

M+E

JOURNAL

# Charting the Metaverse

The metaverse  
will prove  
transformative  
for M&E.  
But only when  
the entire  
industry gets  
on board.

22.01

# FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF THE METAVERSE

That first means properly defining it



**ABSTRACT:** The metaverse holds a lot of promise — the promise of connection, entertainment, and commerce, all in a virtual setting. While the eventual scope of the metaverse may be unknown, one thing is certain: extensive testing by trained eyes will enable users to maximize their experience by limiting frustrations in the user interface.

By Ramón Bretón, Chief Technology Officer, 3rd i Digital

We've all heard plenty about the metaverse. We've heard about how it will change the way we work and play while providing new ways to spend money—on digital clothing, artwork, real estate, and concerts or other virtual events. Despite being unable to predict the timing or extent of metaverse adoption, when some of the largest social media and technology companies invest heavily in new technology, they only do so with expectations of substantial profits.

There is no single “metaverse.” Rather, “the metaverse” has come to describe the sum of all virtual spaces, including the world Meta (formerly known as Facebook) is building, as well as Microsoft’s virtual initiatives for enterprise. There’s also Decentraland and

the Sandbox, worlds built on blockchain technology where in-world land and goods are non-fungible tokens (NFT) powered by unique cryptocurrencies. These worlds may be strictly separate now, but it is entirely likely that seamless bouncing back and forth between them will not only be possible but will eventually be commonplace.

## GAMERS ALREADY AT HOME

Embodying a digital character, collecting items, buying and selling in a digital economy, and interacting in a virtual world have been part of video games for over twenty years. The metaverse expands these concepts with nearly endless possibilities of customization, while

## *A RIGOROUS TEST PLAN MUST BE CRAFTED and budgeted for as part of the deployment timeline for metaverse applications and experiences.*

offering true ownership of wearables, real estate, and other digital objects as NFTs. When it comes to the metaverse, gamers are already willing participants. However, adoption will need to expand beyond this limited cohort for the metaverse to become a significant area of growth for entertainment and enterprise.

### AN UNEXPECTED ROAD TO METAVERSE ADOPTION

Remote meetings became commonplace during the global pandemic. This shift away from in-person meetings toward connecting with others from home has laid the groundwork for even the most tech-reluctant to see themselves participating — willingly or otherwise — in a business meeting using an avatar in a virtual space. Meta has been very forward about shifting most of their eggs into the metaverse basket, with plans to entice enterprise customers via their Horizon Workspaces app. However, Microsoft may be better suited as the entry point for most casual-tech users into the metaverse.

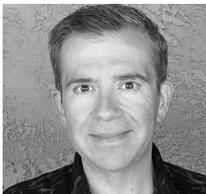
Teams, Microsoft's answer to Zoom and Slack, has exploded in daily use since early 2020, primarily due to the sheer number of Microsoft products already in the workplace when the pandemic hit. Whereas Meta places an emphasis on entry into the metaverse using VR or AR hardware such as their Oculus Quest VR headset or their forthcoming AR glasses currently dubbed "Project Nazaré," many perceive these as cumbersome, expensive, or simply unnecessary. Microsoft's Mesh app, on the other hand, enables even the most casual user to engage in the virtual aspects of Teams via the lowest common denominator: a work computer or cell phone. Although using Mesh via a VR or AR appliance, such as the Microsoft HoloLens, deepens the sense of presence in a virtual setting, allowing participation with items as ubiquitous as a laptop or cell phone removes the barriers to participation in the metaverse.

### FULFILLING PROMISES THROUGH QUALITY CONTROL

Despite its complexity, at its heart the metaverse is simply a collection of user experiences (UX) driven by software applications with user interfaces (UI) exposed to the end user. Regardless of whether the user is a digital novice or digital expert, it is reasonable for them to expect an immersive experience in the virtual world, unspoiled by awkward programming. At best, hiccups in the UI or UX may remind the user that their experience is manufactured, and at worst, they can break the experience altogether. Meta, Microsoft, or any other business such as media and entertainment companies exploring new revenue streams for their IP, must prioritize eliminating frustrations arising from problematic code to keep consumers spending both time and money in the metaverse.

A UI or UX can fail in as many ways as its underlying code is complex. While lessons are learned from consumer complaints, end users cannot be expected to be the primary bug testers. All users have a low threshold of tolerance for bad programming. Novices are easily frustrated as they lack the ability or willingness to think around problems. The digital generation has higher expectations based on their previous experience with similar technology and easily recognizes even the smallest cracks in the code.

Fortunately, lessons can be learned from the robust consumer UI and UX testing that is commonplace in other home entertainment technologies. A rigorous test plan must be crafted and budgeted for as part of the deployment timeline for metaverse applications and experiences. Exhaustive testing cannot be an afterthought, as is unfortunately often the case. The consumer experience must be prioritized with the necessary resources allocated at the earliest stages of planning and development.



