

Case studies

Six examples of VR and AR
in B2B marketing





Introduction

Both virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) transform the environments around us. They create an impressive, immersive experience that goes far beyond anything that can be achieved with a blog, a brochure or an infographic.

Moreover, they're effective sales tools. They tell emotive stories or clearly convey complex information about products and data. As Gavin Finn, president and CEO at AR and VR specialists Kaon Interactive, told us: "It's the customer who's driving the experience and that is a much more engaging prospect than a salesperson with PowerPoint."

Because of this, as an industry, B2B marketing has been talking about the opportunities offered by AR and VR for a long time. A really, really long time. But if you were to plot where we are on the Gartner Hype Cycle, we'd still be right at the start. The technology is there, but meaningful, effective

examples are hard to find. Look beyond events and product demos and they're nigh on non-existent.

In the B2C world, AR and VR are used extensively and efficiently and are constantly being developed. Look at Disney's 'Magic Bench' or any number of retailers, property developers or car companies and you'll see great examples. Not so much in the B2B world.

Why is that? Are we missing a trick? Or should we all just stop hyping it up? These are the questions this report aims to answer, revealing some of the issues preventing B2B marketers from using these tools and how to overcome them. It then outlines six unicorn-like case studies: where AR and VR have been used to great effect. From technology to travel, they each reveal new insights on how AR and VR campaigns can be designed to assist in the B2B sales process.

If you're thinking about how to incorporate AR or VR into your marketing programme and what the possibilities might be, here's how to get to the next stage.

What's the difference between virtual and augmented reality?

Virtual reality (VR), is a computer generated simulation of a 3D environment that people can interact with. It shuts out the real world and transports us elsewhere. This tends to be achieved through a headset such as Oculus Rift or Google Cardboard.

Augmented reality (AR), is when technology is used to overlay a virtual image or sound onto the real world.

It alters the appearance of the environment we are in. Tools such as Google Glass create AR experiences. Increasingly, smartphones are also being used.

What types of marketing can they be used for?

VR and AR have an almost infinite number of applications. But B2B marketers tend to be developing story-led experiences and product visualisations for the following scenarios:

	Virtual reality	Augmented reality
Product demos	✓	✓
Training	✓	✓
Conferences	✓	✓
Sales meetings	X	✓
Enhancing product offerings	X	✓

Is this just a fad?

Far from it. When it comes to these technologies, this is just the start of the B2B marketing journey

Numerous studies show spend on both AR and VR is due to rocket, with B2B being key to this growth. Sectors driving this surge include manufacturing, industrial, construction, transportation and professional services. One piece of research suggests B2B adoption will nearly catch up with the consumer world, and that by 2022 the number of VR experiences in B2B will account for 40% of all experiences.

The way B2B audiences behave is changing. For Justin Shriber, VP of marketing at LinkedIn Sales and Marketing Solutions, they're becoming just as demanding as consumers: "B2B buyers have slowly been conditioned to expect the same personalized treatment that they get while shopping on Amazon."

AR and VR are just part of the answer. We talk about augmented reality and virtual reality now, but the likelihood is that these technologies will start to merge. Mixed reality experiences will step in, powered by HoloLens and the like, creating a more fluid, natural environment where we can

seamlessly play with the virtual objects around us. With this technology developing, B2B buyers will come to expect experiences well beyond a simple email campaign.

Indeed, with the mobile devices that we carry around every day developing to power these experiences, the mainstream awaits. AR and VR – or whatever they become known as – will soon be just one of the tools in every B2B marketer's arsenal.

Why aren't more B2B organisations using VR and AR?

Feedback from agencies suggests there are five main issues.

Many clients are worried about doing something new before it has been thoroughly tested. They don't want to waste time and money tackling uncharted territory and are waiting to see competitor results before diving in. Some discount it as expensive, others as a gimmick, or, as time-consuming. In some industries (like travel), there are concerns about quality in comparison to say, HD or high-quality photography.

How can organisations overcome these barriers?

