

Understanding the value of the metaverse

How technology, media and telecommunications companies can navigate the metaverse with confidence



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Introduction

When it comes to the metaverse, excitement and expectations expressed by technology, media and telecommunications (TMT) leaders are not – so far – matched by action.



LEVI WATTERS

National Sector Leader,
Technology, Media &
Telecommunications
KPMG Australia

KPMG commissioned Forrester Consulting to conduct a survey of 767 TMT executives across the globe to gauge their readiness, expectations and plans for the metaverse.

The survey revealed that 60% of TMT executives believe the metaverse will have a significant impact on consumers and businesses. Surprisingly, only a third of companies feel adequately prepared with platforms for metaverse experiences and related processes. Additionally, less than half of the respondents report interest from their clients in conducting business meetings in the metaverse.

Despite the metaverse being in its early stages, history shows new technologies can evolve quickly, potentially leaving laggards behind. However, the majority of companies are investing less than 5% of their technology budget in the metaverse, and only 34% view building a business case as an important next step.

TMT leaders recognise the value of the metaverse for branding, marketing, and customer experiences, but initial uses are expected to focus on internal activities like onboarding and collaboration to benefit employee retention.

The metaverse offers limitless possibilities as a blend of physical and virtual realms, but the speed of adoption and specific use cases remain uncertain. TMT companies grapple with the task of determining the ideal investment to safeguard against unexpected advances by innovators and investing in ventures that won't yield commercial returns.

While there is a cost to heavily investing in an unknown future, doing nothing also carries a price. The survey identifies gaps that could leave companies trailing behind ambitious competitors as the metaverse market evolves.

The metaverse is a 3D virtual space, accessed via the internet. The metaverse is currently at a nascent stage and while a multi-year buildout is required to fully realise the potential, it provides an immense growth opportunity for businesses.

Survey highlights

In late 2022, KPMG International commissioned Forrester Consulting to carry out a global survey of TMT executives from technology, media and telecommunications.

Seven hundred and sixty-seven global strategy decision-makers, at companies with US\$250m+ in annual revenue, participated in the survey. Respondents were either vice presidents in charge of one or several large departments (83 percent) or C-level such as CEO, CMO (17 percent). Respondents came from 13 different countries across five continents.



TMT executives see value in the metaverse across the business, including revenue and profits, customer experience and loyalty, and employee experience and retention.



TMT leaders appear to be excited and cautious in equal measure, which may explain why few are investing more than five percent of their total technology budget on the metaverse.



However, when asked about their companies' investments in the metaverse for the future compared to today, the story was different. **Eighty-four percent said they plan to increase or maintain investments in five to ten years** from now and an astonishing **92 percent said they plan to increase or maintain investments in two to four years from now.**



And only a third **see building a business case as an important next step** for better enabling their metaverse strategy.



A majority of TMT companies feel **unprepared for the metaverse** in terms of the technology infrastructure and the necessary skills.



Hopes are high that the metaverse can add value to TMT companies. And there's a belief that, by successfully leveraging the metaverse, businesses can boost their bottom lines. Respondents see the greatest expected benefits as increased revenue and profit margins, lower operating expenses, and a shift from costly bricks and mortar operations to virtual point of sale transactions. They also hope that interacting via the metaverse can improve the customer experience and enhance their brands.

Consequently, they expect around 40 percent of their organisation's metaverse investment to be directed towards marketing and branding, and approximately 25 percent towards customer-related use cases. Just over half of companies surveyed are already starting to make investments in metaverse staffing and resources, either creating new projects and teams or ramping up resources for existing metaverse initiatives.

Most of the respondents say their companies already use many of the

tools that will support the metaverse – or at least plan to do so in the not-too-distant future – such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), decentralised platforms, and digital twins. Of the three TMT subsectors, technology is the most likely to use these innovations.

