hawes, the company's MD, believes that these tools were an asset to the Scan Display stand, as they became a point of interest and something to talk about beyond the expo. However, the key to using these technologies is to use them well. So, based on Scan Display's experience, here is Justin's advice for your next event.

It's still new

"A surprising discovery for us was that, even though a lot of this tech has been around for a long time and has been in the media spotlight, people seemed to know very little about it. We expected show visitors to be more aware," says Justin. Therefore you need to be prepared to educate your visitors.

Push it

Perhaps because of the novelty of this technology, people did not readily engage with it. "People were reluctant to take hold of the iPad to view the MRK. They seemed to prefer that one of our Account Executives do it for them," explains Justin. "So, it is important that you as a brand motivate your audience to get involved, and drive the engagement. Don't simply provide the products and anticipate your audience will automatically want to, or know how to, use them."

Keep it simple

Based on the previous points, it therefore helps to keep things very simple. "If you keep it simple, it is less intimidating and easier for people to use AR and VR tools," says Justin. This helps to create a seamless experience.



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Undoubtedly, as AR and VR become more mainstream, people will naturally become more engaged and interact with them in more complicated ways. But for now, less is more.

Adapt as you need to

“Once you have built an exhibition stand, there is not much you can do to change it,” says Justin. “You cannot raise walls, or move them around. However, digital devices have the advantage of being designed to be modified, so you can adjust the settings and features during an event, to make them more suitable and effective.”



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Justin was able to improve the AR photo booth once he realised certain functions weren't working as well as he would have liked. This was done by increasing the size of some buttons, and removing others altogether, to streamline the user experience.

This real-time flexibility is a great asset for improving your event outcomes.

Keep testing

Of course, tech can let you down sometimes. “Although we did a lot of in-studio testing, we found that when we used the AR photo booth on site there were a few unexpected challenges,” says Justin. Probably because the studio was a controlled environment, and the live event setting was not, the camera had a tendency to pick up a lot of interference from other people.

“You need to be aware that there could be a problem, and be prepared to run thorough testing on site before the event and make adjustments during the event,” adds Justin.

To find out more about Scan Display, visit www.scandisplay.co.za. If you'd like to learn more about BizAR Reality or Madex, you can visit www.bizarreality.co.za or www.madex.co.za respectively.

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