*Ramón Bretón serves as chief technology officer for 3rd i Digital, a pioneering company in the field of quality assurance for the media and entertainment industry. Prior to his 20 years at 3rd i Digital, Ramón spent 10 years in the music business as an audio mastering engineer, giving him thirty years of experience contributing to quality entertainment for consumers.*  
[ramon@3rdiqc.com](mailto:ramon@3rdiqc.com)

Part of the process of bringing an application to life involves figuring out how best to write and structure the code so the program behaves as the designers intended. However, when the person responsible for coding also performs the testing, their solutions may not be intuitive for the average person unfamiliar with software programming. Third-party testers—experts in consumer tolerance — act in service of the application without needing to understand what is under the hood. The complexity or simplicity of the underlying code is irrelevant — professional testers approach every UI and UX with the end user in mind. Each application must pass through the same filter, answering the question, “Is this easy to understand for the average person?” When an application fails to meet that simple yet firm expectation, the tester pulls from their wealth of experience to suggest ways to improve the experience.

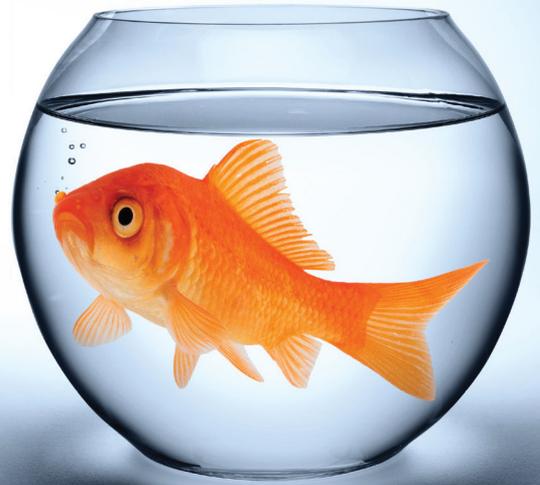
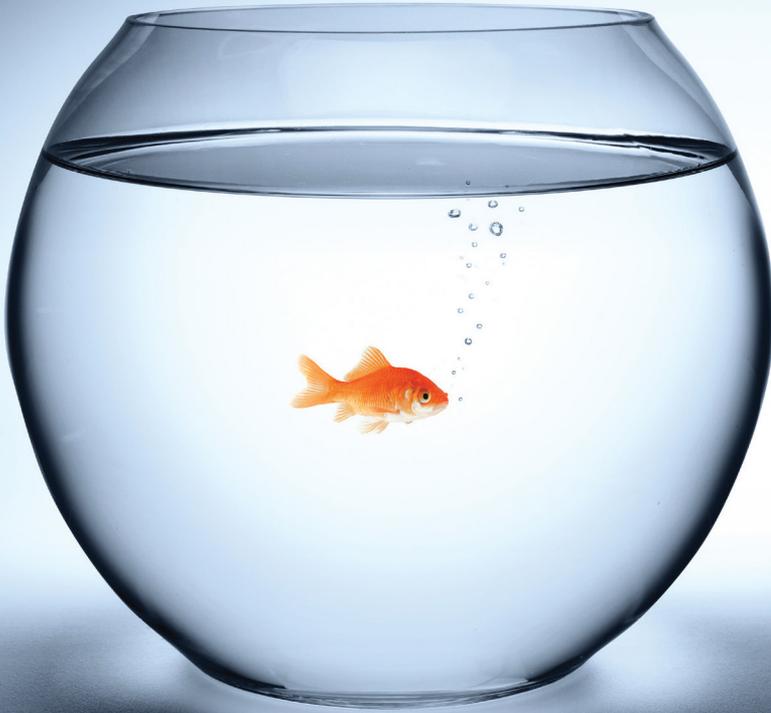
### VISION FULFILLED

If companies investing in new virtual spaces are to see their endeavors prove fruitful, consumers must be able to spend time seamlessly immersed in an experience with little to no awareness of the programming involved. As with previous home entertainment technologies, experts trained in the art of consumer technology testing must be entrusted with the task of identifying and refining any problematic interfaces or awkward elements of an experience before deployment. This will lead to deeper engagement on the part of the end user.

To ensure that the vision of the metaverse comes to fruition, third party testing is key so that the promise of the metaverse—to the end user as well as to those investing in it—is met. ■

---

We don't do  
one size fits all.



With over 25 years of delivering best-in-class quality assurance for partners **big** and **small**, we approach every project with the attention it deserves.

Always client-focused, we tailor our services to fit your unique needs.

Our flexible approach ensures the highest quality entertainment experience, every time.



Master Level QC  
IMF Packaging  
File Preparation and Delivery  
Optical Disc QC  
VR/AR QC