PROJECT METAVERSE

AMBER MEIJERS

PROJECT DOCUMENT

Greenhouse Labs

29-08-2022 - 03-02-2022

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THE COMPANY

WPP

Originally founded in 1971 as a company in the business of crafting metal shopping baskets, Wire and Plastic Products plc, also known as WPP, found themselves bought up by investors and began a rapid growth through acquisition in the 1980s. Between 1990 and 2000, they purchased companies in the sectors of digital marketing, online shopping, digitale media, data management, sports marketing and consultancy with the goal to become a player in the media industry on a global scale.

In 2003, WPP founded GroupM to become the parent company for all of WPP's media agencies. Under GroupM are such companies as MediaCom, Wavemaker, Mindshare, Essence Global and m/SIX. In 2015 a Dutch company named Greenhouse Group joined those ranks. Greenhouse Group was and is largely in charge of their own company with their own CEO and CFO. The collective of the companies that fall under GroupM deliver 30% of all advertisements in the world. While they focus on their clients, GroupM takes care of HR, tool development, finances and other company-related affairs.

Between 2011 and 2019, WPP was known as the most valuable advertising company in the world, a position that they were forced to concede to their competitor Omnicom. Today, they remain one of the four largest media agencies in the world besides Publicis, Interpublic Group of Companies and Omnicom.

BLUE MANGO & GREENHOUSE GROUP

The Greenhouse we know today was founded as a small company in the sector of market research and public opinion polling named 'Blue Mango' in 2006. In time Blue Mango grew up to be a strong market competitor, and new opportunities presented themselves; Blue Mango had always exclusively worked with customers who wished to spend a minimum of 100,000€ a month for advertising, and thus missed out on the smaller businesses. That is how, from Blue Mango, a new company was founded which would focus on smaller customers (10,000-30,000€/month) that would become Fresh Fruit Digital.

This happened a couple more times and within a few years We Are Blossom (social media) and Source Republic (focussed on SEO & Content Marketing) had joined the ranks; all companies that had organically formed from within the group. The fact that all of these companies had their own specialties meant that customers were assured they would receive expert opinions across the board, but this also caused confusion; on a good day, a customer might come into contact with four very differently named companies.

In 2009, the executive decision was made to group all of the smaller companies together under a collective called Greenhouse Group.

GREENHOUSE LABS

In spite of its namesake, Greenhouse Labs is actually a part of GroupM. It has retained the Greenhouse name, is situated in the same building and works closely together with the rest of the company, but is technically a part of the overarching GroupM and performs work for all of the regional companies below them (Mindshare, MediaCom, Wavemaker, etc.).

This unique position offers Labs many opportunities; first off, we don't work directly with clients and thus have the chance to experiment with a wide variety of technologies and strategies before deploying them to clients.

On top of this, Lab's position in one of the largest media groups offers a wide variety of opportunities for the project. Through WPP's partnership with Epic Games, we have access to exclusive Unreal Engine training for creating digital experiences in the context of the metaverse, and through Greenhouse, we have connections with the leading tech company in the market of haptic feedback gloves - Manus VR. This means that I have gained the opportunity to follow an official Unreal Engine course to support my project, and have access to brand new technologies to maximize the output of this internship.

Description

The world is in a constant state of change. If a company wishes to remain relevant, they must differentiate somehow; many do so by keeping pace with the current trends, or by attempting to stay ahead of them.
One of the hottest trends of this past year is the 'metaverse'; the supposed next step in the history of the internet where all sorts of 3D virtual platforms and games will become connected, and everyone only needs one profile that can be used anywhere on the internet.

While tech giants like Meta and Microsoft are entangled in a race to become the spiritual leader of this undertaking, many smaller companies are searching for their place in the internet of the future.

