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Chapter **1**

Making Sense of the Metaverse

This chapter introduces you to the history and development of the metaverse — from its early beginnings within personal computing to its evolution into a \$2-trillion-plus industry in the next decade. Knowing where the metaverse started will be useful when connecting the dots between vendors, big tech, gaming, and other stakeholders. It'll also help you think more clearly about incorporating the metaverse into your organization's product strategy and in your personal life.

GOING “META” WITH TERMINOLOGY

The word *meta* has many connotations and meanings. Ancient Romans used *meta* to indicate a column or post, or a group of columns or posts, that marked the turns on a racetrack. The term also has meanings specific to chemistry and art. English uses the prefix *meta-* to indicate something that describes itself or another thing in an encompassing or more abstract way. If you work in marketing, web design, or another related field, for example, you may recognize the term *metadata*, which describes header and identifying information in a digital asset (such as a JPG image in which the metadata tells you when and where the picture was taken) or data packets or a web page identifier tag in web design.

The word *meta* may mean many things, but in the context of this book, the *metaverse* refers to virtual reality-based online worlds. Some of these worlds are gaming environments or online games, and others function more as online virtual places where you can do other activities such as meet people, learn new things, or simply hang out. And the types of virtual worlds you can find in the metaverse continue to expand and are likely to continue to evolve. This book covers many of these worlds and shows how they work.

In technology and pop culture, the word *meta* has been used to signify a positive change toward the future. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was so motivated by the possibility of the metaverse that he renamed Facebook *Meta*. So, if you come across the company name Meta, it's the former Facebook I'm referring to. Meta has its own metaverse world called Horizon Worlds, which I talk about throughout this book.

For the sake of the book, though, *metaverse* is the collection of the virtual worlds, and *Meta* is the company run by Zuckerberg.

Getting How the Metaverse Started

Much of how the metaverse works and what it feels like to use it is built on knowledge first gained by the gaming industry. Graphics technology, for example, affects how quickly images appear and move onscreen. The better your graphics card, the more colorful, detailed, and interactive the display can be without compromising a computer's performance. Computer game creators knew that what worked to power a Windows dialog box could also be used to power more picturesque and interactive gameplay. So, they used the same hardware advancements that helped the Windows operating system run smoothly and in color to enrich the visual experience of the games they developed without overheating their players' computers.

Similarly, virtual reality (VR) went mainstream in the 2010s. As VR headsets became more affordable and consumer-grade hardware began to make entry into the marketplace, gaming providers started designing games that would work with VR headsets and provide gamers with new experiences.

Metaverse-based VR worlds have taken a new direction. Part 2 of this book covers more about gaming in the metaverse. New metaverse worlds and providers are emerging, however, focused not only on gaming but also on other activities.

In this book, I take a deep look at existing and emerging metaverse worlds and how they're growing. I also look at how technology vendors are opening up these platforms for non-gamers, hobbyists, professionals, and others. There is also a push by other industries, such as high-end fashion, that are entering the metaverse. Part 3 of this book shows how businesses leverage the metaverse as an independent marketing channel either on its own or to complement existing "real-life" channels. In Part 4 of this book, you see how the metaverse can shape the future of collaboration and communication.



REMEMBER

The metaverse has its roots in gaming, but its potential applications reach far beyond gaming. This book covers the impact of the metaverse on health care, entertainment, professional services, and a number of other industries and professions.

Anticipating What's Ahead for the Metaverse

In terms of development, the metaverse today is where the Internet was in the early 1990s. The early Internet was shaped by new ideas, technologies, and ways of doing things. With the right investments, adoption, and usage, the Internet grew into the Internet we know today (for better or for worse, depending on who you ask!).

Similarly, the metaverse today provides an interesting place for many activities, but many of them are still in the early days of development, such as gaming, art exhibitions, group activities, hobby clubs, and others that have just started to develop and gain traction. The investment and attention put into building the metaverse over the next five to ten years will determine what the metaverse ultimately becomes and the value it creates.

The metaverse can help the real world by:

- » Serving as an opportunity to create economic value
- » Creating jobs and new professional opportunities
- » Creating new experiences
- » Connecting people and building communities
- » Adding value

Chapter 19 provides ten case studies that show how the metaverse is being used in the real world.

Bringing the Metaverse into Your Personal Life

What is the role of the metaverse in your personal life? Imagine you're spending time with your friends and family, your loved ones, and you aren't at work. Your role is different from when you're at work. What role can the metaverse play in this case?

In order to answer this question, you need to understand what you do in your personal life that's different from what you do at work. Today, with the emergence of technologies, smartphones, tablets, and ubiquitous Internet connectivity, the gap between the workplace and personal lives has slightly diminished. Today, with remote work and work from home, boundaries between being at work and being at home are sometimes blurry.