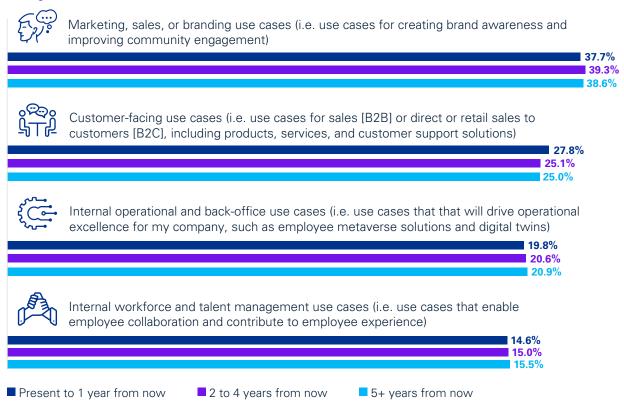
Almost two-thirds anticipate conducting at least some business meetings in the metaverse within the next decade. But discussions with clients may tell a different story.

From your perspective, what would success with the metaverse look like for your company?



To your best estimate, what percentage of your company's metaverse investments are, or will be, allocated to the following categories of use cases?

Average %



Base: 452 global strategy decision-makers at companies with US\$250m+ in annual revenue Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of KPMG, December 2022

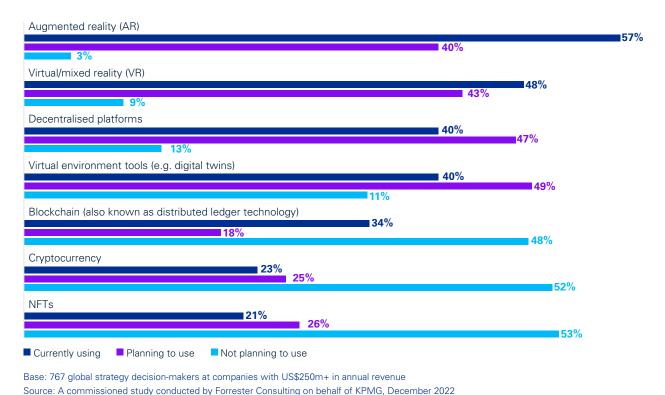
Do you anticipate your company will be conducting at least some business meetings in the metaverse within the next decade?

Have your clients expressed an openness to conducting at least some business meetings in the metaverse?



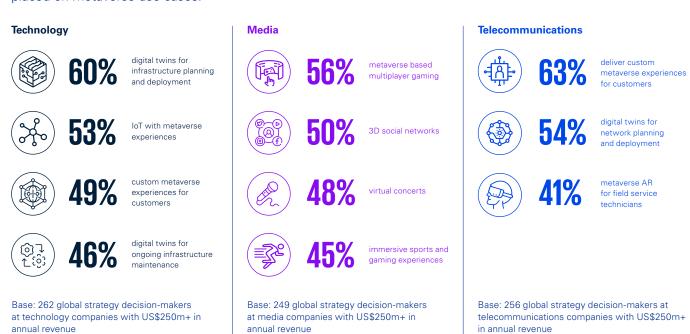
TMT leaders have plans to implement virtual environment tools (AR, VR, digital twins) to support the metaverse

Thinking about the tools and technology that could potentially support the metaverse, which technologies are your company already using or planning to use?



Top expected metaverse use cases by subsector

As this figure shows, the **three subsectors within TMT have varying responses** when it comes to value placed on metaverse use cases:



Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of KPMG, December 2022

Internal use of the metaverse - an overlooked opportunity?

There are high hopes for the metaverse as a medium for branding and customer experience, and while there are several successful industry case studies, mainstream consumer and business appetite has yet to grow to a significant level. This explains why relatively fewer respondents from the technology and telecommunications subsectors say their companies are ready to enable use of the metaverse to drive better customer experiences and solutions.

Instead, the most popular current use cases are internal activities like employee training and onboarding – with employee collaboration also ranking highly. Across the survey, 56 percent recognise the promise of engagement via the metaverse for improving hiring and recruiting,

and 51 percent say it could improve employee productivity. But so far, these words are not backed up with deeds, with only about one-third of anticipated metaverse investments set to be directed to internal activities and processes.

Which begs the question: Why aren't organisations placing more resources into internal uses?

Testing the metaverse with employees is likely to be far less costly and lower risk, and can act as pilot projects for scaling up to a wider, external audience. There's also a high potential upside in terms of ROI on outcomes such as higher employee retention – which has become a critical strategic objective for many companies – and other similar enterprise applications.

