vismedia.agency

B2B Marketing

Insight · Development · Training · Events

Immerse yourself:
The power of innovative digital content in B2B marketing



b2bmarketing.net

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Section 1 What do we mean by 'immersive digital content'?	5
Section 2 Four myths about immersive digital content that need busting	6
Section 3 Three innovative B2B brands winning at immersive digital content experiences	7
Conclusion	13

Foreword



Scott Shillum,
managing director,
Vismedia

Humans are visual creatures. Vision itself is interpreted by the brain into sensory reasoning. The very fact we live in a 3D world and have binocular vision means we're fully immersed in our everyday environment. Around 30% of our brain power is used to make sense of the world around us, which is why 80% of people remember what they see, compared to 20% of what they read, and 10% of what they hear.

Aside from the natural world, the relentless march of new technology means we enjoy ever-increasing visual quality from 4K televisions and laptops (soon to be 8K) and gorgeous OLED phone displays. It's only when watching re-runs of TV programmes from just a few years ago that we appreciate how far we've come and how quickly we've adjusted to the new normal. What hasn't changed in the past couple of decades, however, is the 2D-nature of visual marketing and communications.

The fundamental issue, of course, is that a TV, laptop or phone screen is essentially a 2D plane, which has historically lent itself to a rather linear, passive 2D experience. Even when watching a multi-million dollar movie in an IMAX theatre with heart-pounding audio, it's still a non-interactive experience. And that's fine, because you still emerge blinking into the real world having been immersed and engrossed by the production. But let's assume that most marketing budgets are 1000 times smaller, yet you're still expected to deliver engaging content to a laptop or a mobile phone. What arrows can you have in your quiver?

The good news is that major global tech companies are in a race to make their platforms as sticky as possible, which to you and me is a standard modern-day browser (Chrome, Safari, Firefox, etc). By layering functionality on top of these browsers and creating dynamic two-way communications, B2B marketers can massively increase the dwell time and, almost by default, capture valuable back-end data analytics. The new reality is that the technology at our fingertips – blended together in the right way using a mixture of creativity, user experience (UX) and clever coding – can create experiences that deliver impressive ROI.

What's more, this technology doesn't discriminate. It has the potential to shake up numerous sectors in multiple ways. 360° content, 3D experiences, virtual and augmented reality, gamification: as you'll see later in this report, from sales enablement to employee engagement to investor relations – the possibilities are endless.

Introduction

For B2B marketers, creating compelling content that cuts through the noise has been a perennial challenge that's existed for as long as B2B marketing has. Industry conferences, networking events, thought leadership content – it all urges B2B marketers to be brave and to take risks. But many don't possess the technology, budget or senior-level buy-in to actually do it.

The numerous challenges and extreme disruption caused by recent events hasn't shifted this need or altered these challenges. It has, however, added a sharper focus to the requirement for brands to innovate quicker, and immersive digital content represents the perfect conduit for B2B marketers who want to continue doing what they do best during these uncertain times.

What's more, B2B marketers have found themselves lagging behind the most unlikely of parties in the shape of comms, learning and development, and HR departments. These verticals are setting the bar for how immersive content experiences can truly add tangible business value. If B2B marketers needed any extra motivation, surely this provides it.

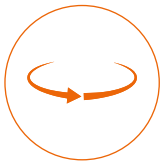
Fortunately, many forward-thinking B2B brands are doing exactly that, reacting with flexibility and agility to particularly disruptive times. Leading customer experience SaaS brand Zendesk adapted to event cancellations caused by the Covid-19 pandemic by releasing a high-quality video series – filmed, edited and released in an exclusively remote setting. The production team sent a high-quality webcam, as well as lighting and audio equipment, to the host, and upscaled the resolution of remotely generated footage from participants using AI software. This was then superimposed onto a virtual 3D stage. In just two weeks, the Zendesk team started airing the twice-weekly 'Zendesk Morning Show' to the web with subtitles in three languages.

And, at B2B Marketing, many of our conferences have been adapted into digital-only events, without compromising the learning and networking potential that so many of our delegates value. The digital version of Get Stacked and our inaugural B2B Ignite USA were roaring successes, while our flagship Ignite London event will be receiving the same treatment.

