Augmented Reality vs. Virtual Reality at Events

Table of Contents

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The case for augmented reality (AR) vs. virtual reality (VR) has long been fought, perhaps even prior to the technology that we use in regards to them in present day. But perhaps TechCrunch hit the ball out of the park with their simple statement: "VR and AR tinker with our reality — but AR enhances it, while VR diverts us from it."

What does that mean, and why is it important to the event industry?

Augmented Reality (AR)

Augmented reality is combining virtual components within real world contents. Think Pokémon Go. Pokémon Go utilizes augmented reality (AR) to display characters, balls, and graphics on the peruses mobile device. The mobile device utilizes its camera function to show the user real time content, while Pokémon Go then overlays with the augmented reality.

For the events industry, this augmented reality experience can potentially provide attendees with a more engaging, and custom experience. It takes traditional content and experiences that attendees may have at events, and brings a real moment experience, rather than a mocked external experience that virtual reality offers.

Virtual Reality (VR)

Unlike augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) allows users to have experiences, without leaving the location they are in. Requiring additional hardware and technology, that typically are quite expensive, users of virtual reality must have virtual reality headsets. Virtual reality truly limits users experience to exactly what they are doing or engaging with – with the only way to stop the experience, taking off the headset.

Because of this completely focused and inseparable experience, VR for events is limited and not nearly as engaging for attendees in whole, where AR allows a heightened and more engaging experience, yet one that can be easily shared with multiple other tasks and activities aside from utilizing the AR mobile event app experience. AR allows users to multitask and engage, while VR truly removes the user from existing reality.

AR vs VR for Events

The battle of AR or VR is not one that has to be. As the intended uses of AR and VR vary greatly, especially in the events world.

VR would allow attendees who cannot be physical live at an event, to still feel engaged and connected as they watch the event live from their location, through their virtual reality head gear.

AR can bring with it opportunities for event attendees to easier network, interact with presentations, and even increase event app gamification.

VR can be utilized by your event exhibitors and event vendors to provide real like experiences for attendees, while reducing cost and spatial limitations that have been historically difficult.

VR is more immersive; AR is less intrusive.

However, the cost of implementing virtual reality into an event is not to be dismissed. While Google offers Though not to be quick with the ease of these ever increasingly common technologies at events. With virtual reality headsets starting at $399 (*with the exception of Google's Cardboard which runs for $15 – however is obviously of a much different caliber and usage model),* providing every attendee at your event with a virtual reality headset seems entirely unimaginable when event planners and event professionals are constantly trying to 'defend the spend'.

Conclusion

In a world where event attendees are requiring more and more custom and personalized experiences at events and conferences, both augmented reality and virtual reality provide opportunities and solutions. Both virtual reality and augmented reality are reflections of the event attendees desire to become immersed into the live event experience. Solo or together, there are ample opportunities for events to include these two types of reality technology.

The expectations of the event attendee are continuing to increase, the needs and desires becoming more specific. Implementing an event technology provider like MeetingPlay who has experience in building custom virtual reality and augmented reality solutions is key. Learn more about how MeetingPlay can help increase event engagement, experience and opportunity at your next event through augmented reality or virtual reality.

Call to Action

Learn more about MeetingPlay and how we can help drive engagement and attendee delight through AR and VR at your next event.

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