



## “Secret” technologies that can transform your marketing message.

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**Q:** I keep hearing about Augmented Reality & Virtual Reality being used at tradeshows & events. What is the secret to their popularity?

**A:** The secret's out ... these powerful technologies can tell a compelling story.

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You've surely heard a great deal about augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). You've also heard about the success many companies experience when integrating these technologies into their marketing mix.

However, innovations in these formats are evolving so rapidly there's a good chance that many you've heard about will be obsolete by the time you investigate them. But luckily, one thing will never change; and that is the focus of this article ... that no matter what vertical you're in, AR & VR can help you accomplish their marketing goals.

**Benefits.** No matter how advanced AR/VR technology becomes, the benefits it offers exhibitors and event leaders will remain constant. Similarly, there will always be a need to design virtual experiences intelligently, position them properly, and stage them effectively. In this article we'll explore these, and other, fundamental considerations for creating AR/VR experiences with impact. We'll also explore some real-world examples that illustrate how various companies are using multidimensional immersive experiences successfully at their tradeshows and events.

**The Big Picture.** Virtual reality was once used exclusively as a training tool simulating job-critical situations for pilots and astronauts. The Disney Company evolved its use and introduced flight-simulation technology to consumers in its popular Body Tours and Star Tours attractions, which created the visual and physiological sensations of high-speed acceleration through the human body and deep space, respectively.

Today AR/VR is being used in a dazzling array of applications, from helping cure phobias to designing dream homes and to training neurosurgeons. Game developers worldwide have

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incorporated AR/VR into their games. Entertainment trends suggest that in the next five years, 3D movies will be seen as laughably antique when compared with emerging VR capabilities that will utterly transform the viewer experience. It comes as no surprise, then, that *Fortune* predicts that the VR market will grow into a \$4 billion business over the next ten years.

Before we look at the opportunities these technologies have opened for marketers, let’s define what is meant by the often-confused terms *augmented reality* and *virtual reality*.

**Augmented Reality.** Augmented reality is technology that combines the virtual and the real. Objects and animations, viewed on the screens of smart phones or tablets loaded with special apps, appear to be superimposed in 3D onto the actual physical space. By touching the screen or handheld controls, viewers can manipulate the object in many ways. AR technology is already a staple of popular games targeted to children—for example, *Invizimals: The Resistance*, in which players must capture creatures running amok in whatever environment they hold the screen in front of, from the kitchen table to the backyard. A game for more sophisticated players, Google’s *Ingress* for iOS, overlays visual elements onto real-world locations by using geolocation-based AR.

At tradeshows, AR can frequently be seen animating infographics. Attendees hold a tablet in front of special markers that trigger 3D animations. The people and objects on a print piece, for example, can suddenly come to life. When hotspots on the screen are touched, different aspects of the story and message are interactively revealed.

In one demonstration of AR, at a Baxter Pharmaceuticals exhibit, attendees held up sponsor-supplied iPads before a small paper marker. That simple action triggered the appearance of an animated clock tower, analogous to the featured product’s life-extending potential.

Depending on which window attendees touched, animated elements, along with musically underscored narration, told the product story.

A less-complex (but equally crowd-pleasing) use of AR was adapted by Bosch to promote its Pro Silence vacuum cleaner, whose mascot was a tiger. Although no tiger inhabited the booth, attendees who looked at a video monitor were surprised and delighted to see a live video feed of themselves—with a virtual tiger sitting at their feet. By positioning themselves just so, they could create the illusion that they were petting the tiger, which thumped its tail and nodded its head in appreciation.

The experience prompted not only a continuous flow of visitors but large volumes of selfies that generated significant targeted social media content for Bosch.

**Virtual Reality.** Virtual reality, in contrast, is a deeply immersive experience. The participant has the perception of being fully integrated within the virtual environment. Content can depict either computer-generated scenarios or actual scenes and locations shot with a VR camera.

Both AR and VR offer a “wow” factor that audiences love and have come to expect.

Wrap-around headsets are integral to VR. As a result, there are no peripheral distractions to interrupt the user experience and take the participant out of the virtual world. Microsoft, Sony, Samsung, and Facebook-owned Oculus are the current leaders in headset technology. Oculus Rift combines real-time head tracking with a stereoscopic display enabling participants to see 360-degree views and synchronous action wherever they happen to turn their heads. Sounds, too, can enhance VR. Positional surround sound design can replicate what the person would hear from any direction in the virtual scenario.

Like AR, VR is well represented in the game industry. When users enter the world of Mirror’s Edge VR, for example, they scale buildings, jump between skyscrapers, and accomplish other daredevil feats—with a “you are there” quality that is not for the faint of heart. to turn their heads.

At a Lufthansa exhibit, visitors were invited to become passengers on a virtual vacation. Seated in a pod and outfitted with VR headsets, they “found” themselves in a movie depicting a Lufthansa flight complete with passengers and flight attendants. A wand enabled them to “handle” objects in the environment, such as lifting and drinking a virtual glass of orange juice. The setting then changed to a beach in San Francisco, with the experience enhanced by the soothing sounds of seagulls and crashing waves.

At the conclusion of the virtual holiday, participants removed their goggles and were greeted by the flight attendant who appeared in the movie they had just been part of. The smiling young man handed them a postcard of their “trip” and invited them to write to a friend or family member about their virtual getaway. Lufthansa sent their visitors’ handwritten postcards to recipients in 30 countries worldwide.

**Conclusion:** Multiple Benefits. Both AR and VR offer a “wow” factor that audiences love and have come to expect. Fortunately, the love affair is two-way; marketers also recognize the many benefits this technology offers, including efficiency, better comprehension & retention, greater visibility on a show floor, bigger buzz, increased likability, and an easier path to transition visitors to prospects to customers.

For a deeper dive and more examples of how AR/VR may be able to help your marketing efforts, feel free to access our White Paper, [Leveraging Augmented & Virtual Reality For More Impact At Meetings And Tradeshow.](#)