

2023 Digital World Predictions

By Deborah M. Collier



In 2022, I advised readers to focus their attention on agility, innovation and stability, and these elements should still be at the heart of any strategy in 2023 and beyond. Where can we maximise opportunities among the challenges in 2023?

Digital Storytelling Ignites Climate Action

Have you ever wondered what will inspire people and organisations to contribute to climate action? Any good marketer, advertiser or influencer will tell you that any change is driven by impact, reward and emotion. For over a decade, remembering back to my French A-Level oral, in which I said <<*Je m'inquiète pour l'environnement, car on le détruit...>>, I have campaigned through my articles, such as ['Going Green'](#), on social media and within our COB Certified E-Business Manager program, about green practices for business. Digital business helps to prevent deforestation through less paper usage, but to digital transform organisations responsibly, they should move to renewable energy for hosting. It has taken more than a decade to finally see major hosting companies move to 100% renewable energy. However, what will motivate change by the everyday citizen? 'Home' is a basic human need, but what if one day we had to move home due to climate change? This is a real story for millions around the*

world and is causing a greater migratory shift than conflict. I predict that Digital Storytelling about these human stories, will be one of the major drivers for citizen commitment to climate action in 2023.

2023 Year of the Side Gig

The post-pandemic world this year features high inflation and cost of living challenges. While governments and businesses battle strategic goals and the impact on people, global citizens focus on ensuring their incomes cover their spending and savings goals. Digital innovation is at the heart of success in tough economic times. *"Mater artium necessitas"* – Necessity is the mother of invention in 2023. The pandemic gave a further ignition and impetus for digital business, but the landscape has shifted from *"How do we work and do business?"*, to *"How to we maintain our standard of living?"* Students and workers turn to side gigs for additional revenue, while approaching or existing retirees explore Internet businesses to support their pensions, which in several countries are dwindling. Cross-border trade constraints posed by Brexit, delivery strikes and rising oil costs, have made international E-commerce more challenging. Innovation of platforms, digital products, services and business models are the high-impact lower risk alternative. However, with the plethora of online tools and platforms provided for the sale and delivery of video, audio and written content, as well as the ability to build audiences online, the barriers to Internet business are now largely limited to availability of time, quality of content and know-how. 2023 is the year for citizens to start a side gig, generating their income from the digital economy, which is becoming ever more accessible to all.

Humanity Befriends Artificial Intelligence

Positive evidence and revolutionary progress of Artificial Intelligence is unfolding at hyper speed, and AI is quickly evolving as a co-pilot of choice. Increased productivity and solving complex problems, particularly in the fields of medicine and global sustainability, are at the forefront of aspirational AI. Usability designers, programmers and experts look to make AI more human, to improve acceptance and collaboration, inspiring both philosophical and ethical questions around humans being replaced by AI. However, humanity can design and program AI to emulate empathy, but to have empathy and emotion would of course require the development of sentience (a distinct separation between humanity and machines). This understanding and delicate handling are particularly key for work in mental health, any form of social care, as well as customer-service. Governments in countries such as Estonia and Finland have employed AI to support civilians with using their online services, (an additional tool in customer service), which if deployed effectively could ultimately reduce taxation needs or boost innovation in other areas such as health and education. In 2022, industry experienced a revolution in Artificial Intelligence, a large AI model and 'Codex' that can translate natural languages into several programming languages. Programming co-pilots, such as 'GitHub Co-pilot' which uses this technology, increases productivity by freeing up developers to focus on innovation and more complex cognitive activities. In 2023 and beyond, invigorated by the progress and adoption of AI in society, my model for evolving and future skills *'Diversity-of-Things' DoT*, becomes ever more apparent. As always with evolving technology, careful monitoring, moderation and regulation are vital. However, governments which have been behind in keeping up with industry and humanity's needs as a result of bureaucracy, political goals, lack of awareness or foresight, cannot risk lack of planning and action ahead and alongside innovation, rather than behind it.

Social Media Comes of Age

What's the future of social networks? Governments who have typically been behind industry and civilian needs with digital and technological governance, are now progressing with debate, cultural alignment and implementation of laws to regulate the handling of user-generated content by Social Networks and other platforms. Indeed, the ethical balance between free speech and preventing

harmful content, such as inciting violence, defamation and online harms leading to abuse, safety issues or loss of life, is key. In August 2018, on Channel 4 news, I talked about the need for both policies and regulations, in light of events with Infowars, which included a defamation case later won by families of the 'Sandy Hook' tragedy. There has to be a cultural shift, in what civilians accept as harmful content, while enabling us all to speak freely about political and religious views. The success of this is largely enabled through education. Such education along with regulation, may come in the form of leading by example. That is, demonstrating punitive actions for individuals who put lives at risk, alongside enabling debate around whether individuals should be banned from platforms. The recent Elon Musk 'Doxing' incident on Twitter, is an example of a seemingly open stalking account, and the reporting of the story by journalists. The suspending of those accounts by Elon Musk, enabled a debate. Clearly the suspension of the journalists accounts wasn't the right choice, but the suspension of the doxing account was. At the same time, offensive content isn't amplified by the social network, essentially allowing individuals to express themselves but without the amplification, which is where the danger lies. This is an example of the fine tuning of social media which will eventually lead to it coming of age. For this to occur however, we need to ensure that rules and standards are not a case 'of one rule for one, and another rule for another'. It cannot be a rule that suits social network owners, or single-sided political motivations and alliances, but must be judged and led with independence, commitment, and impartiality.

Mixed Reality not Metaverse

In 2022 the Metaverse was the prominent discussion topic of user experience and virtual interaction for entertainment, the workplace and education. However, behind the hype of a technological 'buzzword', born from established gaming, virtual reality and long-established virtual worlds, such as 'SecondLife', a more powerful and palatable concept and it's technologies will come to the forefront. The future is hybrid, whether in terms of hybrid working, blended education (mixed media, live and classroom); hybrid events (live online, virtual, multimedia and in-person; and retail (e-commerce, omni-channel, and in-store). What is powering this? Firstly, consumer lifestyle and choice, and secondly business needs (cost reduction and efficiency) coupled with technological opportunity and innovation. So what is mixed reality? Mixed reality enables us all to exist in our current world, but have the choice and control to enhance our view of objects, people, animals, information, content and more through a lens. 'The lens' of course is glasses or other devices such as tablets or phones. Both industry and consumers eagerly await new innovations in the field of headsets and eyewear this coming year and beyond. Smart organisations and innovators will explore how these technologies can be deployed to deliver impact.

Further reading

- [Digital Skills Authority](#)
- [More future predictions](#)
- [Deborah on Twitter](#)
- [Deborah's Blog](#)