"Virtual-Reality-In-Person-Meetings"

Next step in communication and collaboration

All current developments make it clear the need for efficient solutions for a global Collaboration is critical. Regardless of whether customers, suppliers and employees are in a specific country, city or are located worldwide, have to work or learn together. The question always arises, which is the most efficient solution and which solution comes does fit to direct collaboration, a personal meeting.

Although there has been communication improvements such as telephone and video conferencing for years, physical meetings have been preserved, which shows the latent shortage of meeting rooms in companies. Nevertheless, communication and collaboration during the pandemic-related lockdown were mainly carried out with WEB-, telephone- and video- conferences. However, all the technologies listed have one major disadvantage: There is no direct collaboration, direct feedback and active involvement of all participants during the meeting. Who does not know the endless telephone meetings in which presentations are shown, and only a few participants contribute something and are strained to watch patiently?

Out and about in the virtual world

This is where new technology comes into the game, which has only been used by industry experts in the context of 3D CAD users for design or production planning. This technology is called "virtual reality in-person meetings." Briefly explained, there are currently the following derivatives: VR (Virtual Reality), AR (Augmented Reality) and MX (Mixed Reality). Each of the applications has a specific area of application. When it comes to meetings, VR technology is ideal, where you can now wear a wireless headset that takes overall functions.

Avatars as a twin of the person

For someone who is having this experience for the first time, it is hardly a comparable virtual experience, since, in contrast to a 3D cinema or 360-degree images, you immerse yourself directly in the virtual world and use a so-called avatar as "Deputy" is mapped in the virtual environment. This means that every participant turns into an avatar in the VR meeting, who takes over the exact movement, language and face of the respective meeting participant. Technology now allows the avatars to match an image of the person in the question exactly. Depending on the VR meeting solution and the hardware used, even the direct facial expression can be taken over. This technology opens up completely new possibilities to meet other people directly in a virtual world without missing essential aspects of a physical encounter. However, developments are progressing just as quickly when it comes to simulating touch in VR and haptics. Reality will almost merge with the virtual world in the foreseeable future.

Work virtually together in a team

Depending on the solution, virtual reality meetings offer all possibilities to work together in a team in a virtual environment, edit office documents, make changes outside of VR usable, 3D objects or an Internet browser to design processes, to write on whiteboards, to create audio and video recordings of the VR meeting. Thanks to an excellent spatial audio experience and realistic avatars, team and customer meetings are possible without restrictions, as the physical presence creates a pleasant and familiar atmosphere.

Besides, VR meetings are incredibly efficient compared to conventional online conferences since every participant can act just like in the real world, and work results can be achieved quickly. VR meetings offer a considerable area of application. From daily team meetings to involved workshops, project management, training, studies at universities and sales activities to trade fairs and retail stores, topics can be implemented with VR in-person meetings.

Technology replaces travel

This makes it easy to bring teams closer together, inspire customers and involve them in the early development phases. In addition to all the options, the potential for immense savings also stands out. Especially with globally operating companies and organizations, there are considerable costs for travel, not only for the travel itself but also for the working hours that arise for overseas travel and train and car travel.

The article is translated from the original, issued Magazine Industry and Commerce in Germany (Karlsruhe- WIMA IHK 11-2020)

In order to approach the topic VR meeting, it is advisable to have an appointment presented, then to determine your own use cases with a concept review (PoC) and to involve employees and customers at the same time.

Heiko Oldendorf
advancedOBC GmbH & Co. KG, Karlsruhe
und FDG-Consulting Ltd. (Canada)