The war for talent in TMT is a consistent challenge, with a recent KPMG survey of TMT professionals revealing that 38 percent of workers say they intend to look for a job with another company within the next year.¹

As we discuss elsewhere in this report, metaverse skills are in short supply and anything that can enhance hiring and retention could be vital to remain competitive.

The metaverse can offer a rich, immersive space for experiencing company culture and generating enthusiasm among younger candidates in particular.

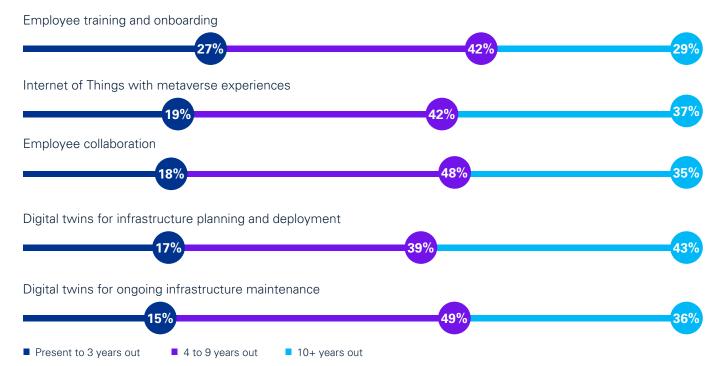
What potential benefits/outcomes of engaging in the metaverse would make your company most likely to invest/engage?



¹ https://advisory.kpmg.us/articles/2022/american-worker-survey.html

Tech leaders view internal metaverse use cases as being the closest to reality, but still likely 4+ years out

Of the metaverse use cases identified, how long do you think it will reasonably take to enable them for your company? (Only technology company answers and internal use cases shown.)*



Base: Variable global strategy decision-makers at companies with US\$250m+ in annual revenue. *Variable for each row Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of KPMG, December 2022

Key takeaway: begin your metaverse journey at home

Your own organisation offers a wealth of opportunities to pilot metaverse initiatives and develop capabilities for the long term – at lower cost and risk than trialling with customers. Gaining efficiencies such as increased employee retention can bring financial benefits and speed up organisational learning of how to harness the metaverse.

Beginning at home means hiring and developing metaverse talent – while also seeking hidden capabilities in your own and your partners' organisations. For instance, you probably have a cohort of workers who already game or use the metaverse in other ways: they offer a rich source of understanding and technical skills.



Focus on developing your skills, knowledge, and preparedness internally while waiting for the metaverse to gain widespread adoption.

This will not only enhance employee retention and communication but also equip you with valuable experience and a competitive edge when the opportune moment arrives. It is worth remembering that the internet originated as an internal communication network for the US government, with an aim to explore its potential as an enterprise tool. This laid the groundwork for a technology that now permeates every aspect of our lives.

Levi Watters

National Sector Leader, Technology, Media & Telecommunications KPMG Australia



Employee retention due to improved experiences via the metaverse

When asked what incremental improvement of employee retention would be needed to consider metaverse investments a success, the most common response from TMT leaders was three to four percent. Exploring this further, we looked at how this level of improvement could impact a company's costs - and the subsequent ROI. Consider this scenario for a company.

Example of retention improvement impact

US\$1b

in annual revenues



20,000



employees

Average salary of

US\$50.000

per employee

Employee turnover rate of



Staff replacement could total

US\$187m

per year based on an average cost of nine months employee salary per departure



improvement in turnover rate (to become 21%) would yield savings of US\$30 million



ROI could be as high as

*Assumes company spends 10% of revenue (US\$100 million) on IT and 5% of IT budget (US\$5 million) on the metaverse.

Excitement - with more than a touch of caution

At such an early stage in its development, the potential of the metaverse presents something of an unknown to the TMT sector.



Leaders see a promising future in the metaverse for both consumers and businesses, but the concept needs further refinement

Which options align with your opinion on the metaverse? (Select all that apply.)



Base: 767 global strategy decision-makers at companies with US\$250m+ in annual revenue Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of KPMG, December 2022

Almost **six out of ten leaders** taking part in our global survey feel the metaverse will have a huge impact on consumers and businesses. However, a similar proportion also acknowledges that, despite its rich promise, it still needs further refinement and development. Despite the undoubted excitement over what the metaverse could bring, there remains a degree of scepticism, with 27 percent of respondents believing it

to be 'an unattainable pipe dream' and 20 percent describing it as 'a fad that will never live up to its hype'.

