The Metaverse

A continuum of technology and experience, reshaping business

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The Metaverse is ushering in the next wave of digital change and is providing forward-looking companies with an opportunity to act today and be ready for the future.

Welcome to the **"Metaverse Continuum"**—a spectrum of digitally enhanced worlds, realities and business models poised to revolutionize life and enterprise in the next decade. It applies across all aspects of business, from consumer to worker and across the enterprise; from reality to virtual and back; from 2D to 3D; and from cloud and artificial intelligence to extended reality, blockchain, digital twins, edge technologies and beyond.

As the next evolution of the Internet, the metaverse will be a continuum of rapidly emerging capabilities, use cases, technologies and experiences.

The Metaverse Continuum will transform how businesses interact with customers, how work is done, what products and services companies offer, how they make and distribute them, and they operate their organizations.

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As these developments challenge our basic assumptions about technology and business, we're entering a new landscape with no rules or expectations. It's time to build and shape the worlds of tomorrow.

Multiple worlds, multiple projects

The physical world is coming alive with new capabilities, environment by environment, each with its own rules. We already have small-scale intelligent physical worlds like smart factories, intelligent cruise ships and automated ports. Tomorrow we'll see these grow into smart neighbourhoods, cities and countries, where massive digital twins mirror physical reality. And purely digital worlds are expanding as well.

Major companies will have their own internal "metaverses" to let employees work and interact from anywhere. In our free time, new consumer metaverses will transport us to almost any type of world we can imagine, to play games, socialize or relax.

While we are at the early days of the metaverse, leaders that shy away from the uncertainty of the metaverse will soon be operating in worlds defined by others. Businesses will find themselves on the front lines of establishing safety and defining the human experience in these worlds.

Trust will be paramount; existing concerns around privacy, bias, fairness and human impact are sharpening as the line between people's physical and digital lives blurs. Leading enterprises will shoulder the charge for building a responsible metaverse, and are setting the standards now.

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Architecting tomorrow's continuum, today

Just like in the early years of the web, businesses are racing toward a future utterly different from the one they were designed for. Over the next decade, we will witness a complete transformation of nearly every environment in which companies do business.

The good news? There's still time to get ahead—but companies need to start making decisive technology investments. At a minimum, they need to prioritize the remaining gaps in their digital transformation, from delayed cloud migrations to sidelined data and analytics programs.

But to really start this new journey, they must build on that digital foundation. It's time to finally pick partners to build a digital twin, go beyond data and analytics to use AI in more visible and collaborative ways, or launch the "moonshot" project that increasingly feels mission critical. Only with a mature and well-oiled digital engine will enterprises be prepared to participate in (or build) new environments and worlds.

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Metaverse: four trends.
These trends investigate the entire continuum, from the virtual to the physical, across humans and machines alike and will become the building blocks of our collective future

WebMe
WebMe looks at how the internet is being reimagined. The last two years have spurred enterprises to explore new modes of digital experience and pushed people to live virtually to an extent they never expected. Now the metaverse is emerging, reconciling how the internet is designed with what we will demand from it going forward.

Programmable World
But the value of new virtual worlds would be capped if not for parallel changes that anchor them in the physical one. Programmable World tracks how technology exists in our physical environments in increasingly sophisticated ways. It projects how the convergence of new technologies like 5G are changing the way businesses interact with the physical world. We'll soon be able to unlock an unprecedented level of control, automation and personalization.

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The Unreal

The emergence of The Unreal is a trend where our environments are increasingly filled with machines that are almost human. "Unreal" qualities are becoming intrinsic to the AI, and even the data, that enterprises are using. But bad actors are using it, too—from deepfakes to bots and more. Like it or not, enterprises have been thrust into the forefront of a world questioning what's real, what isn't and if the line between those two really matters.

Computing the Impossible

Finally, we will reset the boundaries of traditional industries as we begin Computing the Impossible.

The outer limit of what is computationally possible is being disrupted as a new class of machines emerges. Quantum, biologically inspired and high-performance computers are each allowing companies to tackle the biggest challenges in their industrie.

We stand at a unique moment. There are new technologies to embrace but competing in this next decade will require something more than tech and innovation skills. It will require a truly competitive vision—both for what these future worlds will look like and for what your enterprise will need to become to succeed in them. Technology points us in the right direction, but the rest is up to all of us.

This paper is an extract from Accenture's Technology Vision 2022: Meet Me in the Metaverse. You can download a full copy at https://www.accenture.com/us-en/ insights/technology/technology-trends2022-

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