1. Novelty:

It's always a challenge introducing new ways of working, especially in corporate organizations. It's not impossible though. It's essential to set the right strategy and create the right idea to fuel any activity before deciding on AR and VR as the tactic. Next, find the senior people you know will support and champion a pioneering project that answers a business issue. And finally, work with a partner. There are dozens of organizations that create AR and VR experiences regularly and can support you with technology.

2. Cost:

VR and AR don't have to be prohibitively expensive but, as with any marketing campaign, it's about ensuring the investment is worthwhile. For instance, if a VR tool is going to cost \$50,000 but it can be used around the world for a year to help convert high value sales, it could pay for itself.

3. Time:

Some of the examples in this report took just a few weeks to turn around. Others took far longer. But there's no reason why, with the right partners, they should take significantly longer to develop than other advanced marketing executions, like video and data visualization. As with all B2B marketing, it's likely to be gaining initial buy-in and then achieving sign-off that takes the bulk of the time.

4. Gimmicky:

Again, overcoming the claim that AR and VR aren't appropriate tools for a serious organization comes down to having the right strategy. Some companies created a buzz at events by being the first people there with VR and AR, but that simply isn't enough anymore. It's been seen. Now it's all about developing a differentiated, strategic but entertaining experience that could only have been developed by your organization. Not an easy task but the case studies on the coming pages show the possibilities.

5. Quality:

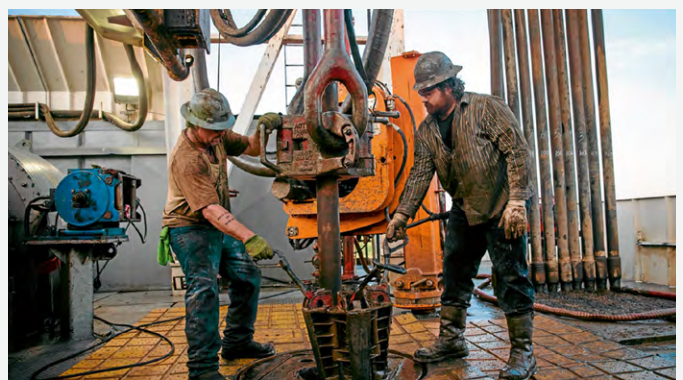
Yes, VR isn't HD yet, but it's developing and it's key to ensure the experience is so immersive that any unnatural technology is irrelevant. Tell a story.

So what could a VR or AR experience look like in your organization? Here are six examples along with learnings from each.

VR

The first three case studies in this report are all examples of where businesses have used virtual reality to assist with sales and raise brand awareness.

A matter of life and death in the energy industry



Challenge

Lloyd's Register helps organisations within the energy industry with the safety and performance of their business operations. Training clients in their understanding and use of energy equipment is one of its key offerings. But, due to the market downturn, as the industry cut its investment it became critical that Lloyd's Register's training services maintained its market share.

Marketing faced a threefold challenge to:

1. Enhance the knowledge gained in the training classroom, creating a memorable, stimulating experience.
2. Use technology to replicate real-life situations in order to test and improve learning outcomes beyond any competitors.

3. Make it possible to train beyond the high-tech classroom facility in Houston and so create an international offering.

Tactics

To address these, the team created a virtual reality safety simulator. Three catastrophic industry events were created in VR and gamified. In each scenario, lives are at risk if people

don't take the right action. 'Players' put on a headset, see the incidents and then have the chance to fix them and learn more.

The headset, a laptop and an iPad are the only items needed making the learning experience far more portable than the real safety equipment used in the classroom.

The simulator has also been used to fuel marketing activity. It was taken to events such as the Offshore Technology Conference and the data it collected was used to create content and media opportunities.