Which explains why almost half say their companies are either 'watching and waiting' or assessing long-term business value before making major investments.

The majority of TMT executives taking part in our survey feel that the metaverse is several years from

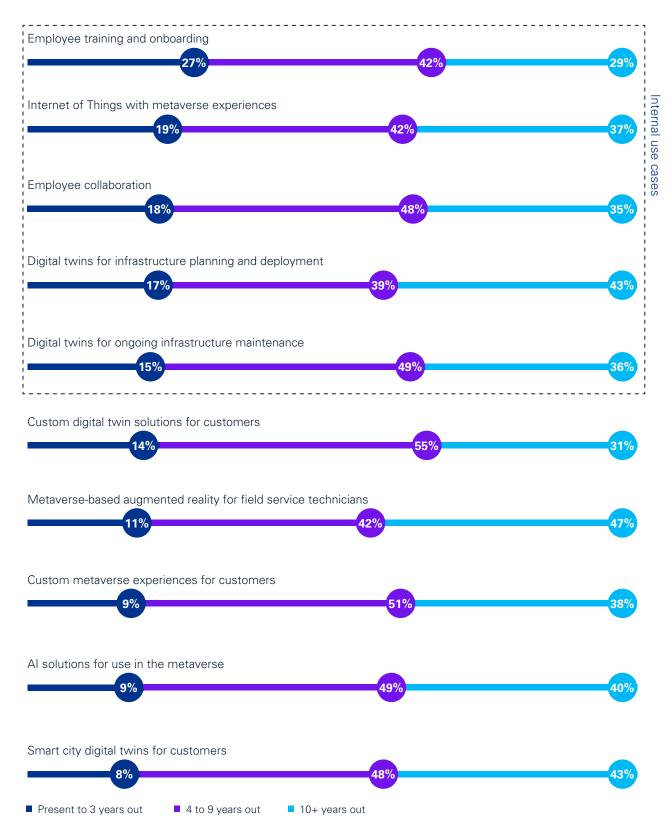
becoming a thriving commercial ecosystem. Of the three subsectors, respondents from technology are relatively the most optimistic, but even then, around 40–50 percent don't expect the commercial use cases to mature for four to nine years. Between 30–40 percent believe they won't be in use in their company for 10 years or more.

What is your company's approach to the metaverse? (Select one.)



Tech leaders view internal metaverse use cases as being the closest to reality, but still likely 4+ years out

Of the metaverse use cases identified in the previous question, how long do you think it will reasonably take to enable them for your company? (Only technology company respondents' answers shown.)*



7/10

respondents say their companies are investing less than five percent of their 2023 technology budget in the metaverse

27%

of respondents have zero funds committed



Modest but committed investments

TMT companies are hesitant about spending too much money, too soon, on the metaverse. Seven out of ten respondents say their companies are investing less than five percent of their 2023 technology budget in the metaverse, while 27 percent have zero funds committed.

And investments are not forecast to grow significantly in the next few years, with only a fifth anticipating a rise of more than 10 percent.

On a more encouraging note, few of the respondents expect to reduce their metaverse financing despite the possible challenging economic conditions.

It seems that many in the TMT sector want to see evidence of greater metaverse usage before making significant investments, with 60 percent responding that they're waiting for higher customer demand before putting more resources into this

area. This echoes the findings from another KPMG multi-industry survey, Shaping your strategy for Web3 and the metaverse, where respondents say the biggest challenge to deploy or build Web3 technologies is identifying early use cases and/or applications.²

Key takeaway: take a bold approach to investment

If you're confident that the metaverse will be a game changer for your business, consider how you can invest wisely, balancing risk with reward.

What do you believe are the macro-level preconditions that must be met for making the metaverse successful?



² https://www.kpmg.us/growth-strategy/shaping-strategy-web3-metaverse.html



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Ahead of, behind, or missing the curve?

In the early days of the internet, no-one could have predicted how rapidly e-commerce, e-publishing or e-learning would take off, which highlights the difficulty in predicting technology adoption. In recent decades adoption curves have accelerated; as laggards have discovered to their detriment.

