



BIMA

Conference

BIMA Conference 2019

Messages from the Future





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One day in September, several hundred innovators, digital specialists, thought leaders, scientists, futurists and journalists – many of them BIMA members – gathered together for a conference with a difference. Its focus would be wide, tackling issues as eclectic as climate change, AI, democracy and eradicating malaria.

It would hear from impassioned keynote speakers and use inspirational masterclasses and showcases to give delegates a real, practical understanding of the issues affecting our industry now – and present options for what should happen next.

This is the story of from our Immersive Showcase, at inaugural BIMA Conference.

Thank you to Karolina Kézdi, for her amazing write up on the day.



Immersive Showcase

How Immersive Technology Is Shaping the Future of Work

Sol Rogers, CEO & Founder of Rewind looks at the current state of extended reality and explains why it's worth revisiting.

Key takeaways:

- VR now delivers real value
- Our children will be the first generation to spend more time in synthetic environments than physical ones
- We don't have conscious AI yet; we have very smart machine learning
- The next major step is developing our avatar, a version of ourselves in a digital world

Rewind creates immersive experiences. What many call XR - extended reality - covers virtual (VR), augmented (AR) mixed realities (MR) and more. It helps to think of XR as a gradient, where creative technologies run side by side on a spectrum ranging from a purely synthetic, purely digital world to a purely physical world.

'VR made me sick'

The technology has improved significantly. People quite often say: 'I've tried VR once, but it made me sick. It doesn't work for me', but anyone who has felt that way should really give immersive another try. Now it's more than just a piece of technology. It has a real use, real value – way beyond being just a juicy PR story. It can help the consumer and make their life easier. We are much better at VR now – and we have to get people's trust back.

Synthetic environments

Ever since the human race started to work we have applied technology to help us, and the pace of technological innovation has been increasing ever since. The technology acceleration has become so intense that we can barely keep up with the pace of change, but that's intensely exciting.

Our children's generation will be the first to spend more time in a synthetic environment than in a physical one.

The next stage of AI

We don't have conscious AI yet; we have very smart machine learning. Siri, Google, Alexa etc have greatly improved since their first iterations to the extent that they can answer your questions, translate languages, control your house or teach you how to bake a cake.

The next step is our avatar, a VR version of ourselves in a digital world – so that where you are physically and where you represent yourself to be are entirely different.

There remain people who don't want technology to change us or our world. But, technology always changes the world. XR is growing fast and it will change all of our lives.



Spatial Storytelling

The Future of The Living Room

The way we explore content has never been more exciting. Phil Stuart, founder and Creative Director of Preloaded explains why.

Key takeaways:

- AR and VR are more than just passive storytelling tools
- 5G is set to enable these improvements in spatial storytelling
- AI will understand and interact with our facial expressions, emotions and surroundings, enabling active participation

The future of storytelling is happening all around us, but AR and VR are more than just passive storytelling tools. They offer a new way to interact with our environment, enabling us to be part of the story by creating a blend of physical and digital worlds.

Enabled by 5G

5G is set to enable these improvements in spatial storytelling, creating a more engaging, more efficient way of teaching using smart devices, headsets and glasses that will change the context of how we see the world.

Active storytelling

Increasingly, AI will understand and interact with our facial expressions, emotions and surroundings, building a complex, detailed picture of our world. Our digital avatars will interact with physical places and we will bring other worlds into our living rooms, kitchens or bedrooms, using active storytelling to educate and entertain far more powerfully than is possible right now.

Active storytelling requires your presence. You have to interact. You learn from active participation because the experience is so much more personal to you.

Content will never be the same again.



Extended Reality, It's Time to Grow Up

The potential of extended reality (XR) is vast, so why hasn't it taken off yet, and what needs to change to improve the picture? Nicola Rosa, Global Head of Immersive Learning for Accenture, explains.

Key takeaways:

- Why has XR not taken off yet? UX, ergonomics, cost, ROI and use cases have all been lacking or unclear
- Where does XR find its iPhone moment? Technology should not be the starting point. First, we must identify a problem and design the solution. If the solution demands XR technology, then we design it

Experiences are an important part of learning. An adult human can read 5 - 10 words per second. Yet just to describe the room around you you'll need at least 100. It's far easier to digest visual information and that's where AR (which adds digital elements to a live view) and VR (complete immersion in a digital experience that shuts out the real world) can help solve the data overload problem.

Experience improves information retention, so immersive experiences could have an enormous impact on the learning process.

The way we experience the world is already changing. The smartphones we use every day have already effectively made us cyborgs. XR will create a new kind of economy, one where we shift from clicking on links to a world literally painted with data.

Why hasn't XR taken off yet?

- UX and ergonomics have not been great
- XR is still expensive
- ROI may not be immediately clear
- Some companies are not ready yet – boards need to see more transformational use cases

Where does XR find its iPhone moment?

