

# Virtual Reality in Practice

## An Exploration of Immersive Experiences in Pharma: Best Practices from Early Adopters

Virtual reality, or VR, represents one of the biggest tech trends of today. With major product launches coming from Oculus/Facebook, HTC/Valve, Sony and Microsoft, the interest in using VR to promote, learn and play continues to gain momentum, and pharma marketers have started to take note.

From operating rooms to convention floors, pharma marketers have started to harness the power of VR to create experiences, which articulate their

brand messages in engaging and memorable ways.

At **Viscira**, we've been working with our life sciences clients to tap into this technology, launching our first successful VR program in 2011. Since then, we've had the chance to explore a variety of techniques that work well in this medium—and also learn what doesn't work.

We've translated these observations into a Top 5 list for producing a top-notch VR program.



AbbVie HUMIRA Virtual Reality Experience. Launched at EULAR 2016. This program featured a combination of live action and boldly designed animation sequences to deliver high-impact patient stories.

# 1 It Starts With a Digital Compass: Establish Clear Points of Interaction

We have to start by making one thing clear—virtual reality and video are not the same thing. Why do we stress this point?

Unlike video which presents a linear story from frame-to-frame, VR is a 360-degree experience. There is no start, stop, play, fast-forward or rewind button in the virtual world—it's an experience completely subject to the control of the viewer. And because of this, there is a risk that viewers could get lost in this world if interactions are not clear.

To avoid this, ensure that your UX designers identify clear paths of engagement and pinpoint areas where a viewer could get lost. These insights should then be used to inform the types of visual or audio cues needed to guide viewers through the experience and ensure they are on the right path.



**Identify clear paths of engagement and pinpoint areas where a viewer could get lost**

# 2 A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Virtual Words: Go Light on the Copy

One of the biggest misconceptions about VR is that it offers a great medium for all types of content. The truth is, VR is not an ideal platform to present copy (no disrespect to our copywriting friends).



## Keep the environment focused on high-quality graphics



Due to the depth of field, text within a virtual environment can be challenging to read. And, readability becomes further hampered if the viewer wears glasses which are removed before donning a VR headset.

Instead, consider incorporating other senses, such as sound, into the experience. Text-based content works well as a voiceover narration to punctuate key brand messages and to keep the environment focused on high-quality graphics.

---

### 3 Doctors Aren't Gamers: Keep the Interactions Simple

Although there may be a couple of doctors who are experts at "Call of Duty", most of our end-viewers aren't gamers, and for many, this may be the first time they've tried on a VR headset. Therefore, we've found that passive experiences (where the viewer just has to sit back and watch) tend to be successful with an inexperienced audience.

If you do choose to create a more interactive experience which requires the use of gaming hardware, like a joystick or wand, keep the interactions simple and intuitive. Any actions that the viewer has to take should try to mimic the "real world" action as closely as possible.

## 4 How Does This Work Again? Involve Compliance Early and Often

One of the toughest challenges of executing a VR program is getting approval from compliance. Most compliance teams are unfamiliar with VR and may not understand the fluidity of the experience. We recommend scheduling interim check-in meetings with compliance to have them view early prototypes of the program using the VR headset. This is an effective way for them to understand the degree of choice that a user has in navigating through the program and also gives context as to how any information may be displayed.



View early prototypes using the VR headset

## 5 Beware of Virtual Vertigo: Keep the Experience Short

With the popularity of platforms like Vine and SnapChat, trends in digital content are moving towards short and concise sound bytes. VR is no different. It is important to establish a target time for the length of a VR experience so that users aren't wandering around aimlessly in the 3D environment.





Also, know that those who may not be familiar with these immersive environments could experience vertigo with programs that are too long. It's best to keep the experience short. You don't want your program to be associated with motion sickness!

VR is not a gimmick but a channel to bring new life to brand challenges. With smart planning and thoughtful execution, it can be a highly relevant and valuable vehicle to enhance a marketing campaign.

**So put on your headsets and immerse yourself in the possibilities.**

### Learn More

To read more about Viscira's work using virtual reality technology, see this example of a VR experience that took healthcare providers into the mind of a schizophrenic. <http://www.dailydot.com/technology/oculus-mindscape-schizophrenia/>