Outcomes

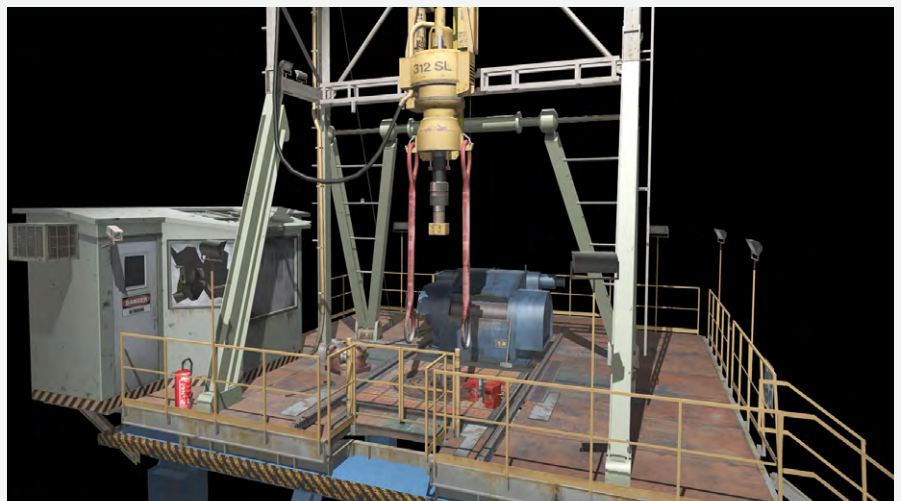
Since the launch, Lloyd's Register has seen an uplift in training bookings and has already achieved 3x ROI. The company is now taking its training offering even further, creating AR experiences so that whole teams can work together to solve scenarios.

Learnings

- › **Identify the real problem:** Not the marketing problem, but the business issue that needs addressing. In this case, marketing didn't create a B2B campaign to increase bookings. It drove a technology initiative that got to the very crux of the problem.
- › **Be strategic with spend:** Costing £40,000, the project more than paid for itself, showing the value of executing an innovative idea.
- › **It doesn't take as long as you think:** From idea to implementation, the project took two months to develop.

This idea proves that B2B marketing isn't dull. In fact, it's leading-edge and challenges FMCG for clever, strategic thinking

Peter Richards, vice president of marketing and communications at Lloyd's Register



Travelling the world



Challenge

The organisers of ILTM were keen for their invitation-only shows – which match up global luxury travel companies – to remain industry leading occasions. Key to success is being able to facilitate relevant, engaging one-to-one conversations between buyers and suppliers, and show ROI in attending the show.

Tactics

With just three weeks until the next event in Cannes, agency Everywherebrand and ILTM decided to promote the use of VR to attendees to help them communicate their products and services more clearly. They worked to put the potential of VR communications at the heart of the upcoming show by creating a suite of experiences. These were

designed to add interest to the show and help showcase brands in their best light possible. This would show ILTM to be innovating the way luxury travel brands interact.

Attendees could enter an immersive 360-degree VR viewing of a five-star luxury London hotel. Or they could create their own experience by drawing and sending a virtual postcard in real time. Combining Google Tilt Brush, HTC Vive and live projection,

brands could see how they could bring their own story to life using VR.

An integrated campaign supported this activity, including a whitepaper.

Outcomes

- › The NPS score of the event rose by five points to 54.
- › The dial shifted with a quarter of attendees saying at the end of the event that they would now use VR to help facilitate conversations.
- › Some 10% of conference attendees viewed the hotel video.
- › Due to the success of the VR experiences at Cannes, the

technology was used at ILTM's Asia event to showcase the location of the conference in Singapore the following year.

Learnings

- › **Curate the experience:** Everywherebrand found some travel companies were nervous about the visual quality of VR as they're used to HD video. To overcome this, VR experiences have to tell an engaging relevant story and the creator has to carefully explain the experience beforehand.
- › **Create a relevant story:** The technology alone isn't enough to impress now that first-mover advantage has gone (especially at events).

If you don't look back at your first VR film in a year and shudder with how much better things are now, you've left it too late. Using the latest technology is about being brave, pioneering, testing, and being ahead of the game

Rachel Haynes, strategy and planning director at Everywherebrand



Spilling the beans on food tech



Challenge

Key Technology, which designs and manufactures systems to process food, was preparing to launch a new digital sorting platform called VERYX.

It partnered with agency Stein IAS to create a campaign that would:

- › Generate awareness of the new platform among plant engineering

managers in multinationals and company owners of smaller manufacturing businesses.

- › Drive booth traffic and engagement at the upcoming Pack Expo event.
- › Generate leads and help acquire customers.

Tactics

A high-tech marketing approach was designed to match the high-tech new product.