The industry is sitting at a juncture. Technology has become infinitely more advanced, and now allows B2B marketers to deliver advanced interactive experiences to anyone with a desktop or a mobile. Recent times have underlined the value of these experiences. Why then, with digital marketers holding the ability to create incredible digital experiences right at their fingertips, are so many still churning out the same content and experiences?

Section 1

What do we mean by ‘immersive digital content’?



1. 360° content

When you hear ‘360°’, you either think the temperature is really high, or someone’s talking about virtual reality (VR). The truth, however, is that, 360° isn’t just limited to VR. Anyone with a screen that can access the internet can immerse themselves in a video or image that’s fully explorable.

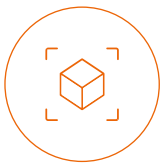
In B2B terms, 360° video, imagery or CGI can be used to illustrate the inner workings of an energy plant, or can take an online delegate on a tour of a digital conference or event.



2. Interactive web pages

The quality of written content and basic functionality of a web page isn’t enough to stand out on today’s noisy digital streets. In order to attract attention, B2B brands are adding extra layers to their websites, meaning people can interact with individual elements of a web page – whether that’s through animations, data visualisations, or 360° immersive experiences.

For B2B brands, whose subject matter can often be complex and difficult to understand, interactive web content creates a more dynamic and intuitive experience for users.



3. Augmented reality

Not to be confused with its sibling VR, augmented reality (AR) superimposes virtual objects into the real world. Unlike VR, it supplements, rather than replaces, reality.

In B2B, it enables brands to bring complex ideas to life and reach new audiences. With manufacturing brand Coats, you’ll find a stellar example of AR in action, later in the report.



4. Virtual reality

One of most sophisticated pieces of digital tech currently on the market, VR can transport people to different worlds and show them places they’ve never seen before.

For B2B brands, it unlocks an unrivalled level of immersion, and can bring to life places and products in ways we couldn’t have imagined a few years ago. Imagine being able to walk the corridors of an energy facility and interact with individual pieces of machinery to see how it helps transform waste into energy – that’s exactly what Cory Riverside Energy did (see the case studies in section 3).

Section 2

Four myths about immersive digital content that need busting

Whether it's cost, time, or lack of resources, creating cutting-edge digital content has long been hampered by stigmas that have held many B2B marketers from harnessing their true power. The debunked myths below should provide the motivation you need to embrace their potential.

1. It's too expensive

When these flashy new content types (360° experiences, interactive websites, and AR/VR) first burst onto the scene, the players with the meanest budgets were, understandably, the first to grab a piece of the action.

Encouragingly, as this tech becomes more mainstream, it becomes more affordable, and infinitely more accessible for B2B brands of all shapes and sizes, maturity and industries/sectors/verticals. Now, with the right counsel and expertise in tow, every B2B marketer has the power to craft cutting-edge digital content at their fingertips.

2. Campaigns take too long to get off the ground

Due to their sophistication and the demands of the technology involved, there exists a stigma that cutting-edge immersive content campaigns aren't worth the hassle because of the long turnaround time from ideation to execution.

But, as the real-life examples below demonstrate, you needn't age considerably while waiting for these kinds of campaigns to bear fruit. With the right partners, there's no reason why B2B marketers can't turn around campaigns quickly and efficiently.

3. The quality is found wanting

We've all experienced the frustration of long loading times and choppy videos that look like they've been filmed on a potato. A few years ago, our ambitions for immersive content far outweighed our capabilities for actually producing something that added value (at least, to all who didn't possess the strongest of wifi speeds).

Thankfully, 4G made the pursuit of immersive digital content more inclusive, and 5G promises to turbocharge this potential into large scale, data-hungry experiences that can be delivered to mass audiences. New compression algorithms also enable the creation of much smaller file sizes with no loss of quality. It means that even the most cash-strapped B2B marketer will be able to create the kind of stand-out, relevant experiences and content they could only have dreamed of a few years ago.

4. It's a gimmick that doesn't add business value

Like most shiny new toys in B2B, the early adopters of immersive content types jumped on the proverbial bandwagon with little consideration for how it aligned to their strategic business goals. However, now that much of the technology is tried and tested, there's enormous potential for each and every campaign involving these content types to deliver serious business value.