That said, you can use the metaverse as an avenue for learning, entertainment, and other aspects of life that have nothing or little to do with being at work. Here are some examples of how you may use the metaverse at home and in your personal life.

Finding entertainment in the metaverse

The metaverse is a conduit to a whole new world of entertainment. You can play online games, some of which are based on a network play and some in which you join a specific metaverse world and start engaging with others. You can also watch some of your favorite musicians and artists perform in the metaverse, attend

concerts and performances, and attend major sports events. These avenues for entertainment are just the start. Turn to Part 2 for more about entertainment in the metaverse.

Getting fit with the metaverse

Special accessories can make metaverse fitness more engaging, so not surprisingly, the fitness industry is embracing the metaverse. You can join a fitness class or a specific group-fitness activity in the metaverse. Chapter 15 covers some of the fast-growing health and fitness areas in the metaverse and how you can get the most from them.

Learning in the metaverse

The metaverse is making learning more engaging. Maybe you have younger children who need to learn about a specific topic, or maybe you'd like to learn something new yourself.

If so, get your VR glasses and join a learning experience curated by a museum in the metaverse, or visit a far-off land such as New Zealand, which is promoting itself in the metaverse. You can find many options for learning about new things in the metaverse, and as organizations, providers, and other entities enter the metaverse, learning will catch up quickly.

From enabling remote learning to helping students experience learning in a 3D format, the future of education is likely going to be very experiential through the metaverse. Imagine being able to walk with virtual dinosaurs or fly with bees as they pollinate different flowers — everything is possible in VR!

To find out what learning can mean in the metaverse, check out Chapter 14.

Socializing in the metaverse

Fifty years ago, people met in social gatherings. In the 2000s, people met online in chat rooms. Now you can meet people in the metaverse when you engage in group activities, such as developing personal interests, hobbies, and professional networking. The next section, “Finding hobbies in the metaverse,” and Chapter 9 cover finding hobbies in the metaverse.

As with social media, you may find that some of your friends are exclusively metaverse friends, and others may become friends you communicate with through other means — text, email, phone, social media, and so on. You may even choose to meet in real life.



WARNING

Take precautions when taking your conversations in the metaverse into actual, physical life on planet Earth. Meet in public places with other people around, in order to create a personal safety net. Turn to Chapter 3 for more on staying safe in the metaverse.

Finding hobbies in the metaverse

Hobbyists will find the metaverse interesting when they're able to find people with similar interests in the metaverse and ready to share their expertise, time, and enthusiasm for their hobbies.

As more and more people connect to each other in the metaverse, hobbyists will be able to create groups, forums, and perhaps new metaverse worlds focused on specific hobbies.

Think about meeting your journal writing group in the metaverse or attending the next LEGO Builders Club meeting in the metaverse. Anything is possible! Right now is a very early time in the development of the metaverse, and as a result, we have a lot to look forward to in terms of hobbyists leveraging it to its full extent.

See Chapter 9 for more about finding hobbies in the metaverse.

Using the Metaverse for Work

From small businesses and entrepreneurs to large enterprises, the metaverse can find its place in every nook and cranny of the work world and be a useful tool to perform a specific task. The metaverse can serve as a channel of engagement, to build a customer base, sell products, and even provide customer service.

In the public sector, governments can use the metaverse to change government experience and reduce friction between citizens' services and how governments deliver those services. Turn to Chapter 10 for some examples of how this is already happening and how some private and public sector entities are jumping on board to create better governance and value for citizens.

At a business level, a number of activities are emerging in the metaverse. In Chapter 4, I look at non-fungible tokens (NFTs), the retail industry, the emerging metaverse real estate, and perhaps the application of the metaverse for specific professionals.

If you were around when the Internet started growing exponentially, around the year 2000 and after, many new things were happening on the Internet, including

“Internet banking,” where you could actually log in to your bank and check your balances (amazing!). Today, accessing a bank online or with an app is a feature most consumers expect. There was also a time when early Internet users were introduced to the ability to order something online and get it delivered by mail. Believe it or not, most people hesitated to buy anything online, but some experimented with it. Today e-commerce is a multi-trillion-dollar industry, and most people order things with an app without giving it a second thought.