Technology should not be the starting point. First, we must identify a problem and design the solution. If the solution demands XR technology, then we design it, ensuring it is user-centric and designed for purpose. We must:

- Move away from one-off experiences to something ready for mass production
- Design smart – lots of startups can already provide you with mind-blowing platforms for your new content



- Don't build a spaceship - clients don't want risk, so choose a technology you can expand in the future
- Select the right target device
- Find the right stakeholder - talk to the head of learning or logistics instead of the CMO
- Plan for the pilot - it will help you measure the impact of your enterprise on your clients
- Think about change management - what help will the client need to change their processes when your new technology is introduced (training, logistics, operation infrastructure, support, security and updates)

Finally, keep experimenting. Be bold and have fun - the journey is what counts.



Storytelling in Future Immersive Formats

How do you grab and hold the attention in VR when you can't control the edit? Alia Sheikh, BBC Senior Development Producer of 360 video, VR and immersive experiences, shares the secret.

Key takeaways:

- Traditional media use edits to control what you see, hear and feel. The edit can be used to lead your attention
- In a VR experience, you can't use jump cuts, close-ups etc
- Technology can help us track and analyse what attracts viewers' attention and help us create better experiences
- Immersive storytelling can be the best storyteller of all

Books, dance, cinema, theatre, poetry: they all capture our attention. They build an imaginary world. Storytelling is always about engaging our imagination, but traditional media all have ways to edit what you see, hear and feel. The edit can be used to lead your attention.

Capturing the attention in real time

In a VR experience, however, you can't use jump cuts, close-ups etc – it makes people feel sick. So how do you control attention in real time?

With the help of technology, we can track and analyse what attracts viewers' attention, what disturbs them or disinterests them - and learn from it to create a better experience.

The best storyteller

VR content extends the 360 video experience, letting us explore and create new environments. It feels real. But we don't discover this world on a director's terms; we do it ourselves. Giving people complete freedom to explore in this extended reality - and still have it feel real - is incredibly expensive, so we have to use psychology to lead their attention without noticing. Details are the key: accurate reflections, realistic shadows, not being able to see the edges of the screen.

The best storyteller in the pub is always the one who reformats the story according to the audience. They make it more engaging to you, more personal.

Immersive storytelling can be the best storyteller of all – wherever the story is told.



Space, Skeletons, Slime and Serious Applications of XR Tech

Simon Barratt and Emma Cooper of Cooperative Innovations talk the pros and cons of VR.

Key takeaways:

- We need to decrease the hardware size and cost of AR and VR headsets
- The big advantage of VR is we intuitively know how to use the tools
- Volumetric is a 4D data visualisation tool bringing new insights into player behaviour

We are passionate about immersive technologies and how they will impact the future of entertainment, work and life, but it's really important to also be aware of our past. VR may be a relatively new platform for content but liking it doesn't mean you can't enjoy a book or a movie too. Not everything has to be VR – sometimes it will be the right tool, sometimes not.

What we really care about are things that let us represent our humanity to other people – things that enable us to directly or indirectly communicate and say 'this is my human experience'.

The problem with VR

For the future to hurry up we need to decrease the hardware size and cost of AR and VR headsets. They need to be easier to wear - because people don't like having a screen in front of their eyes. We need to increase the variety and quality of content, and we have to work on the tools and the content at the same time.

The big advantage of VR

You don't need to teach a player how to play. You don't need to know the right button to swing a sword to kill the skeleton - we intuitively know how to use the tools.

World building

Volumetric is a 4D data visualisation tool that brings a new level of insight into player behaviour. We can see where people are looking, what attracts their attention, how often and for how long.



Peripheral Vision: VR Beyond the Goggles

Maciej Zasada, Technical Director of Unit 9 asks what is immersion, and what difference does full immersion make?

Key takeaways

- Immersion doesn't have to mean VR and goggles by default
- The mind can accept the digital world as reality if the experience is engaging enough
- Creating an experience the fully engages the customer can be a powerful sales driver
- Sometimes a simple solution works better than the hypercomplex (and costlier) one

Immersion means deep mental involvement. It can be achieved through the careful choice of medium in combination with great UX and storytelling. It doesn't mean choosing VR by default or being limited to goggles.

Immersive experiences let the audience try something new, something they probably wouldn't be able to experience otherwise, from space travel to an extreme hairstyle they can share on social media. VR can 'teleport' people, bringing them together in a virtual space when they can't be in the same room in the physical world.

The human brain has no problem coping with the fact you are riding unicorns in a virtual world whilst being in your living room in the real world. The mind can ignore real reality and accept the digital world as reality if the experience is engaging enough. Or you can mix realities, overlaying a digital world on the top of the physical one.

Creating an experience the fully engages the customer can be a powerful sales driver, but you have to choose the right platform, tool and device to get the best experience possible.

That doesn't necessarily mean opting for expense. Sometimes a simple solution works better than the hypercomplex (and costlier) one.