Waiting for increased customer demand may seem a pragmatic approach to an unproven new technology, but the TMT sector needs to be wary of what Clayton Christensen called 'The Innovator's Dilemma'.3 Christensen warned against framing new, immature and disruptive technologies against current standards and values, where customer feedback may be unreliable. Even the most forward-thinking TMT company risks missing out on new waves of innovation, because they're hamstrung by traditional practices not relevant to the future. The answer, according to the author, is to know when to listen less to existing customers, and be prepared to invest in smaller markets at lower margins, as they could carry the promise of potentially larger, longerterm, mass-market breakthroughs. The alternative is to wait too long.

Meanwhile, Terrance Strom, VP at Vuforia Business Strategy, PTC, told KPMG that companies should look at an '... inflection point for the XR (extended reality) industry in the next three years to move beyond a very fast-growing market to a rocket ship.'4

Waiting for a critical mass of consumers and business workers to own VR/AR devices and headsets, for instance, may appear a sensible strategy. A recent KPMG US study *Go boldly, not blindly into the metaverse,* found that approximately 70 percent of consumers do not currently own a VR device – but also concluded that this situation could change quickly, not least among remote workers needing to enter immersive, interactive workspaces and training.⁵

VR and AR are not, however, the metaverse: they are components that enable one to engage with the metaverse in a more immersive way. It is also possible to interact with the metaverse via a mobile device,

tablet, or laptop. Technologies like VR/AR should be viewed as indicators of adoption and market maturity. This helps to explain why keeping a tab on competitor activity is another priority: 45 percent of executives participating in the KPMG US study *Shaping your strategy for Web3 and the metaverse*, say they are very influenced by competitors' decisions, and make sure they don't fall behind, even if they don't ultimately use the technology.⁶

"TMT has a strong record of leading the charge for innovation, embracing agile development and 'test-and-learn' strategies, to explore potential uses and scale up successes. Wait-and-see is a high-risk strategy."

Darren Yong

Partner and Head of Technology, Media & Telecommunications, KPMG Asia Pacific

Key takeaway: think big, start small, move fast

Be nimble and closely monitor the progress of the metaverse. According to the Forrester survey, firms that have 'high metaverse readiness' have ambitious expectations, but also expect to invest twice as much as their competitors. In the near term, much of these investments are likely to be channelled into innovation labs and centres of excellence, with an emphasis on incremental learning rather than large-scale execution.

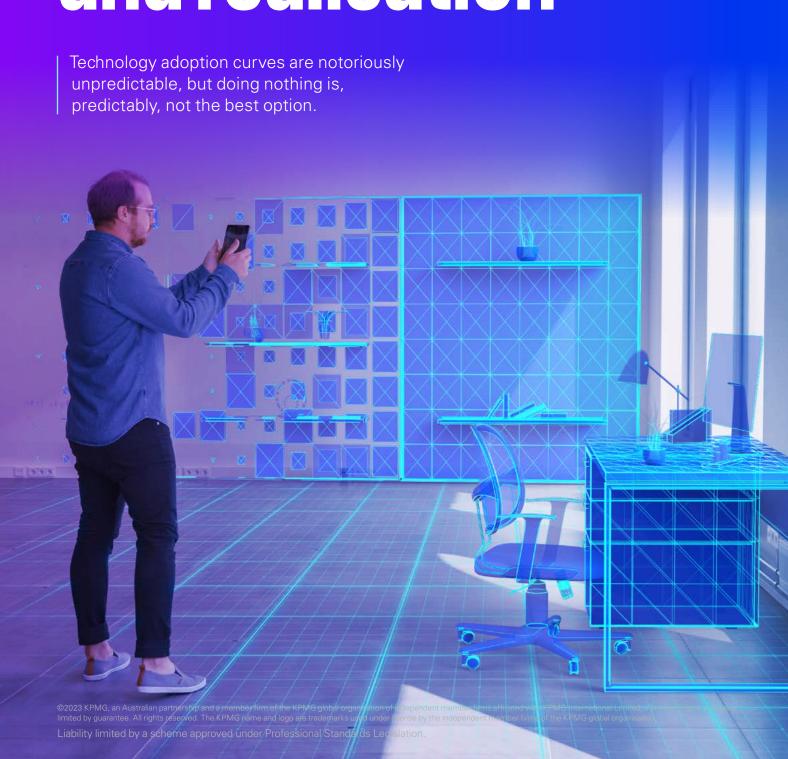
³ The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail", Clayton M. Christensen, Harvard Business Review Press, 1997