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It's way too early for most people to even fathom how the metaverse will affect the workplace, but there are people who specialize in foresight and forecasting who can shed light on what the future may look like for work. Here are some ways the metaverse may be used for work:

- » **Customer service reps:** New careers will emerge that will need people to do specific jobs in the metaverse. Most of these could be customer service, customer relations, and meeting people.
- » **Metaverse designers:** Complex environments in the metaverse require a lot of brain work and creativity. Your skills will be needed if you can program, design, or imagine new worlds and ideas.
- » **Virtual offices:** We've heard about virtual offices in the real world, but virtual offices in the metaverse will host specialists who are experts in things such as NFTs and metaverse design.
- » **Teachers and instructors:** Are you a teacher or an instructor and do you want to build a following in the metaverse? The other avatars you see in the metaverse are people, too, and many of them may fall into your target audience. Future teachers will hold classes and teach new skills in the metaverse — everything from Spanish to how to create new 3D art.
- » **Meetings:** Many companies have started using the metaverse on an experimental basis to see its suitability for collaboration. This means hosting some meetings and creating employee collaboration opportunities in the metaverse.

If you're curious to see more about how the metaverse might affect your work experience, head over to Chapter 12.

Visiting a Metaverse World

So, how do you enter the metaverse or connect with one of the many VR worlds? The next few sections walk you through entering the metaverse for the first time.

Among the emerging metaverse worlds you can visit, some focus on gaming, some focus on meeting people, while others are trying to create new shopping and event experiences in the metaverse.

Accessing the metaverse

Accessing a metaverse world requires computer hardware and access devices such as a VR headset, that have enough capacity and computing power to be able to properly display graphics and provide an optimal metaverse experience.

For a typical metaverse world, you can use a browser such as Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, or Firefox. Any of these browsers will be able to open the main page of the metaverse world you're trying to access.

This section provides the URLs (web addresses) to some of the most common metaverse worlds, some of which I cover in later chapters. To visit any of these metaverse worlds, type the URL exactly as shown into your browser address bar and press Enter.

Following is a general list of interesting places in the metaverse. These are popular metaverse VR worlds that can be accessed through a web browser in most cases, although some may ask you to exclusively have a VR headset.



WARNING

Enter the URL into your web browser exactly as written in the following table. Depending on your browser settings, you may or may not get a warning that the website is unsafe. Proceed with caution if you do get this warning, or just don't go to the website, if you prefer. Things are constantly changing online.

Metaverse	URL
Bloktopia	www.bloktopia.com
Decentraland	https://decentraland.org
Horizon Worlds	www.oculus.com/horizon-worlds
Illuvium	http://illuvium.com
Roblox	www.roblox.com
The Sandbox	www.sandbox.game
Somnium Space	www.somniumspace.com
Voxels	www.voxels.com



REMEMBER

There are hundreds of metaverse worlds you can visit online. The preceding list is a small representation of the popular metaverses. Chapter 2 describes in detail what each of these metaverse worlds offers.

Choosing a metaverse world to visit

When you're choosing which metaverse world to visit, consider what you want from your metaverse experience. Some metaverse worlds focus on gaming, and others may focus on activities such as visiting a museum in the metaverse or even attending a metaverse concept.

Think of visiting a metaverse world similar to browsing an online social network. Many social networks are available to choose from — Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, and others. Not all platforms are relevant for every person. Some people prefer to use Facebook to stay in touch with their friends or engage in a specific type of activity, such as hobbies, attending art and entertainment events, and more. Others prefer Twitter because it offers information in a different format with a different type of audience mix. When you choose which metaverse world to visit, consider matching your interests with what the metaverse offers.



TIP

Save time by knowing which metaverse world you want to visit and why before taking all the steps to join or create an account for it. Joining a metaverse platform takes effort and can be time-consuming — from creating an account or connecting your wallet to customizing your avatar. Browsing a metaverse platform and finding your place within the metaverse also takes time. Researching the suitability of a metaverse platform with your interests saves time in the long run. For an overview of metaverse platforms, turn to Chapter 2.

Setting up a metaverse profile

Every metaverse world requires users to create a profile. Like any other website or platform online that requires users to create a username and set a password, the metaverse is very similar. A common factor among all metaverse worlds here is the requirement to create a username and select a secure password.



WARNING

To ensure the greatest possible security, use a different password for each of your metaverse world profiles. And of course, be sure that all your metaverse (and other) passwords are unique from the passwords you use for your email or banking website.

In some cases, you may also be able to use your Microsoft, Google, or Facebook account to log in without creating an account. This happens because of an agreement between these entities or single sign-on (SSO) or the fact that the metaverse

is connected to one of these vendors. For example, to access Horizon Worlds, you need to use your Meta (previously Facebook) login, rather than create a new username and password. Horizon Worlds is part of Meta and doesn't require you to create a new username and password.

After you've created your username and password, you'll be able to further customize your profile with information such as your age and date of birth. You'll also select security questions and their answers and then create your first avatar, or the virtual you, for that metaverse.