Our task is searching for a possible solution for the implementation of the online shopping of the future (in this case, in the metaverse). An oft-made mistake that we see a lot right now is that companies are directly translating the current shopping experience into a digital experience. Our preliminary research has shown that less than 30% of people are interested in the act of shopping in a store itself (KPMG, 2017), raising the question of whether a direct one to one conversion may be a poor implementation.

Goals

The goal of this project is the creation of a concept that can be employed by Greenhouse Labs to showcase the future of commerce to colleagues in other departments who are not as knowledgeable about the metaverse and its potential. From there, we could expand to employing the project for clients interested in the metaverse. With the help of a strong concept that is backed by research into the market, new deals for Greenhouse could be brokered. Beyond the project, the project itself could continue to be refined to the point where you can employ a personalized version for other companies or initiatives.

As a Media Designer with a brief history in Transmedia Storytelling, I have made it my personal goal to explore the possibilities of expanding upon storytelling within this project. I would like to see where I could incorporate the creation of a storyworld, and tie various experiences into said storyworld.

01
Scope

Our idea is to create a digital advent calendar that links up to Greenhouse's existing "Remember December" advent calendar. In December, they organize several fun events for everyone who works at greenhouse to participate in. By creating an online calendar, we could slot in on the days that no physical activities are planned, and use them to showcase the experiences that one can have in the metaverse. Each day there would be a different world focussed on a different client of Greenhouse, and in those worlds we could pour our ideas for the possibilities of storytelling and experiences that we could have in the metaverse. By choosing Greenhouse's clients, our colleagues will be able to recognise the brands they already work with and gain a better understanding of how we can better support these brands in the future. The fact that this advent can be re-used to showcase the metaverse to those same clients is an added benefit.

02
Requirements & Deliverables

Greenhouse would like to receive solid research into commerce and trends in the metaverse. Besides this, the delivery of several different prototypes that will serve as solutions to our problem statement is a must. Lastly, we are to deliver a document full of recommendations for bringing this project to the next level.

The shape of my final product will be a fully fleshed out, single virtual world created to showcase a single customer of Greenhouse. Atmosphere, story and experience will be the points of focus for this project. Once this prototype is finished, the project could be expanded to create the entire calendar in the future.

03
Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders of this project are Tim, Koen and Alex from Greenhouse, followed by the secondary stakeholders: my group mates who are each specialists in their own fields.

04
Criteria

- Greenhouse must be able to learn from the outcomes of our explorative research.

- The contents must contain new knowledge.

- The knowledge must be sharable; colleagues and customers must understand the value of the technologies we are proposing.

APPROACH

"WHAT IS RESEARCH BUT A BLIND DATE WITH KNOWLEDGE?"
WILL HARVEY

Design Thinking is the most commonly applied project method used in Greenhouse, a method that is suitable for researching the latest trends that people are interested in, and connecting visions of the future with the people of the present.

Furthermore, within our group we will employ the double diamond to keep diverging and converging our ideas. Lastly, we will employ SCRUM with a weekly sprint review for stakeholders on Monday mornings to ensure continuous progress throughout the project.

Research Questions

Based on the analysis and preliminary research my group has conducted in the first weeks of the project, I have composed the following research question:

How can we introduce our colleagues to the commercial opportunities of the metaverse, so that we can keep our client's commercial opportunities relevant, as the future hurtles towards a virtual world?

To get acquainted with the subject and compartmentalise the main research question, I have also written up several sub-questions:

- What is the metaverse, and who is already 'there'?

- How is commerce currently conducted and is this still relevant in the metaverse?

- What do our colleagues know about the metaverse and what can we teach them?

- Which client is best suited to focus the project on?

- In the current context of the metaverse, what is an attainable solution to our problem?

- What are the best ways to translate our solution into a digital experience?

Research Methods

What is the metaverse, and who is already 'there'?

Library Research

Because neither myself nor any of my team have any experience with 'Web3.0' or the metaverse, we will have to conduct desk research to gain an understanding of the concept of the metaverse, where the technology is now, and how it might develop in the future.

