The Rise of Metaverse Learning for Corporate Training

Learn how the metaverse will impact L&D in the coming decade. Discover how you can get started with metaverse training and what you'll need to know to implement this innovative learning technology at your organization.
# Table of Contents

03  Intro - What Is the Metaverse?
   - 03  What Does this Mean for L&D?
   - 03  Why Is Immersive Learning the Future of L&D?
   - 04  Creative and Persistent World Building
   - 04  Interoperability of Content
   - 04  Highly Accessible Immersive Learning Environments

05  Metaverse: The Next Step in Immersive Learning
   - 05  Virtual Reality Training
   - 05  Augmented Reality
   - 06  Metaverse Training
   - 06  Why Now More than Ever?
   - 07  Content Sharing and Collaboration

08  Industries Are Responding to the Shift to Immersive
   - 08  Immersive Onboarding
   - 09  Technical Skills Training
   - 09  Safety Training
   - 09  Customer Service Training
   - 09  Sales Enablement Training
   - 09  Leadership Development

10  The Potential ROI of Metaverse Training
   - 10  The Value to the Learning
   - 11  The Advantages for L&D
   - 11  The Value to the Business

12  The Value of a Creative Learning Agency
The metaverse is currently defined as a shared online space where virtual reality, augmented reality, and physical presence can exist together. Users can interact as avatars (digital representations of their physical appearance) in this environment as a simulation of the physical world, but with the benefits of digital tools. For example, teams can draw diagrams in 3D space or on a digital whiteboard, or a facilitator can lead sessions and take notes only visible to them (much like a traditional powerpoint presentation).

In the metaverse, your learners can exist in a simulated reality where the laws of physics, gravity, and corporeality are obeyed. This could be used for anything from playing a simple game of catch with a basketball, to more complex simulations powered by digital twins of operating machinery.

Avatars and information can co-exist across multiple metaverses, meaning everything can be shared and is interoperable. Therefore, many metaverses can be created by users themselves and everything they generate can be shared while maintaining the fidelity of the items and information created.

What Does this Mean for L&D?

Over the past decade, the L&D industry has embraced virtual and augmented reality to support learning programs. Remote training has become a priority due to the pandemic, and technology has become the backbone of remote work, training, and onboarding. Metaverse training has the potential to drive transformation to remote training by providing a one-stop-shop for immersive learning.

Why Is Immersive Learning the Future of L&D?

As a breadth of research into learning science indicates, virtual reality training has proven itself to be a highly impactful and successful modality for learning and training. Learners give their full attention to VR experiences. They absorb and retain information more effectively because of the element of “presence” in their VR-powered experiences. Metaverse training takes VR training one step further by empowering learners and facilitators to collaborate within a 3D environment using avatar-representations of their real-life selves. As an extension of virtual reality, the metaverse further supports interactive, real-life scenarios, face-to-face learning, and hands-on learning.
The many tools within a metaverse learning environment can allow instructors to provide virtual instructor-led training that simulates real 1:1 interactions.

Creative and Persistent World Building

If you think of the metaverse as not simply a platform and environment, but as a world in which your learners can build themselves, you’ll gain perspective on the potential of this learning modality. As your metaverse takes shape, L&D teams and learners alike can continually add new elements that can be shared across the platform, providing a persistent learning experience and space.

Interoperability of Content

Sharing content, items, and data is a natural process within the metaverse. Much like how a learning management system provides a centralized learning environment where documents, content, courses, etc. can be shared and accessed, the metaverse provides a simulated physical environment similar to an LMS. Learners can “walk” through libraries, galleries, museums and have physical access to data, all stored in a central location.

Highly Accessible Immersive Learning Environments

Since a metaverse learning environment doesn’t initially require a VR headset, many L&D professionals are exploring the potential of bringing this technology to their organizations. This means that high-impact learning content can be easily accessed across a learner’s personal devices, bringing budget-friendly, immersive learning experiences at scale.