Creating an avatar

An *avatar* in the metaverse can be defined as your visual representation within a metaverse. You may choose to represent yourself as a human figure, an animal, a cartoon character, or a superhero, or choose from hundreds of other options. You may also be able to customize your appearances such as changing your hair color, your height, eye color, and other aspects of your appearance.

You can also decorate your avatar or your virtual self using different clothes available on various metaverse worlds. Some leading fashion brands also offer digital clothes in which you can dress your avatar. Many fashion brands are also tapping into the metaverse and selling digital clothes for avatars. The world of avatars is undergoing exciting changes as it expands and connects with the world of fashion.

At this time, there's no way to use the same avatar across different metaverse worlds. For example, you can't use your metaverse avatar from Roblox on Horizon Worlds, or from the NVIDIA Omniverse on Decentraland and others. We're currently in the early development stages of the metaverse, though, so this may change.



TIP

You can always continue participating in your metaverse with a default avatar and come back to customize it later. No need to feel rushed!

Personalizing your experience

Experiences in the metaverse depend on a number of factors, including the metaverse world you're visiting. Each metaverse world offers its own experience. Horizon Worlds, for example, may offer proprietary games and activities, while Roblox may offer a completely different experience offering the ability to create your own

games within a unique 3D graphic interface. As you participate in the metaverse world of your choice, personalizing your experience will be about choosing some parameters and options for your avatars.

Funding your metaverse account

Good news: You can buy things in the metaverse! As of this writing, what you can buy is mostly digital goods, digital art, digital clothes, and accessories for your metaverse avatar and other digital wares.

In order to purchase something in the metaverse, you need to fund your wallet on that specific metaverse. A full chapter on mastering money in the metaverse is coming up in Chapter 4, where I cover the essentials of money in the metaverse, funding your wallet, and buying and selling in the metaverse.

Funding your metaverse account will get you started with the world of cryptocurrencies. In Chapter 4, I go through the process of funding your metaverse account, also called a *wallet*, with a tiny amount of cryptocurrency, and converting that into a metaverse proprietary cryptocurrency. Different metaverses are accepting different cryptocurrencies. Some have created their own cryptocurrencies, which can be converted from U.S. dollars, British pounds, Canadian dollars, and other commonly used currencies.



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There is a limit on which currency can be converted into cryptocurrency and ultimately used to fund your metaverse wallet. The reason for this is that cryptocurrency is currently not recognized by all monetary agencies worldwide and your bank may not allow you to convert your local currency into crypto. If this happens, don't be disappointed. You can still participate in many metaverses but your ability to buy digital goods may be limited.

Funding your metaverse account is a very simple and straightforward process. Funding the account will give you the ability to have a wallet through which you can purchase a digital product in the metaverse.



REMEMBER

This book doesn't recommend or suggest you buy any product or service in the metaverse. The only reason I cover this subject is because of the crucial aspect of creating safe and secure buying and selling experiences in the metaverse, and to help you as a first-time metaverse participant to know the exact process of funding buying and selling. Your safety is my prime concern.

EVERYONE WANTS TO RULE THE METAVERSE

As the metaverse evolves, many new private- and public-sector entities are trying hard to lead the push to the metaverse. Meta has completely changed its organization focus and has renamed the company to reflect the seriousness of its focus on the metaverse. Governments are not behind. The government of the United Arab Emirates and the city of Dubai are making many first things in the metaverse happen. These include the world's first government office in the metaverse, the world's first wedding in the metaverse, and other trailblazing efforts.

In the end, the metaverse will become what people choose to put into it. It will offer the ability to communicate better if people create new and better ways to communicate in the metaverse. It will help with engagement if people create highly engaging experiences on it. With every technology, there is an adoption curve, and the metaverse will have one as well. The progression from early adopters to mass adoption takes time, as people lay the foundation of a metaverse that has appeal for the masses.

Cool places to visit in the metaverse

There are many cool places to visit in the metaverse. The following places are part of some of the metaverse worlds listed earlier, so you may need to log in to a metaverse to visit or experience these:

- » **Musee Dezentral, the world's first metaverse museum:** <https://musee-dezentral.com/museum>
- » **Metamall, the world's first metaverse mall:** <https://metamalls.io>
- » **MetaVegas, Las Vegas in the metaverse:** <https://dreamlandxr.com/metavegas>
- » **Metaverse Fashion Week:** <https://metaversefashionweek.com/>



TIP

Throughout this book, I mention many metaverses and provide links that you can access either with a computer browser or through VR headsets. Although you don't need to purchase a VR headset to experience the metaverse, having one will generally offer you a better experience.