Most demos at Pack Expo showcase products from the outside so potential buyers don't see the mechanical architecture, cameras, lasers or sorting processes taking place on the belt. Stein IAS, which was working with Key Technology

Our industry tends to be very conservative and not highly creative when it comes to marketing. In the trade publications, adverts are kind of catalogue-like – a lot of stainless steel equipment and pictures of food processed in that equipment. We really wanted to step outside the box with this campaign. The introduction of VERYX was a great success and everyone was thrilled with the launch and the campaign

Anita Funk,
marketing communications
manager at Key Technology

on the project, wanted to reveal the ingenious inner workings of the new product to the technical people who would be interested in such details.

As a result, the key element fueling the overall campaign was an immersive VR experience revealing exactly what was going on inside the digital sorting platform. For the first time, people could see for themselves the journey of a green bean – or indeed anything else.

This was supported by a video teaser campaign to drive awareness of the experience at the event.

Outcomes

This VR experience, the first of its kind in this industry, resulted in:

- › Immediate sales opportunities
- › The most opportunities Key Technology had ever generated at the conference
- › Securing more leads than projected
- › Multiple award wins.

Learnings

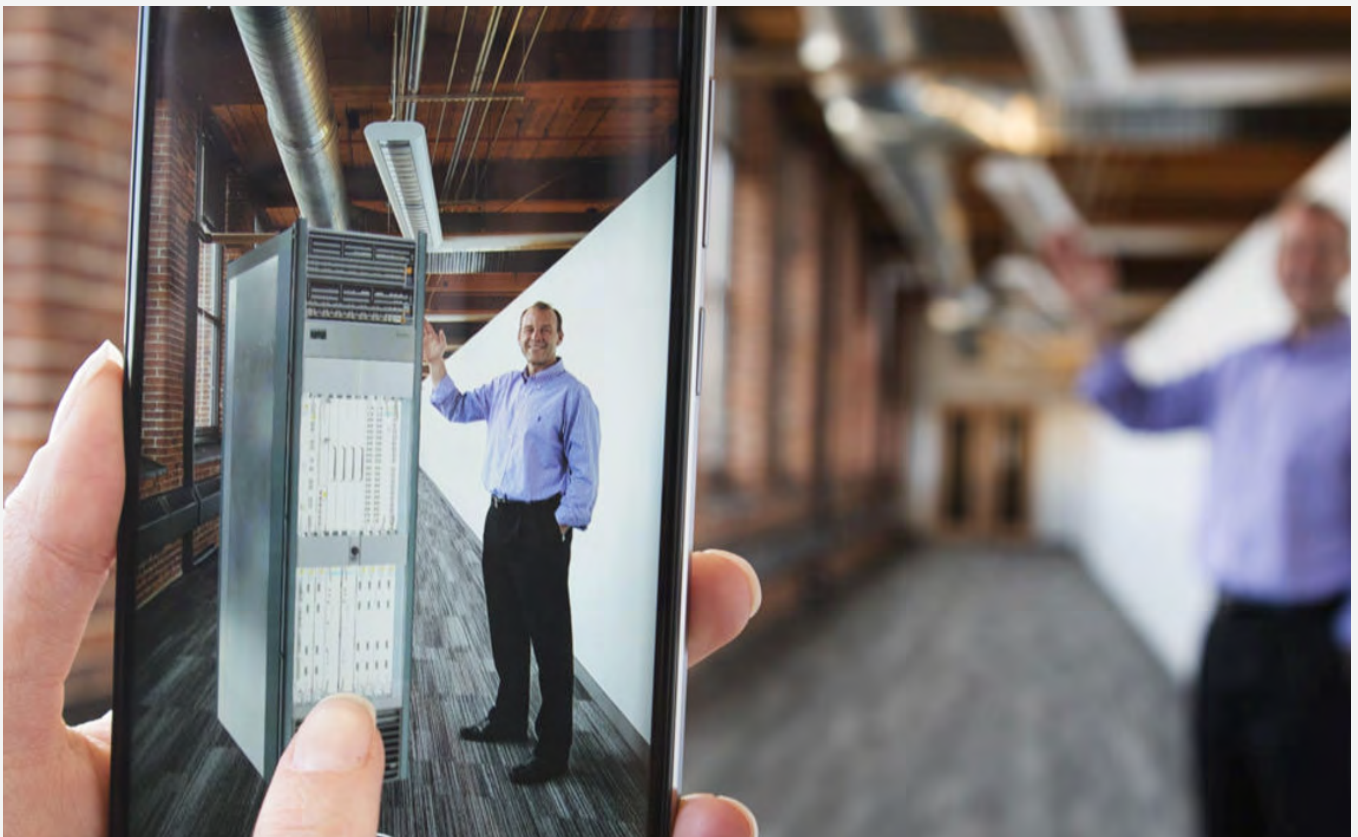
- › **Don't be afraid to get into the details:** VR can show important technical details in more engaging ways than a video or leaflets outlining the same information.
- › **First mover advantage:** In some industries, there's still time to use VR and AR to stand out from competitors at events and conferences.