You are no doubt filled with excitement and curiosity about what metaverse training can bring to your organization. At the same time, there are many questions surrounding this new modality’s learning effectiveness and potential applications. In this guide, we give a brief overview of what you’ll need to know to understand how metaverse training can meet your expectations. As well, you’ll learn some of the critical applications where this type of immersive training can bring real value to your learners and your business.
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Metaverse: The Next Step in Immersive Learning

For the past 25 years, L&D has been evolving towards a digital transformation of learning. People are socializing and communicating, playing games, buying products, and organizing their lives using digital technologies. L&D has followed suit by leveraging the technology their learners are already familiar with and finding new ways to deliver engaging learning experiences. Emerging technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and now the metaverse are bringing together learners and learning programs in exciting new ways. Here’s a look at what’s on the horizon for immersive learning.

Virtual Reality Training

Technology has made it easier for learners to connect with each other and their learning programs. Virtual reality training has taken learners into imaginative and astounding environments supporting a number of effective learning experiences that drive both technical and soft skills training. A maintenance worker can train on fixing a mechanical component without having to risk damaging equipment. An immersive business simulation can allow a sales representative to play the part of a potential customer to better understand their perspective and needs by walking in their shoes. A people manager can practice giving in-person interviews where body language and facial expressions are critical to making an employee feel at ease.

Immersive learning can engage learners with a story. Much like how video games both tell stories as well as train players to build skills and move through the game, learning programs can develop job skills to improve performance. Wherever training is required to improve interpersonal skills or hone manual manipulation skills, VR training has a place.

Augmented Reality

Augmented reality is similar to virtual reality in that both can leverage digital imagery and assets to provide information and simulations in a realistic space. However, AR is most ideally suited for situations where specific technical knowledge is required. If you think of how valuable a HOD (heads-up display) can be while driving, you’ll see the potential for AR learning. By lowering distractions and reducing the need for manual interaction, AR can provide access to key information by overlaying digital assets on a user’s field of view, be that a smartphone or wearable device such as AR-enabled headsets.
AR technology is ideally suited for workers in the field where they may require quick reference to technical schematics or information needed to make a repair. And if they need more assistance, they can bring in other subject matter experts remotely who can collaborate in real time in the augmented reality space.

For L&D, AR can be leveraged to deliver on-the-job training and reference. For example, a sales representative can quickly look up the technical specs of a pair of running shoes, see if it’s in stock, etc. simply by pointing their phone’s camera at the product. Or if your company is launching a new product but doesn’t have the resources to send out samples, your employees can learn about the product, interact with it, gain product knowledge, all in AR space.

**Metaverse Training**

The metaverse can combine all the advantages of VR and AR and unify them into a single, physical environment. Learners can access specific product knowledge, access reference material, manipulate objects, play role playing games, have 1:1 conversations, and more.

**Why Now More than Ever?**

The need to work remotely due to the pandemic has encouraged all organizations to embrace digital tools to support remote team collaboration and training. It’s no coincidence that interest in the Metaverse has grown over the past few years as organizations turn to hybrid workplaces. As well, employees are developing an exhaustion to video conferencing as a primary means of communication and collaboration. eLearning has also seen a sharp increase in adoption due to the pandemic. It makes sense that immersive tools such as the metaverse should step in to allow learners a deeper sense of “being there” while maintaining safe distance.

**TOP 4 REASONS FOR ZOOM FATIGUE**

01. Excessive amounts of close-up eye contact is highly intense.

02. Seeing yourself during video chats constantly in real-time is fatiguing.

03. Video chats dramatically reduce our usual mobility.

04. The cognitive load is much higher in video chats.

Content Sharing and Collaboration

Many online video games allow players to build items and environments and share them with other players. This has given rise to the popularity of user-generated content and peer-to-peer sharing. Imagine how this modality could allow your employees to share information and knowledge.