⁴ https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2022/04/the-future-of-the-metaverse.html

⁵ https://advisory.kpmg.us/articles/2022/consumer-pulse-metaverse.html

 $^{^{\}rm 6}\ https://www.kpmg.us/growth-strategy/shaping-strategy-web3-metaverse.html$

Bridging the gap between potential and realisation



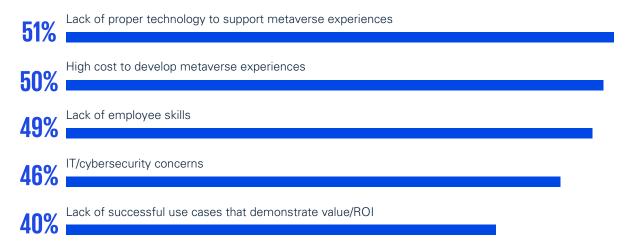
Precise adoption timescales for metaverse products and services may be uncertain, but many survey respondents say their companies are underprepared. Respondents expressed lowest levels of readiness in platforms, operational alignment and content (digitising assets into 3D metaverse formats). The biggest barriers to investing in and embracing the metaverse are lack of technology to support experiences, high cost

of development, and a dearth of appropriate employee skills.

A significant proportion (40 percent) say lack of proven use cases with reported ROI is holding them back from further investment.

However, generative AI models from the likes of OpenAI (GPT-4), Meta (LLaMA), Google (PaLM2, Gemini) and open source Stability AI (Stable Diffusion) are fast-tracking timelines for metaverse adoption for many companies. It's now faster, cheaper and easier to create virtual spaces and the assets and avatars you need in those spaces. New off-the-shelf tools and platforms using generative Al are launched every week, which require no code and only text prompts to develop proof-of-concepts, minimum viable products, and features that are ready to integrate into production-ready solutions.

Proper technology and skillsets are primary barriers to fostering more committed metaverse adoption/planning What are the primary barriers your company faces in more fully investing in and embracing a metaverse strategy?



Base: 767 global strategy decision-makers at companies with US\$250m+ in annual revenue
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of KPMG, December 2022

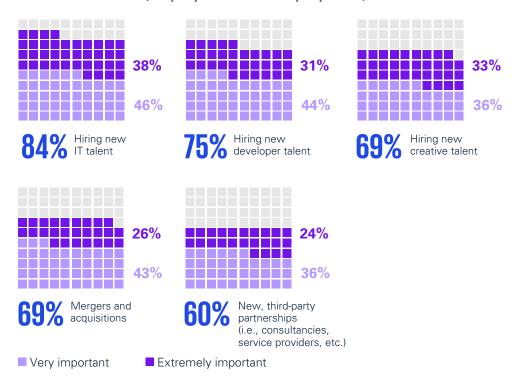
There is wider discussion happening in Australia on risks and consumer safety in the metaverse, as highlighted in the May 2023 whitepaper by Standards Australia, which will continue to evolve especially as generative AI will play a big role in metaverse design and implementation.

In response to these challenges, two-thirds of respondents agree that hiring IT, developer, creative and M&A talent is a big priority.

Consequently, 55 percent are trying to recruit new staff with the right expertise, and 51 percent are investing in foundational IT infrastructure to support their metaverse ambitions. But many

are not committing financial and human resources, with 43 percent increasing their overall technology spend to enable more expansion into metaverse activities, 38 percent creating a dedicated metaverse budget category, and only 31 percent appointing a dedicated new leader and group.

How important do you expect the following to be in helping your company build and execute on anticipated metaverse use cases? (Very important/Extremely important)

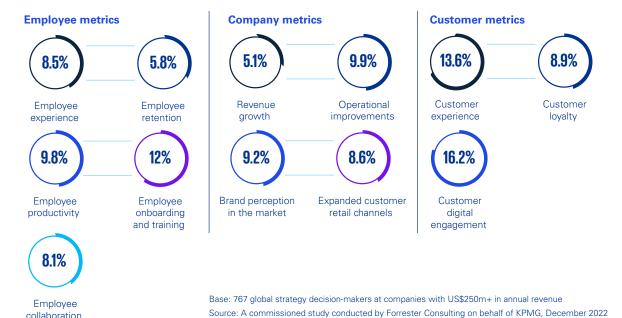


Base: 767 global strategy decision-makers at companies with US\$250m+ in annual revenue Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of KPMG, December 2022

How is your company organising itself internally to pursue metaverse opportunities?