Competitive Analysis

While it is unlikely that we will design an entire 'metaversal world', it does not hurt to see if there are existing solutions out in the world that employ commerce in the metaverse. Whether it is selling a service, auctioning off virtual property or employing digital to physical, we can find the highs and the lows of competitors to see where our unique selling points lie, and how we can improve where they failed.

How is commerce currently conducted?

Interview

To gain first-hand knowledge of the way people experience shopping, an interview could be conducted to find out what people love and hate about shopping, and what they would enjoy to see improved.

Context Mapping

Throughout the project we will receive several opportunities to work with people who have little to no experience in the field. For example; we will get the chance to demo something to Van Haren.

What do our colleagues know about the metaverse, and what can we teach them?

Interview

In order for us to introduce our colleagues to the metaverse, we must first ascertain what they already know and what their opinions about the future of digital marketing are. Armed with this knowledge, we can set out to find the right direction for the project.

Empathy Map

The creation of an empathy map and persona will allow us to remain in-touch with the end user in a project that gazes so far into the future that it will likely often lose touch with the people of today quite often.

Good, Bad & Best Practices

Many companies are battling to be the first to dominate different aspects of the metaverse, and they are exploring their own brand values in this new context, leading to a variety of interesting implementations. By exploring our potential customer's competitors, we can gain an insight into what will make us unique.

Co-Reflection

Every monday we have a sprint review with experts in the field of innovation and e-commerce to guide us. Furthermore, students and experts on the subjects of digital ownership and the metaverse make regular visits to the company to help us narrow down the focus of our project.

By preparing a couple of small things for them and having a discussion about the topic of commerce, we might gain interesting insights into their perspective, and what ideas they might have about the metaverse.

Sketching

Sketching will likely be employed in many phases of the project to jot down details and early ideas. It will become more prominent once we move from researching to developing, wherein we will need actual sketches of our concepts.

Obstacles / User Stories

One of the defining aspects of design thinking / human-centered design is that we are designing for humans, from a human viewpoint. By looking at the problems that our target audience experience with the current state of affairs surrounding commerce, we can find a direction for our project

In the e current context of the metaverse, what is an attainable solution to our problem?

Brainstorm

Employing a brainstorm will allow us to generate a large amount of over-the-top ideas for the future, that we can then dive and converge once more.

Obstacles / User Stories

One of the defining aspects of design thinking / human-centered design is that we are designing for humans, from a human viewpoint. By looking at the problems that our target audience experience with the current state of affairs surrounding commerce, we can find a direction for our project

Concept

Our concept will define what idea we are trying to 'sell' to our stakeholders. In this document, we will describe what problem we are solving, for who, and what opportunities we are creating for our clients with this solution

Expo

Throughout the project, we will demo our project to stakeholders, but also to crowds of people on events like AdNight to garner interest and feedback, as well as gain new insights from others in the industry.

Pitch

From week two we have been pitching the idea that the metaverse can be the solution for several future problems. As the project gets further along, we will have a concept that will have to be pitched to stakeholders and outsiders to defend our Unique Selling Points.

What are the best ways to translate our solution into a digital experience?

Wizard of Oz

The AdNight will take place very early in the project, so we will likely implement a Wizard of Oz technique to sell our demo. With the help of this technique, we can communicate our ideas without needing to begin developing a high-fidelity prototype prematurely.

Requirements Prioritization

After writing the requirements for our solution, we must prioritise them to ensure that the project can be completed in due time. This could be achieved with the MoSCoW method.

Prototyping

Creating a variety of prototypes will allow us to let loose our creativity, but also show more than one available option to stakeholders, giving us the opportunity to test which one is the best fit. The creation of an empathy map and persona will allow us to remain in-touch with the end user in a project that gazes so far into the future that it will likely often lose touch with the people of today quite often.

