

3 Best Practices for Creating Engaging VR Content

Published
January 2017

Topics
Video, Advertising,
Mobile

It's one thing to make your VR content accessible. But how can you ensure that your audience engages? Our recent research identified three key insights for "sticky" VR content that you can carry into your highly non-virtual media plan.

We recently shared some tips for [how to make VR content accessible to more users](#), based on takeaways from a YouTube Red Originals campaign. One of the biggest upshots was that VR content doesn't need to have sky-high production values to be immersive and compelling. That got us thinking about other traits of winning VR content.

To that end, we conducted some qualitative studies to determine what makes VR content attractive to consumers. In essence: What makes people stick around in a virtual world?

The study's participants, 13- to 44-year-old smartphone owners who watched at least one hour of video per week, revealed key insights for VR creators—applicable across all genres of video. For VR content to be compelling, study participants told us it must do at least one of the

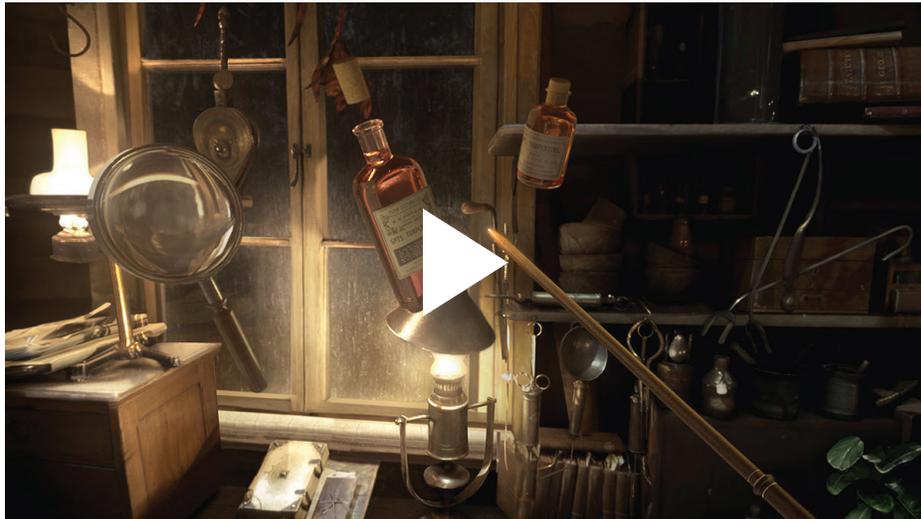
thinkwithGoogle.co.uk

following three things:

#1: Make the viewer the protagonist, not just a spectator, in the VR experience

If you offer your viewer an active experience with decision-making rights, he or she will venture willingly into your virtual world. As one of our study participants put it, "The best videos are the ones where you have an actual role in it, where you can move around and be in control." Just remember that it's impossible to offer interactive VR functionality without interactive VR technology, so the trade-off here is content [accessibility](#).

Fantastic Beasts
VR Experience on
Daydream

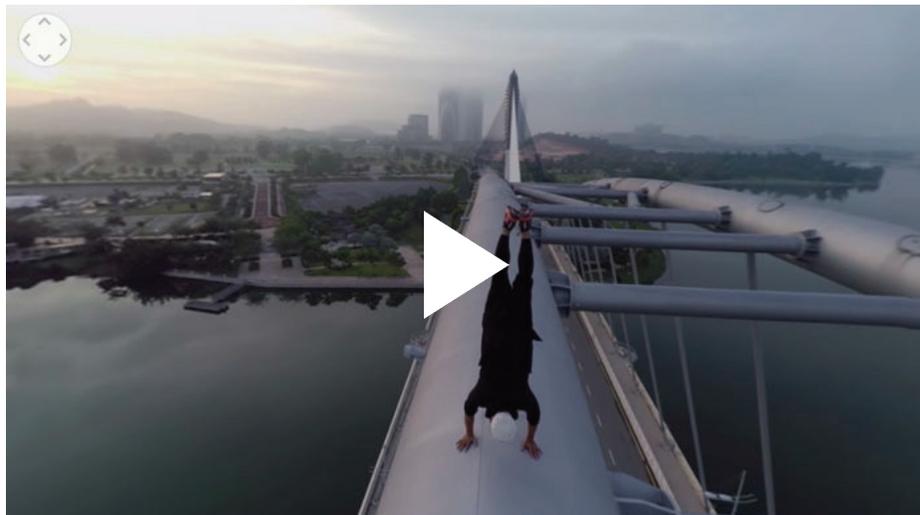


Available on [Daydream](#), the app for the recent Warner Brothers film "[Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them](#)" invites Harry Potter fans to summon and communicate with magical creatures by solving puzzles and performing spells using the Daydream controller as a wand.

#2: Make the impossible possible

In addition to interactive VR content, study participants said they loved VR content that extended admission to places, sights, and experiences they'd never have accessed otherwise. If your content can open a door previously locked to your viewer—whether due to cost, fear factor, or location—you can hold and maintain your viewer's attention.

Exploring the Forbidden
Skyline in Virtual
Reality | Introducing
the Cast of URBEX



Red Bull TV made the impossible possible by transporting viewers from the safety of their own homes to the precarious skyline perches on top of some of the world's tallest buildings with the urban exploration series URBEX.

#3: Expand the viewer's worldview

The third rule of thumb to ensure sticky VR content is all about angle. VR content creators don't have to go all out to engage viewers. In fact, our study participants said content that provided a new perspective on familiar topics or content was just as compelling as the more exotic fare out there. For brands, this means thinking beyond innovation in storyline. Additionally, think about innovation in point-of-view.

Mr. Robot: Virtual Reality
Experience - 360°



In an exclusive "flashback" 360-degree VR episode on YouTube, fans of the USA Network's hit psychological thriller "Mr. Robot" get to step into the world of the show like never before, experiencing a pivotal moment from lead character Elliot's past from a unique and powerful perspective that only 360-degree video can provide.

In conclusion, 'stick' the landing

If you're going to make a VR video, make sure you exploit the unique capabilities of the technology to improve the user experience. Give your viewer an active role. Open a closed door. Offer a new perspective. You'll be able to tell a more immersive story, and your viewers will not only want to take part—they'll want to stick around.