You indicated that the following is a KPI that you expect to be positively impacted by your company's innovation and investment in the metaverse. What growth or improvement threshold would you want to see in order to consider your investment a success?



Lack of strategic clarity is a barrier to progress

Most of the TMT leaders surveyed see the metaverse as a medium- to long-term investment that will impact many different parts of the business, from digital transformation to product innovation, customer engagement to acquisition of new talent.

But according to our global survey, only one-third see building a business case as an important next step for better enabling their metaverse strategy. This statistic should concern the sector's leaders as they consider their next steps in a world where technology adoption curves are accelerating, and new innovations make old brands and products redundant. Some of the earliest (and largest) adopters are spending billions on everything from product development to acquisition of other companies already at the forefront of

the metaverse. All the more reason for clarifying objectives and continually refining strategy to stay close to the pulse of this fast-growing ecosystem, and avoid getting left behind.

When asked, 'What does success look like?' the respondents say they expect a high return on investment in employee onboarding, training and productivity; operational improvements and brand perception; and customer digital engagement and experience. Clarifying the internal and external metaverse value proposition can help to define investment goals to drive clear, probable use cases.

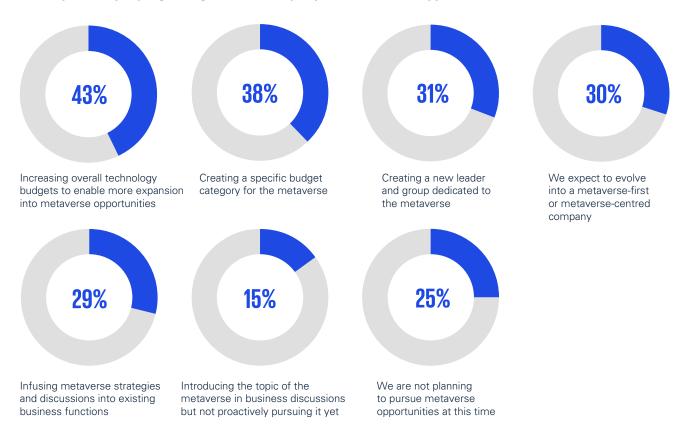
By setting and tracking KPIs and metaverse pilot projects (especially internally), TMT companies can be ready to move fast, scale up investments that build upon early successes - as well as shelve others that are not meeting expectations, acting in classic 'fail-fast' fashion. Rus Gant, a futurist who runs the Visualization Research Lab at Harvard, says, 'The "when" can only be predicted if you as a company are experimenting in a way [where] you can get a little bit higher fidelity on that time frame. Things will become more clear over time, but having a scientific and thoughtful approach to gathering the right data, and making decisions on whether to dive in or not, will help you determine not when the thing hits, but when it's impactful for your business.'7

⁷ https://www.kpmg.us/growth-strategy/shaping-strategy-web3-metaverse.html

Key takeaway: focus on real business and customer value

Don't let technology drive the conversation – let business value drive it. Be crystal clear about what you hope to achieve, and develop a clear business case that identifies expected impact. Also, be sure to define realistic KPIs early. Revenue, for instance, is more likely to be a 2028 KPI and not a 2023 target.

How is your company organising itself internally to pursue metaverse opportunities?



66 The metaverse is not a destination for a TMT organisation. It will have implications for myriad aspects of any organisation including retention of employees, services innovation and communication with stakeholders and hence needs to be incorporated into the broader strategy of the organisation. **Simon Thorp** Technology Sector Leader, **KPMG** Australia Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation

Case study

Telco cyber security training in virtual reality (VR)



Scenario

KPMG partnered with a telco client to develop a fresh approach to engaging employees through training solutions. The purpose was to train employees in the fundamentals of cyber security.

