

Talking Tech: Apple and Facebook dominate the week, but holograms are the future

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

"If everything moves along and there are no major catastrophes we're basically headed towards holograms," filmmaker Martin Scorsese said in 2011 while promoting his 3D movie "Hugo."

Well, here we are. Recently, I had a hologram of myself made at Avatar Dimension, which captures realistic 3D images and video in its volumetric studio in northern Virginia and transforms those into holograms.

Avatar Dimension focuses on corporate and government clients, many looking for [holographic video](#)-based training and education programs. "We have seen pent-up demand for more realistic avatars for more effective training in defense, government, and enterprise," futurist Cathy Hackl, who is Avatar Dimension's vice president of strategic growth and partnerships, told U.S. TODAY.

Holographic versions of historical figures such as U.S. presidents could be captured, "so their legacies can live on," she said.

The tech company, located just west of Washington, D.C., works with Microsoft, which is developing a new platform called Microsoft Mesh to let people "interact holographically with others with true presence in a natural way," said Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella during an online keynote last month.

For in-depth sessions, Avatar Dimensions does pre-production and test shooting for lighting, wardrobe and props. But capturing photos and video of myself and, separately, my wife Julie, took only minutes for the team at Avatar Dimension.

Later, technical director Ben Schwartz emailed web links of our video holograms that we can use our smartphone cameras to place in any setting—just like a character in the augmented reality video game "Pokémon Go."

Many think the stay-at-home lockdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic has spurred the development of online virtual worlds we will populate with holograms and avatars. That remains to be seen, said CJ Bangah, a principal at consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers.

"Because we have over a year of proven ability to be productive and many key industry events were able to adhere to a virtual format, making virtual events more experiential with 3D virtual worlds is likely—even in cases where it supplements the in-person experiences," Bangah said.



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But that drive toward virtual life and work can slow as "real-world, in-person experiences become viable again," Bangah said.

Paul Saffo, a futurist and adjunct professor at Stanford University, agrees that physical presence is not going away. "But at the end of the day, the question is going to be, what is it that makes a particular event absolutely essential to be physically present? And that number may shrink," he said.

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