

# In 2022, each tech firm will have its own version of the metaverse

## Article

**The trend:** The word “metaverse” became impossible to escape in 2021 as companies across industries laid out plans for the virtual world. In 2022, as tech firms and brands put those plans into action, we’ll get a glimpse into how the metaverse will actually look and function.

**A disconnected reality:** If 2021’s deluge of announcements showed us anything, it’s that the metaverse will not be the parallel digital realm promised by fiction adventure films like “Ready

Player One.” Instead, a variety of tech players will possess and control their own different spaces, laying out their visions for what the metaverse will mean.

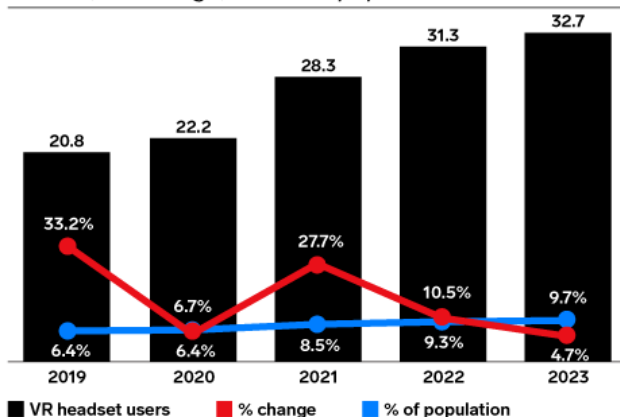
- **Microsoft’s** first foray into the metaverse, called “**Mesh,**” will be [focused on the workplace](#). The service was announced in November and will be released in 2022 as part of workplace software suite **Microsoft Teams**. In it, users will be able to create metaverse avatars that they can use to attend virtual meetings and navigate virtual office spaces.
- **Meta,** formerly known as **Facebook,** is similarly betting on workplace and professional applications for its metaverse, which will spend 2022 in beta testing. But Meta also highlighted the potential for social interaction in a video announcing the [company’s name change](#).

**Heavy is the head:** However, both of these visions heavily rely on the use of virtual reality headsets like those made by Meta-owned **Oculus**.

- Wearable VR technology has yet to take off in a significant way, though adoption is expected to increase over the next few years as it becomes more affordable and less cumbersome. We expect **US VR headset users to increase** from 28.3 million this year to 32.7 million by 2023.

#### US VR Headset Users, 2019-2023

millions, % change, and % of population



Note: Individuals of any age who experience VR content at least once per month via headsets  
Source: eMarketer, March 2021

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- Even Meta’s executives have yet to fully adjust to the wearable tech: In a [viral clip](#) of a Financial Times interview with Vice President of Global Affairs **Nick Clegg** that took place in

the company's metaverse, Clegg's avatar clumsily cranes its neck as he complains that the "wretched headset" is too big for him to wear and drink coffee at the same time.

- While Meta fumbles with VR, companies like **Pokémon Go** developer **Niantic** are presenting a vision for the metaverse that relies on already widely used augmented reality technology, putting the metaverse in the hands of anyone with a smartphone.

**How games and brands play in:** Video games like **Roblox** and **Fortnite** remain power proofs-of-concept for the metaverse, especially when it comes to brand involvement.

- Though Fortnite began as a multiplayer shooter and Roblox as a game creator, they have since evolved to become virtual playgrounds for players to do things like attend highly publicized virtual concerts and museum exhibits, and socialize in combat-free virtual theme parks.
- These interactive, playful virtual worlds represent a blank slate for advertisers to paint on. Brands have already made aggressive moves into the metaverse: **Nike** recently acquired a virtual apparel company to bring its brand to virtual worlds, and **Ralph Lauren** has partnered with Roblox to release limited-edition virtual clothing made by the legendary designer.

**Looking forward:** If a unified, open virtual world is what you imagine when you think of a metaverse, you're in for a disappointment. Instead, the next few years will see companies iterate on their own walled-off spaces while looking for ways to integrate advertisers and brands in order to drive revenue.