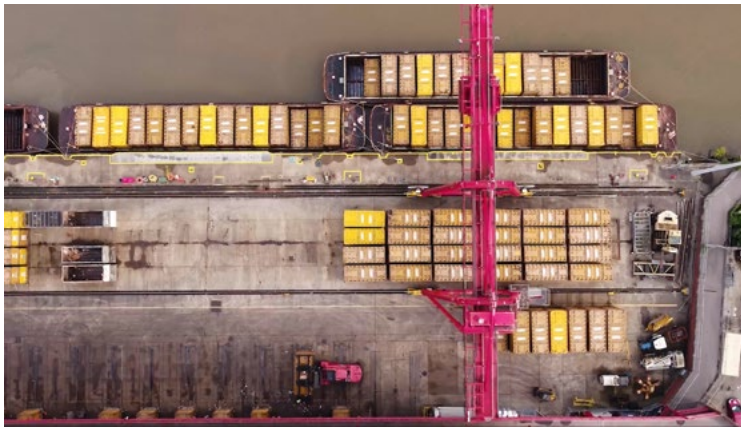
One of the biggest challenges facing B2B marketers is convincing the c-suite to loosen their purse-strings to enable these kinds of campaigns. With that in mind, the case studies below will hopefully serve as the persuasive material they need to free up some vital funds.

Section 3

Three innovative B2B brands winning at immersive digital content experiences

Cory Riverside Energy – 360° digital content that spanned the globe







The company

Cory Riverside Energy is the UK's biggest largest waste-to-energy plant. It transports over 750,000 tonnes of waste along the River Thames each year, using its state-of-the-art facilities to generate enough power for 160,000 homes.

Challenge

After being put up for auction, Cory needed to appeal to a wide range of potential global investors, but lacked the means to showcase its impressive facilities to interested parties dotted around the world.

It needed an innovative and environmentally-friendly approach to demonstrate the potential of its London-based energy waste plant, but without the need for a physical tour that would require potential investors flying thousands of miles to attend.

Objectives

1. Attract the interest of potential investors without compromising environmental commitments by flying them across the world for a physical visit.

2. Follow up with key potential investors to further strengthen relations.

Tactics

With many of its potential investors situated in North America and Asia, Cory knew that flying them to the UK for a physical tour of its facilities – coupled with a plant's strict health and safety regulations – would be a logistical, financial and environmental sinkhole.

To give investors a flavour of its facilities, Cory developed a 360° interactive and immersive digital 'twin' of its Thames facility. Using a blend of videos, photos and animations, potential investors could walk the plant's corridors and uncover what powers the UK's largest energy-from-waste plant – from its recycling facility at Smuggler's Cove, to its energy recovery plant at Belvedere.

Primarily a desktop-only experience, Cory expanded the campaign by identifying 40 key potential investors and sending them bespoke VR headsets (delivered in a Cory-designed mini shipping container) to provide them with a fully immersive experience.

Results

With Cory's CEO attributing the plant's eventual sale to its digital content campaign, this initiative delivered 300,000% ROI when comparing the cost of the campaign to the ultimate sales figure (which greatly exceeded Cory's original valuation price).

Timeframe: four months

Why it worked

When they can't come to you, go to them

Cory quickly realised that the challenges of bringing potential investors to them would be insurmountable, so it adapted. By approaching investors directly, it created a 'destination experience' while also demonstrating its environmental commitment by reducing the carbon footprint of travelling investors, which would prove a key attitude for attracting interest.

Simplifying a complex story

The inner workings of an energy plant are extremely intricate and difficult to make sense of to the untrained eye. The use of immersive and interactive content, along with the follow-up VR headsets, allowed Cory to communicate the value of its facilities in an engaging and human manner.



"The premium immersive experience delivered by the Vismedia team played a crucial role in showcasing Cory Riverside Energy's innovative facilities, ultimately helping us achieve a premium sale price for the business"

Nicholas Pollard, CEO, Cory Riverside Energy

Coats Car – AR puts delegates and prospects in the driving seat

The company

Coats Group is a world leader in the development and production of advanced fibres. Its products are used across numerous industries and sectors, including retail, fashion, automotive and telecoms.

Challenge

Coats is a brand whose products and services span almost every sector and industry imaginable. To strengthen its market-leading position within the automotive sector, Coats was looking for a visual, innovative and disruptive way to articulate how its products were used inside and outside of a vehicle. The result was in an immersive piece of content that could be used by marketing and sales teams alike.

