Responsible Metaverse definitions, strategy, and ethical principles

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About the Responsible Metaverse Alliance

The Responsible Metaverse Alliance (RMA) is social enterprise and an international movement dedicated to supporting the development of the metaverse, constituting virtual or immersive worlds, so that it is handled responsibly from a perspective of design, deployment, safety, culture, inclusion, operations, and function.

The RMA will focus on encouraging the ethical, transparent, and acceptable uses of, and policies for, metaverse platforms and related technologies in a manner consistent with, 1) participant well-being and safety, 2) environmental well-being, 3) diversity and inclusion and 4) societal laws and norms.

Please note that that there is no one definition of any of the following concepts and terms - this is an attempt at putting some words around these fluid concepts so as to be more accessible to those learning about the field.

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The metaverse

The metaverse is a persistent and immersive, simulated, or virtual world that is experienced in the first person by large groups of simultaneous users who share a strong sense of mutual presence.

Some commentators refer to virtual worlds as individual metaverses however in the main the metaverse refers to multiple immersive worlds or platforms that are contained within a singular concept termed the metaverse.

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The metaverse vs Augmented, Virtual, Mixed and Extended Realities

The metaverse may be experienced using Augmented or Virtual Reality however neither of these technologies on their own accord constitute the metaverse. Both technologies can be used separately for their own specific purpose, such as providing a layer of information over a physical object, without the experience being regarded as being in the metaverse.

The distinctions are set out below:

Augmented Reality (AR) is the real-time use of information in the form of text, graphics, audio, and other virtual enhancements integrated with real-world objects. It is this "real world" element that differentiates AR from virtual reality. AR integrates and adds value to the user's interaction with the real world, versus a simulation. (*Gartner*)

Virtual Reality (VR) provides a computer-generated 3D environment, including both computer graphics and 360-degree video, that surrounds a user and responds to an individual's actions in a natural way, usually through immersive head-mounted displays. Gesture recognition or handheld controllers provide hand and body tracking, and haptic (or touch-sensitive) feedback may be incorporated. Room-based systems provide a 3D experience while moving around large areas, or they can be used with multiple participants. (*Gartner*)

Mixed Reality (MR) is a medium consisting of immersive computer-generated environments in which elements of a physical and virtual environment are combined - unlocking natural and intuitive 3D human, computer, and environmental interactions. (*Microsoft*)

Extended Reality (XR) is a collective term that refers to immersive technologies, including virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality. (*Nvidia*)

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A Responsible Metaverse

A Responsible Metaverse is one where virtual or immersive worlds have been designed, developed and deployed in a manner which has the well-being of the diverse participants, society and the environment at its core; and that platform providers and related parties are held to account for any harm that is caused related to the design, deployment or operation of their systems.

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Responsible Metaverse Strategy

A Responsible Metaverse Strategy goes beyond a focus on ethics, safety, security, and privacy – rather it is a holistic strategy used when virtual world platform providers or suppliers to the metaverse are looking to design, develop or deploy metaverse related technologies in a responsible way.

A Responsible Metaverse Strategy may incorporate policy and programs for:

Leadership

1. Strategy & Leadership –including goals for human, society and environmental well-being
2. Governance – formal structures that are both internal and external to the organisation
3. External party relationships and accountability e.g., civil society, regulators, and other interest groups
4. Risk Management focused on minimising harms and unintended consequences
5. Scaling strategy

Design

6. Human, societal, and environmental experience design
7. Ethical by design

8. Safety by design
9. Effective design processes for creatives, designers, suppliers
10. Virtual product and service design

Marketing and Sales

11. Participant/user research
12. Metaverse brand positioning
13. Marketing including AI-driven and virtual product initiatives
14. Virtual and human sales processes
15. PR and media in the virtual, digital, and physical worlds

Culture

16. Culture – across virtual, digital, and physical worlds
17. Diversity and inclusion
18. Trust building

Data & Operations

19. Data, security, privacy
20. Participant/user experience and support
21. Technology infrastructure
22. Operations including interoperability between virtual worlds
23. Transparency, explainability, contestability and accountability processes
24. Monitoring, assessments, audits and reviews
25. Reporting – internal and external
26. Effective operational processes between the virtual, digital, and physical worlds
27. Procurement and supplier processes

People and Digital Labour

28. Recruitment and engagement
29. People and skills including Human-AI teams
30. Accountabilities

Financials and Legals

31. Financial modelling and processes relevant to virtual worlds (and potentially web3 business models)
32. Intellectual Property and rites
33. Legals and contracts including smart contracts

The Responsible Metaverse strategy model assists leaders and organisations make decisions and choices to create a trusted and dependable environment where participants feel confident that no harm or deleterious outcome will occur.

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