What KPMG delivered

KPMG developed two concepts.

One based around a model of a laboratory to be used for generic cyber security training and the other, a typical home environment enabling security awareness for employees on how to protect the home.

KPMG developed a VR-based training solution, which was fully interactive and a self-contained solution that could be installed on mobile devices.



Result

This training solution demonstrated that VR is a powerful way to provide learning and development to employees and that learning via VR increases information retention.



Defining the 'metaverse-ready' organisation

"The metaverse fundamentally shifts how we can think about and experience the internet. It accelerates the coming together of physical and digital experiences and will lead to new possibilities and opportunities for both business and government to engage with customers and citizens. The technologies that underpin this transformation of the internet will continue to evolve and mature over the next five to ten years and it is the companies who lean in now that will be best placed to lead and prosper. This is why KPMG have invested in building out the capabilities and tools to support our clients to take advantage of the opportunity the metaverse presents."

James Mabbott Partner in Charge, KPMG Futures

The ultimate evolution of the metaverse may not be here today, or tomorrow, or even next year, but this technology is poised to have a profound impact on the TMT sector, and all companies need to be attuned to developments and be ready to act. Of the companies represented by the 767 TMT executives taking part in the survey, a quarter are categorised as being in a state of 'high readiness' as a result of their responses.

High-readiness companies are characterised by:

- being more likely to anticipate that metaverse investments will have a big impact across their business, including digital transformation, product innovation, customer satisfaction and engagement, talent acquisition, employee experience, and revenue growth
- investing twice as much in the metaverse as low-readiness companies

- seeing a higher value in both customer-facing and internal use cases
- being more likely to conduct business meetings with clients in the metaverse.

With the majority of TMT companies not prepared for the metaverse, there appear to be tremendous opportunities for those ready to move – and money left on the table for those who don't.

Three actions you can start taking today:

- 1. Identify where the metaverse can be applied to solve a challenge you are experiencing in your organisation (for example, workforce training or customer engagement).
- 2. Next, identify key team members to upskill and train.
- 3. Work with those team members to develop a low-cost, low-effort, proof-of-concept using off-the-shelf tools.

How KPMG can help

At KPMG we recognise that change is happening across all industries. The world around us is changing, and the future is uncertain and unpredictable. To be future-ready, organisations of all sizes need to explore the possibilities of what's to come – and be ready to adapt accordingly.

<u>KPMG Futures</u> brings together a diverse range of perspectives and subject matter expertise to provide insights on trends contributing to emerging innovation. We assist organisations through our Innovation Lab, the KPMG Future Technology Program and our broader set of offerings, in collaboration with our metaverse platform partners.

Consulting

Faced with an increasingly complex and uncertain operating environment, organisations - and the people within them are under pressure to make decisions better, faster and smarter. Yet, as stakeholder expectations shift, and as technology advances, new ways of working and regulatory change are making it harder for people to make the right decisions. And so, opportunities can be missed. Value lost. And trust eroded. KPMG professionals can help harness constantly evolving technologies that can connect and power businesses forward - building trust and creating and protecting value, while bridging the gap between past and future. We assist organisations in solving organisational challenges such as enhancing customer engagement, reducing customer acquisition costs, improving product innovation, and enhancing employee onboarding, retention and training through our set of offerings that include metaverse-based loyalty programs, digital goods development, and VR/AR-based training.

Strategy

KPMG professionals support organisations and executive teams in defining their ambition and developing progressive strategies that embed the agility, customer-centricity and operational excellence needed to thrive in dynamic markets. But they don't stop there – they can draw on KPMG firms' deep functional experience to work with clients through implementation and help deliver targeted results by accelerating momentum, striving to lock down value and helping to de-risk both decisions and actions. They call this 'innovation to results'



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Contact us



Levi Watters
National Sector Leader
Technology, Media & Telecommunications
KPMG Australia
E: lwatters@kpmg.com.au



Simon Thorp Sector Leader, Technology KPMG Australia E: sjthorp@kpmg.com.au



James Mabbott
Partner in Charge, KPMG Futures
KPMG Australia
E: jmabbott@kpmg.com.au



Alyse Sue
Director of Metaverse, KPMG Futures
KPMG Australia
E: asue1@kpmg.com.au

KPMG.com.au

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