

Virtual reality meets cause marketing



By Sheila McGillivray

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It's expected that virtual reality [will be an \\$80bn market by 2025](#). The list of businesses coming on board with VR is long and impressive: Google is creating a Chrome virtual reality option, Samsung is showing Rio 2016 in VR and Sky News is building a VR studio and releasing an app along with it. The future is most definitely here. But where to with VR for ad agencies like One Lady and A Tribe who are committed to cause marketing?

#1 Immersive engagement

Storytelling for brands just became a whole lot more real with VR. We can now place the viewer right inside the experience. For marketers with a cause, this opens up the possibility of creating an unforgettable bond between audience, cause and brand. We loved the idea of using VR for effective immersive engagement in [safety training](#) for mineworkers, using a hazard awareness training simulator.

#2 Championing causes

VR can help brands regain authenticity by being transparent in a new way. For example – farming and McDonald's are not two things you'd immediately put together, but McDonald's UK's [first VR campaign](#) shows where its products come from and how they're used. The VR storytelling tries to change viewer perceptions about farming and their concept of McDonald's too. Championing the farming industry has helped champion their brand.



#3 Face-tracking

Face-tracking is done through a headset which captures the user's facial expressions and transfers them in real-time into the virtual world. We're imagining the possibilities of using this technology in children's hospital wards – turning them into [Disney Princesses](#) (or whatever they want to be), cheering them up and helping them heal. But the options are endless; we all want a shot at becoming a hero in a story of our choosing.

#4 Conservation

What better way to show how vital support is for conservation than by taking the viewer into a game park, ocean or forest? Virtual Reality clips and documentaries will assist in crowd funding support for important causes. As David Attenborough, talking about his new [series](#), says: “VR has incredible potential. It takes you to places you could have never dreamed existed, and you have a vivid feeling of actually being there.”

#5 Education

Online [e-learning in Africa](#) is already taking off; imagine having a 360° VR classroom environment for children to be a part of? In June 2016, Africa’s first interactive digital learning centre was [launched](#) in South Africa and as Dumisani Otumile, CIO of Tshwane, said at the opening, “Virtual Reality based knowledge transfer will be crucial to the future of education in South Africa...”

In our future with VR we’ll be thinking beyond 30 seconds and into creating user experiences that change perceptions, habits and lives. Exciting times!

ABOUT SHEILA MCGILLIVRAY

Sheila McGillivray's knowledge of the advertising industry spans four decades. Sheila's energy, enthusiasm and passion for her work has grown with every new position and challenge. Her experience in the industry is exceeded only by her willingness to keep learning and innovating.

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