Tech companies reveal blueprint for a safer metaverse

Article

The news: **Oasis Consortium,** a group of game developers and online companies envisioning an ethical and safe internet, are spearheading efforts to introduce safeguards and ethics in the metaverse and other VR environments.

More on this: The hype surrounding the metaverse as the next evolution of various internet services and communities has neglected to consider the safety and security of users, per the

MIT Technology Review. In November, a **Meta Horizon Worlds** user complained that she had been groped while beta testing the service.

- The Oasis Consortium, composed of 14 companies including **Pandora**, **Riot Games**, **Roblox**, and **SiriusXM**, envisions "an ethical internet where future generations trust they can interact, co-create, and exist free from online hate and toxicity."

- The consortium released its guidelines for metaverse companies to self-regulate, hire trust and safety officers, and use content moderation to fight abuses.

The problem: Without the support or buy-in from key players like **Meta** or other Big Tech companies with a stake in creating the metaverse, efforts to standardize ethics and user safety and security could fail to gain industry-wide traction.

The metaverse, or at least Meta's vision for an immersive VR future, is at its inception phase in which the company is striving to attract users, not keep them out.

- Horizon Worlds is an open and unfiltered environment. **Users can say what they want and interact with anyone in the space without boundaries**, making it difficult to moderate.

- While Meta enables users to block offensive participants or retreat into a Safe Zone, **there's no penalty for offenders**.

- The toxicity and bullying that plague social media and other web- and app-based services can easily occur in an unregulated metaverse, potentially scaring away early adopters.

What's the catch? User safety and stronger penalties for online harassment need to be enacted now for the metaverse to attract users to the new VR reality.

The Oasis Consortium provides useful guidelines, but Meta and others with VR platforms need to address these issues before they get out of hand.
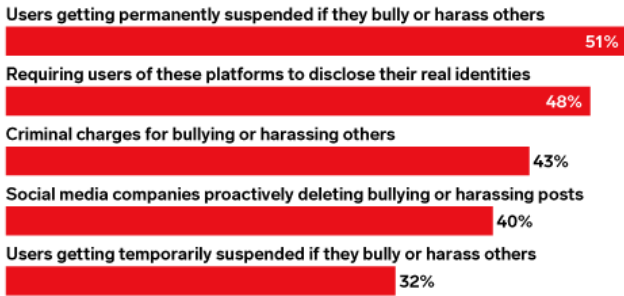
Deeper dive: To learn more about the metaverse and wider AR/VR, platforms read this metaverse primer.

What Do US Adults Feel Would Be Very Effective to Reduce Harassment or Bullying on Social Media?
% of respondents, Sep 2020

Users getting permanently suspended if they bully or harass others
51%

Requiring users of these platforms to disclose their real identities
48%

Criminal charges for bullying or harassing others
43%

Social media companies proactively deleting bullying or harassing posts
40%

Users getting temporarily suspended if they bully or harass others
32%

Source: Pew Research Center, "The State of Online Harassment," Jan 13, 2021

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