The metaverse has enormous potential to drive team innovation through creative thinking and collaboration. A virtual space could be dedicated to a team collaboration to help solve critical business problems. For example, teams working on the UX of a new product or technology solution can build solutions in collaboration, in real time, and in a virtual space where all stakeholders can monitor progress and contribute in meaningful ways. They can sit together in a metaverse to watch a video or playback or product simulation and make real time comments and critiques.
The Rise of Metaverse Learning for Corporate Training

Industries Are Responding to the Shift to Immersive

Much like the rise of virtual reality, the metaverse is developing interest from diverse industries looking to enhance their training programs. While the jury is still out on the entertainment and social media value of the metaverse, many L&D leaders are exploring the various use cases for metaverse learning.

Central to the metaverse’s functionality is its ability to allow L&D to embed and link immersive content and draw upon storytelling methodologies to express learning in new and exciting ways. Along with the exponential rise in creative content providers, the metaverse is an infinitely expansive environment which offers a learner-centered experience in a way that has never been conceived before.

“The virtual training and simulation market size was valued at $204.41 billion in 2019, and is projected to reach $601.85 billion by 2027, growing at a CAGR of 13.7% from 2020 to 2027.”

Research shows how the immersive and simulation-based training market has increased exponentially over the past decade. The metaverse is simply a confluence of many immersive learning technologies into a single learning ecosystem. If your goal is to achieve a culture of continuous learning with a learner-centric approach, then the metaverse is going to be the key tool to support your success. Here are a few potential use cases that are emerging across every industry.

**Immersive Onboarding**

Gone are the days of classroom-based onboarding. New hires can quickly become familiar with their workplace and develop a community of support from co-workers within a metaverse experience. Not only does this help to get trainees up and running quickly, but it provides enormous value to the business by reducing training time and creating memorable first impressions. Reports show an 81 percent reduction in training during onboarding.
**Technical Skills Training**

Whether employees are on an assembly line, loading or unloading packages, or repairing an engine, metaverse training using a VR headset can provide an efficient and effective training solution. Learners can gain hands-on experience to improve operational efficiencies and speed up productivity.

**Safety Training**

Learning proper lifting techniques or identifying hazards in the workplace requires situational awareness and critical thinking skills. Textbooks are no replacement for experience. An immersive safety training experience allows learners to become more familiar with their work setting and identify threats and risks, while being completely safe.

**Customer Service Training**

Customer service representatives can develop the critical skills they need to support customers in their unique needs. Immersion training programs can allow learners to practice customer interactions just as they would in real life, whether it’s a hotel lobby, call center, or store. Using scenario-based learning to build empathy, associates can take on the role of a customer and learn what drives their needs and fuels their concerns.

**Sales Enablement Training**

Traditional role playing attempts to simulate client relationships. However, there is greater value in having sales managers and leaders actually participating in the unique sales training process at their organization. Business simulations using storytelling and branching scenarios help to prepare sales associates for all contingencies, including managing resistance from prospective clients.

**Leadership Development**

Developing effective leaders is key to driving effective teams. Immersive solutions can include programs to help leaders develop soft skills to improve team performance. Including, having difficult conversations, leading remote teams, building empathy, and driving innovation through diversity, equity, and inclusion. With a metaverse solution, leaders can provide more transparency and channels of communication by connecting with managers and team members in a direct and friendly manner.

The list of potential use cases is growing every day. But with the increased interest in VR training and AR solutions, metaverse training is only going to enrich the L&D landscape. The main question you should be asking is if you have a content strategy to meet the growing needs of your L&D requirements.
The Potential ROI of Metaverse Training

Taking a leap into a new learning technology requires an investment of time, resources, and budget. Gaining buy-in from the business is never easy when it’s difficult to tie learning directly back to business success. Digital learning tools can provide L&D leaders with the data they need to make this case. By mapping learning objectives to KPIs such as sales quotas or net promoter scores, L&D can demonstrate the value of their immersive learning programs. However, there are many areas where metaverse training can provide value to all stakeholders.