AR

Is it possible for B2B businesses to use AR meaningfully? The following case studies reveal the results of augmented reality campaigns in three businesses, and make the case for why AR could well be the future over VR.

Showstopping technology



Challenge

More than a decade ago, Cisco was looking to simplify its complex product stories, reduce product shipping costs and increase product accessibility to its global sales teams, channel partners and customers. Ultimately, it wanted to lower costs and drive faster sales.

To answer this brief, Cisco worked with Kaon Interactive to develop

a visually engaging 3D interactive product catalogue.

Flash forward to 2017, and the tech giant was looking to improve this approach further, differentiate from competitors and give buyers an even more immersive and detailed experience.

Tactics

Based on more than 800 3D products available on the catalogue, Kaon created 360-degree photo-realistic AR animations using its marketing platform and Google Tango. These could be accessed across a multitude of devices so they could:

- ▶ Create a magical pop-up AR appearance at trade shows that

people can activate and walk around.

- › As visual tools in sales meetings.
- › For buyers to look at product details in their own space and time.

Outcomes

- › Significantly reduced shipping costs and access to more products for salespeople.
- › More than 2500 weekly application users.

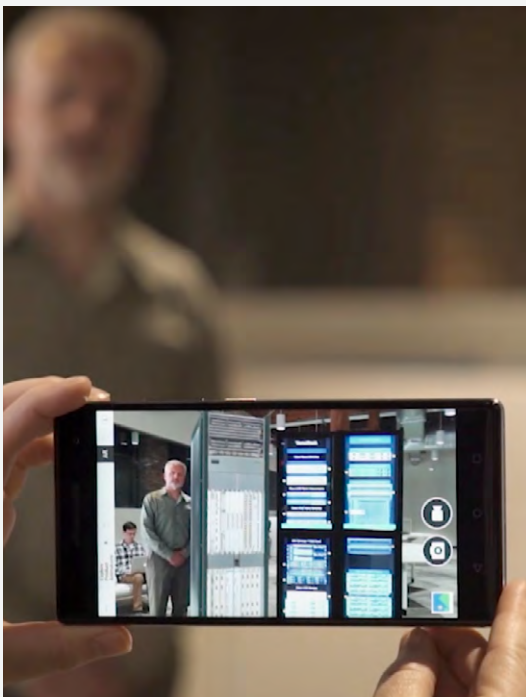
- › Increased engagement at trade shows.
- › Joined-up approach between sales and marketing.

Learnings

- › **Plan experiences across multiple platforms:** Build AR into your marketing infrastructure so the most appropriate device can be used at any given time. This makes sure your marketing investment has long-term, rather than one-off, benefits.

The application excites booth attendees but, more importantly, it educates on unique product features, benefits and value messaging, creating a more informed buyer

Dana Drissel, VP of marketing at Kaon Interactive



AR lends a helping hand



Challenge

Ottobock, a manufacturer and supplier of prosthetic limbs, wanted a way of using technology to show off its products and ensure the brand was seen as an innovator. Many of its products are highly technical, with intricate concealed working parts and mechanisms that provide ongoing 'nature' mobility to users, so this is difficult to show to potential customers (such as the NHS).