Objectives

1. Use immersive digital content to increase lead generation on the Coats website.

2. Create a stunning visual aid that would enable sales teams to host more strategic and interactive conversations at events and during client meetings.

Tactics

Coats' took a two-pronged approach to ensure campaign success and to bring its sales and marketing teams together. Firstly, it created an interactive 3D model of a car (hosted on its website), allowing people to dynamically explore specific sections of the vehicle. This revealed where different Coats products were applied and how they contributed to the vehicle's operation – such as the driver and passenger air bags, bonnet reinforcement, and lightweight seatbelts.

Coats then repurposed this 3D digital version of the car into an AR model, which salespeople could use to create



unique visual experiences at events and during client meetings. When viewing a physical sculpture of the Coats Car through an iPad, prospects and clients could use the app's AR capabilities to strip back specific parts of the vehicle and examine where various Coats products were applied, much like the digital 3D model hosted on its website.

Results

Since launching the interactive 3D model on its website, Coats has enjoyed a significant uplift in website traffic and form submissions on its automotive landing pages. Coats' sales teams have also attributed a number of new client deals to the AR sales enablement version of the car, which has helped them communicate the benefits of Coats' products in a unique way.

Timeframe: three months

Why it worked (and what B2B marketers can learn from its success)

The right digital content brings marketing and sales together

For many brands, an immersive piece of digital marketing content that neatly encapsulates its products would be enough, but Coats wanted content that would merge the typical boundaries that often keep B2B marketing and sales teams apart.

Immersive digital content is extremely versatile

Instead of merely focusing on a single application, Coats used the flexibility of visual digital content to create a 3D visual model that could be repurposed as an AR app, both of which proved beneficial to different parts of the business.

"Augmented reality and interactive web experiences have enabled us to drive visitors to our three innovation hubs, increase footfall at exhibitions, increase website traffic, and increase engagement on our social media channels across our target segments. They are key tools to help us to educate our customers as to our company USPs which, ultimately, lead to an increase in leads and commercial growth"

Carla Griffin, global head of marketing communications, Coats

EY – Gamification brings boring employee surveys to life



The company

One of the world's best-known professional services brands, EY employs over 270,000 people in 150 countries across the world.

Challenge

EY wanted to gauge the reaction to its crucial strategic step-change, named the three Ts (Technology, Talent and Trust). Having experimented with traditional ways of collecting employee feedback (such as online questionnaires), EY wanted to adopt a more dynamic and engaging approach towards gathering employee data, that would result in more honest and accurate responses.

Objectives

1. Collect vital data concerning employee sentiment surrounding EY's three strategic pillars: Technology, Talent and Trust.

2. Increase participation of internal initiatives, while not compromising employee satisfaction and patience.

Tactics

While gamification in B2B has been around for a while, using it as a 360° experience to engage employees is rare. To help reach its people and analyse their attitude towards its new strategic approach, EY launched three

interactive digital games around Technology, Talent and Trust. The games were designed specifically for EY's website, tailored to its branding, and with the added option to flexibly add and repurpose content as and when needed.

Results

- 84% of targeted employees participated in the initiative, amounting to over 7000 people.
- The data collected confirmed there was strong understanding and belief in the three Ts across the organisation.

Timeframe: 1.5 months

Why it worked (and what B2B marketers can learn from its success)

Treat your people, like people

Everybody loves a good game. By applying a rich aspect of popular culture (gaming) to a business environment, EY ensured its employees would actually enjoy sharing their thoughts, rather than treating it as a chore.

Something different brings out the honesty in people

We've all rushed our way through those compulsory staff surveys and left obscure and potentially unhelpful feedback. By making the process enjoyable and engaging, EY not only increased participation levels, but also the quality of data recorded, as employees were more likely to share their honest and candid thoughts.