The Value to the Learning

SUPPORTING INSTRUCTORS AND COACHES
Facilitators have the ability to watch, comment, and interact with learners during the experience and make adjustments to behavior in real time, much as they might do during an in-person learning session. All stakeholders can share a virtual classroom so everyone can learn from each other supporting social learning and peer-to-peer learning.

Metaverse training supports face-to-face instruction, which still remains the most effective modality for training. Immersive technologies simply help to simulate interactions to reinforce the value of the 1:1 relationship in training.

A LEARNER-CENTERED SOLUTION
The metaverse, much like virtual reality, is highly interactive and addictive. It’s a fun experience that immerses the learner within an experience. They can see facial expressions, they can interact with avatars in a role playing situation, or stroll through 3D hallways to explore learning content and interact with other people. They can even participate in someone else’s shoes to learn a different perspective. This introduces training capabilities of soft skills, communication, empathy—ideal for training in customer service and client interactions.

Technical skills require hands-on training. The metaverse can allow learners to practice and repeat in a true representation of their actual work environment to help familiarize them with their job locations. Learners can save time and can access training programs at their own pace and location. There is a reduced need to travel and take time away from family and work.
Learners have direct contact with not only their instructors and coaches, but also to the simulated environment, tools, and technology involved with their real-life work. And all resources, content, items, and learning modules can be recalled at any time from a learner’s mobile device.

**The Advantages for L&D**

**SUPPORTING FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Metaverse learning environments can be accessed on existing technology infrastructure. Unlike VR training that requires sophisticated VR headsets, your employees can participate using laptops and smartphones. This means you can quickly develop a proof of concept to demonstrate to your organization the potential of metaverse and VR training in the workplace. If you’re interested in moving forward with potential VR projects in the future, the metaverse is a perfect first step in the right direction.

**DRIVING KPIs**

Learning analytics provide a deeper understanding of how your learners are progressing and achieving milestones. Armed with this data, learning programs can be adjusted to address learning needs and issues.

Learning can be tied directly to the business by analyzing year-over-year learning progress. For example, you can align learning engagement with sales metrics to demonstrate your program’s impact on the business and the bottom line. Employees that show mastery in areas of leadership skills can be selected for career development opportunities.

**The Value to the Business**

**ADDRESSING THE HYBRID WORKPLACE**

As with all remote training modalities, metaverse training can reduce the reliance on in-person training. This results in reduced expenses for travel, hotels, meals, etc. It also maintains social distancing practice to support the health and safety of all workers.

**AS A RECRUITMENT TOOL**

To support recruitment, employing emerging technologies for onboarding and training demonstrates how a company values learning and creating learner-centered experiences. This can be a key differentiating factor when the next generation of employee is seeking employment.
The Rise of Metaverse Learning for Corporate Training

The Value of a Creative Learning Agency

As we evolve towards more sophisticated modalities, we need to keep a constant watch on our polar star: learning effectiveness. Technology allows us to track, measure, and report upon learning success, but we need to embed this mindset into the development of learning programs from the start. Choose your modality wisely and ensure it aligns with what learners want. This involves personalization of learning paths, surveys, touchpoints, coaching, mentoring, etc.

This technology is learner-focused. But you need effective programs, learning paths, and understanding of the learner to achieve this. Otherwise, the value is only for the business. Yes, the tech can make for more efficient and effective learning. But your learning program and strategy needs to be effective in the first place to reap the benefits of the technology. It’s not about the tech, but about the teach!

Learning objectives, outcomes, and strategy remain the top priority for L&D. It’s about creating learner-centered experiences and empowering learners to want to boost their education. The main goal should always be to make your employees excited to engage in critical learning programs that can have a significant impact on their personal and professional careers. Let’s move away from transactional learning initiatives and strive towards a culture of continuous learning.

With that in mind, your content strategy is going to need to support your business requirements. As your organization moves towards more immersive learning programs and metaverse training solutions, you’re going to need high-impact, and highly engaging content. Your creative learning partner needs to be able to support your strategy and empower your innovative ideas.