Planning Poker

When crafting a digital solution, developers must assess how long it might take to implement a certain feature. Through planning poker, the team would have to put their heads together and concretely define how long we believe this will take, then assess which tasks receive priority or which tasks might have to be cut because they will take too much time for little to no benefit.

Usability Testing

Because we are designing a solution in the context of a social platform for humans, it is important that the experience is one that humans wish to undertake. If things are too difficult to understand or are otherwise lacking a vital component, nobody will be interested in our project. Through usability testing with our target audience, we ensure that users understand and are interested in engaging with the project.

Date	Week	Deliverables	Greenhouse Work	Deadlines & Vacation
29/08 - 02/09	1	-	Introweek Presentations	
05/09 - 09/09	2	**Literature study**		08/09 | PlanetM Festival
12/09 - 16/09	3	**Best, Good & Bad practices** Project document		
19/09 - 23/09	4	**Benchmarking the Metaverse** **Trend analysis** **Brainstorm** **Sketching**	Present AdNight ideas	
26/09 - 30/09	5	**Co-Reflection** (SCRUM) **Interview** preparation Project Document v3 feedback		Company Visit
03/10 - 07/10	6	**Co-Reflection** (SCRUM) **Interview** Portfolio (after go-ahead for project document) **Context Mapping** **Brainstorm**	WPP Unreal Engine Training 06/10 | VanHaren presentations Pitch	
10/10- 14/10	7	**Co-Reflection** (SCRUM) Portfolio Interview results **Empathy Map** **Scenario** **Lo-Fi Prototyping**	13/10 | Craft Day 14/10 | Adnight Pitch + Wizard of Oz	

17/10 - 21/10	8	**Co-Reflection** (SCRUM) Portfolio **Storytelling** **Requirements Prioritisation from Scenarios** **Concept**	18/10 | Craft Day Sittard 20/10 | Craft Day Eindhoven	
24/10 - 28/10	Autumn break	**Co-Reflection** (SCRUM) Portfolio **Brainstorm** **Concept Document** **Lo-Fi Prototyping**	26/10 | Digital Wednesday Presentations	2 days off with parents
31/10 - 04/11	9	**Co-Reflection** (SCRUM) Portfolio **Sketching**	03/11 | This Year/Next Year	
07/11 - 11/11	10	**Co-Reflection** (SCRUM) Portfolio **Planning Poker**		School Reunion 11th of november 10:30 - 12:15 Pitch
14/11 - 18/11	11	**Sprintreview** (SCRUM) Proof of Concept 1 Portfolio		|
21/11 - 25/11	12	**Sprintreview**(SCRUM) Proof of Concept 2 Portfolio **Review** **Requirements List**		
28/11 - 02/12	13	**Sprintreview** (SCRUM) Portfolio **Usability Testing**	**Expo** (waiting for confirmation of more events)	Remember December Advent Field Trial
05/12 - 08/12	14	**Sprintreview**(SCRUM) **High Fidelity Prototyping** **Usability Testing**		Remember December Advent Field Trial
12/12 - 16/12	15	**Sprintreview** (SCRUM) Portfolio **High Fidelity Prototype**		Remember December Advent Field Trial Laur and Stela go back home on the 15th until well into January

19/12 - 23/12	16	**Sprintreview** (SCRUM) Portfolio Organise company visit **High Fidelity Prototyping** **Test report**		Remember December Advent **Field Trial**
26/12 - 30/12	Christmas			Christmas
02/01 - 06/01	Christmas	**Sprintreview** (SCRUM) Portfolio Recommendations & Transfer document		
09/01 - 13/01	17	**Co-Reflection** (SCRUM) Portfolio Continue working on project		10/01	Portfolio Deadline

Sources

1. KPMG. (2017, januari). The truth about online consumers. https://assets.kpmg/. Geraadpleegd op 7 september 2022, van https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2017/01/the-truth-about-online-consumers.pdf