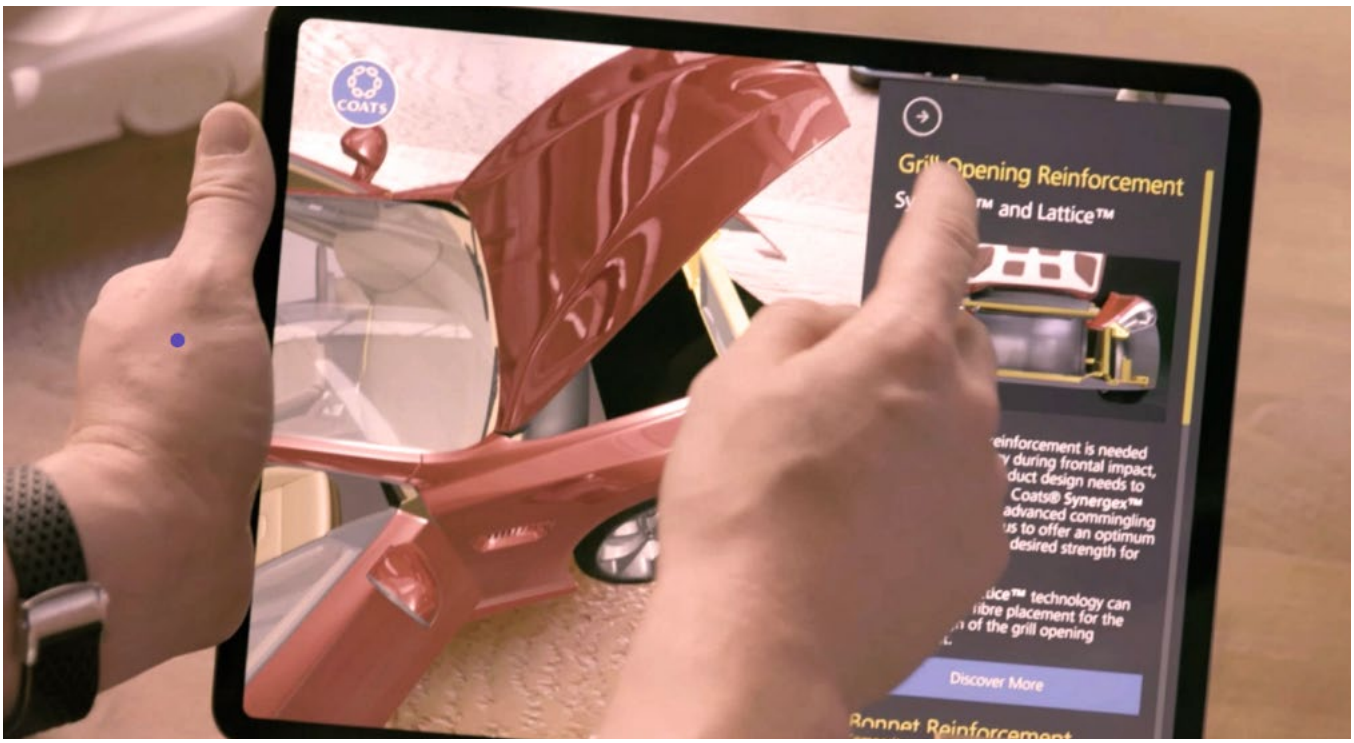
"Gamification helps our partners and leaders talk with their people about their contribution to the three Ts – as groups and individuals"

Gill Poloni, UK&I head of communications and engagement, EY

Conclusion

This is a brave new world for B2B marketers, brimming with creative and innovative mediums and formats to inject new levels of life into their work. The unprecedented period we have all experienced during 2020 has made this need even more pressing and pertinent, and may well result in a permanent step change in how B2B marketers approach digital content.

Immersive digital content no longer represents an expensive pinch of glitter to sprinkle on top of a more traditional marketing campaign. It's robust, strategic and affordable, meaning B2B brands of all shapes, sizes and sectors can use it to delight their audiences and seize competitive advantage.



About

B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research and reports
- Training
- Events
- Membership.

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0)20 7014 4920.

Vismedia

Vismedia is leading the use of immersive 360° and 3D interactive web experiences for B2B marketing. The Shoreditch-based agency has worked with leading business brands for 20 years and has built a highly talented team of producers, directors, developers, 3D artists, animators and editors who keep their B2B clients ahead of the creative tech curve.

vismedia.agency

B2B Marketing

Insight · Development · Training · Events

vismedia.agency

B2B Marketing

Insight · Development · Training · Events

Contact us

B2B Marketing
Clover House
147–149 Farringdon Road
London
EC1R 3HN

Tel: +44 (0)20 7014 4920
info@b2bmarketing.net
b2bmarketing.net

vismedia.agency

vismedia.agency