

How to make magic: Bridging the gap between marketing & AR

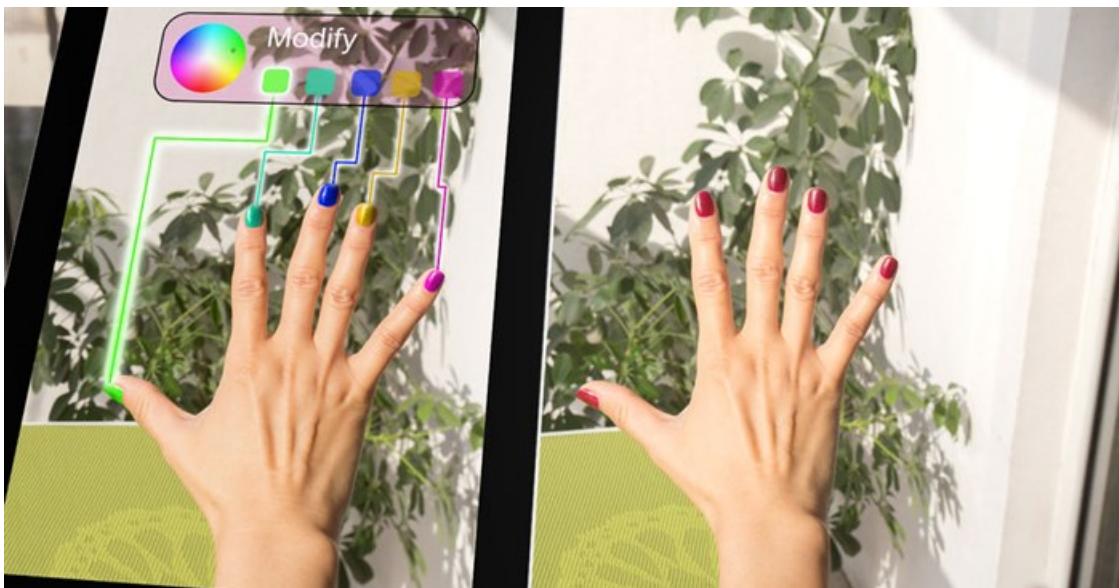
By [Jason Reid](#)

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Imagine a first time luxury car-buyer deciding between Audi and BMW. In the past, the buyer would visit showrooms, take test drives, and sift through glossy manuals.

Today, with leading carmakers incorporating augmented reality (AR) into their marketing and branding, this type of physical 'research' has become somewhat archaic. Now, potential buyers can take virtual test drives and explore AR manuals – 'trying out' various features and absorbing the luxury experience from the comfort of the couch... simply using their smartphones. The same applies for furniture hunting. Ikea, for example, enables shoppers to see how a particular piece would fit in their living room using an AR-powered application.

This is the much-trumpeted promise of AR within the marketing and advertising sphere: to transform one-way, static consumer experiences into two-way, interactive and highly engaging journeys that transfix increasingly distracted shoppers. And, of course, ultimately lead to purchase and deeper brand loyalty.



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While this potential is slowly being realised - with marketers and brand managers beginning to adopt and embrace AR - there is undoubtedly a way to go before the full value of this emerging technology can be unlocked for brands.

To begin with, marketers need to understand that AR is an exciting tool to amplify an existing marketing strategy or campaign - it's true potential lies in fulfilling a need within a campaign, rather than in trying to create a campaign simply to use this dynamic technology.

It's also important to understand how AR differs from other digital tools and platforms.

Essentially, AR is the ability to overlay virtual content on the physical world, while enabling the two different realms to interact in real-time. It requires partnering with established expert AR developers, and finding creative ways to match business needs with the concept of creating a virtual dimension to the brand.

As a result of this entirely new and virtual dimension, AR can potentially be far more powerful and potent than mainstream marketing tactics, which generally broadcast messages one way and lack any interactive element. But with AR, consumers finally get to 'control' and navigate their own experiences, and to discover brands in a way that is meaningful – and memorable – to them as individuals. So instead of marketers defining and directing each engagement, AR essentially turns the tables – and makes the consumer the head driver, so to speak.

In short, with the right implementation, AR can drastically transform a range of consumer experiences - from how people discover new products to how they decide which brands to buy. But instead of viewing AR as a solution in and of itself, it should ideally be viewed as a complementary tool that can enhance and support existing marketing campaigns.

With this in mind, it is critical to emphasise that marketers have a massive role to play in any AR application and rollout. Indeed, without the effective marketing and unique brand insight, even the most advanced and sophisticated of AR campaigns run the risk of falling flat. And this is precisely where marketing teams need to return to the basics, before they can think about any type of implementation or partnership with designers and developers.

'What is our current marketing trying to achieve?' 'How do I want customers to interact with the brand?' 'How can an AR application positively impact consumer behaviour?' These are just some of the key questions that need to be answered by the marketing team before they move onto the conceptualisation phase of AR in conjunction with their AR development partner.

Integrating AR into the customer journey

Once the business or strategic case has been made, and the concept has been decided upon, it is then important for the marketing team to focus on how consumers will interact with the technology or app itself. In many instances, AR rollouts lack support from branding and marketing teams from a user perspective, including staff training to drive user interaction, or eye-catching and informative signage. Too often, consumers aren't given any real guidance around how to unlock value or navigate new platforms powered by AR. So before the rollout or final leg of any AR campaign, it is imperative for all the stakeholders to have a very clear idea of how consumers will use the application, how this will be communicated, and what the desired outcomes are.

This kind of insight and understanding requires close collaboration between designers, developers and marketers. Each player needs to be closely aligned to a well-defined strategy, that looks to seamlessly integrate any new AR application into the existing consumer journey. Again, the goal is to support and enhance existing marketing campaigns – not to become the campaign itself.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fuzzy Logic is the brainchild of Jason Ried, who grew up in Springs in Gauteng in the era of the ZX Spectrum. He'd rush home from school, and later work, foregoing lunch to play Pro Evo with his best friend, dreaming of the day he'd get to make his own games. In 2002, Jason took a huge leap of faith and moved to the UK to pursue his dream. Starting off as a Quality Analyst at Eidos Interactive, he worked his way up to Associate Producer. He worked on big budget, AAA games such as Championship Manager, Just Cause 2, Tomb Raider, Hitman and Wacky Races, before moving to Disney Interactive Studios in 2008 where he was part of the team that produced the award-winning game Split/Second. In 2011, Jason was given the opportunity to move back to South Africa to start up his own development studio. He decided to focus on the latest technology, augmented reality (AR), as well as apps and mobile games. Setting up in George, in the heart of the Garden Route with a view of the beach, Fuzzy Logic was born. Jason's vision for Fuzzy Logic is to create world-class games and apps while growing the games industry in South Africa which has a wealth of untapped potential and talent. To date, Jason has led Fuzzy Logic in releasing chart-topping products, winning an international award and starting work on a big budget, highly ambitious game for an international game and toy company.

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