

Augment Your Toolkit by Embracing AR

Nicholas Pearson | Domtar | Marketing Specialist

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How can paper become an extended version of the real world? The Answer: through technology, enabled by virtual visuals, sounds, or other sensory stimuli. Put simply, through augmented or virtual reality. Augmented Reality (AR) is a completely immersive experience that replaces a real-life environment with a simulated one. This has been a rapidly growing trend among companies involved in mobile computing and business applications. We've talked about how it can help us maximize our marketing budgets, but how does it work and how can we take advantage?

How is Augmented Reality used?

We know that [AR](#) is a hot topic, and it's easy to see why. The technology seamlessly blends a variety of different communication methods in a single, user-friendly omnichannel experience and its applications with print are exciting. From [Ikea's catalog](#) allowing customers an opportunity to virtually test a sofa to [Print Media Center's](#) 3D peacock that introduces the audience to [Project Peacock](#) participants; AR has already been proven by many creatives and marketers to elevate the user experience.

AR can be used to virtually stage a product. For example, [Susan Jones](#) used it to create the above scene featuring Xerox Vitality to show how we can share our products. We have the ability to rotate reams, walk around the stage, flip pages in a book and more. Users can see products in 3D environments that mimic real life and in real-time through tablets or smartphones resulting in increased sales and higher user engagement.

Realities to Consider

Still, the idea of AR can be intimidating if you've never utilized the technology before, so here are 5 things to consider before you begin:

- 1. Your Audience** - As with any campaign, you need to begin with an understanding of your audience. Are they busy Generation X CEOs that want to get straight to the point, or are they members of Generation Z that need something flashy to capture a short attention span? Defining the demographics of your target audience will help you narrow down what sort of AR technology is best for your project.
- 2. The Customer Journey** - At which point in the buying cycle is your prospect? Are they researching all options (you'd want to focus on building awareness) or are they ready to make a purchase (talk more about the features and benefits of your product and working with your company)? Although, customer journey mapping is normally spoken about in the context of digital marketing. The benefits certainly carry over into the omnichannel area as well.
- 3. Your Goals** - Define your goals. Of course, as marketers and creatives, we all want to promote something, but what are the additional goals of your client and/or company? Is it brand awareness, building brand loyalty or applying content marketing to be a resource to your customer? This is another area where creating a customer journey map will help in defining what sort of AR approach is right for you.
- 4. Your Research** - Budget is probably every creative's favorite topic but setting a budget prior to beginning an AR project is absolutely necessary due to the vast array of options available. We are all wowed by [Ikea's](#) use of AR, but that type of custom programming can easily set you back about \$50,000, maybe more. If a large budget isn't accessible, think about if a custom program is really necessary to meet your goals and resonate with your audience. If all your audience needs are a seamless omnichannel approach, there are many AR apps that are easy to use and affordable. If you work for a large company or institution, don't forget to look into your internal human resources. There may be someone in the design department that knows how to edit video, for example. Perhaps a designer or web developer would love the opportunity to learn a new skill, but the need hasn't come up yet to justify the time spent. You never know until you ask. Also, is there an in-plant printing facility at your company or organization? Many of these forward-thinking departments are adding AR and other communication vehicles to their service offerings to better serve their customers.
- 5. Your Print (and Paper)** - In most cases, print is the primary vehicle that triggers the AR experience. Print and paper are what capture the attention of your audience, establish the messaging and create the need. Don't focus so much on the AR component that the print becomes an after-thought-your target audience may end up never utilizing it.

Ultimately, the best way to begin is by asking questions and doing some research.

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