Solution

Mustard Design developed an AR application that would allow sales staff to display a CGI version of three prosthetic products when pitching for contracts by scanning relevant sales literature. The application would show a fully functioning prosthetic that was

interactive, allowing the salesperson and prospect to see how the product would work and articulate. Using the camera of the device it was possible to 'cut' through the CGI version of the prosthesis to see the inner workings of the device. This allowed never-before-access to the components of each piece of technology as it performed its various functions.

Result

A key challenge is finding innovative ways to show off a highly technical, but visually uninspiring, product. Ottobock had an engaging way of showing why its products are the market leaders. Using cutting edge technology like AR positioned the brand as a high-tech innovator in its field.

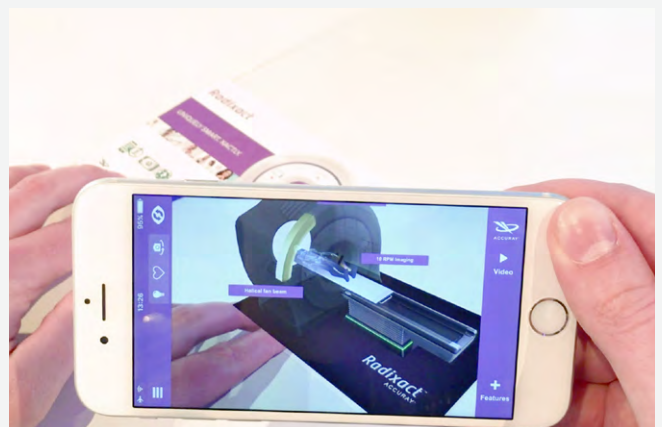
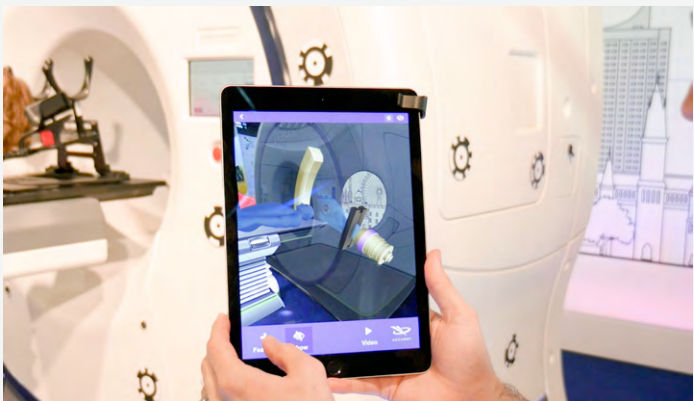
Learnings

Consider AR a tool to enhance your brand. In addition to its practical purpose, using AR helped to position Ottobock as a business at the cutting edge of innovation.

B2B delivery of augmented reality is horrendously underused. In most cases, AR in B2B offers significant value, whereas the majority of B2C AR deliveries are gimmicky with little to no value-add

Dan Betts, head of strategy,
Mustard Design

Travelling the world in healthcare



Challenge

Accuray, an oncology company, needed to show potential buyers all over the world its products in order to generate sales. But when your products are rare machines the size of MRI scanners, the task of transporting them isn't easy.

Normal videos and brochures cannot show the advanced features of the products in compelling

enough detail, so the challenge for the marketing team was to:

- ▶ Assist salespeople in converting leads by showing the cutting-edge nature of the product.
- ▶ Create a portable alternative to transporting entire machines.
- ▶ Generate interest in the product at shows and events.

Tactics

Using Zappar AR technology, Accuray created a way for people to see what's inside machines such as the Radixact Treatment Delivery System. Hovering an iPad or iPhone over a printed image of the machine projects information about the X-ray radiation, refined beamlines and fast imaging technology used to deliver treatments.

Learnings

- › **AR keeps the salesman at the centre:** High-value purchases such as these machines require salespeople with specialist understanding. AR enables these conversations rather than replacing them.

- › **Group experiences are easier to create:** Whereas B2B VR tends to be an individual experience, in AR, multiple stakeholders can be engaged at one time.



We pride ourselves in providing innovative technology to the medical industry and our marketing solutions should be no different. We have achieved an overwhelmingly positive response... which demonstrates just how valuable this type of innovation is for the industry

Birgit Fleurent, CMO at Accuray

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