



Stanford eCorner

Keeping Virtual Reality in Perspective

Derek Belch, *STRIVR Labs*

April 06, 2016

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/4077/Keeping-Virtual-Reality-in-Perspective>

Derek Belch, co-founder and CEO of STRIVR Labs, expresses "cautious optimism" about virtual reality. Despite VR's popularity, the former Stanford football assistant coach and kicker says there are both good and bad use cases. While a movie director can focus audience attention, Belch says VR firms haven't yet mastered how to guide users through a 360-degree experience.



Transcript

- One of the things that really frustrates me about the industry right now, given that I'm doing it every day, I'm kind of the anti-VR, VRSEL. I don't think virtual reality headsets are gonna take over the world. I think it will be really, really sad if your generation would rather put something on their face and be antisocial in the real world versus, you know, actually talk to somebody. It's bad enough doing this all the time, now we're gonna put headsets and we're gonna completely lose our sense of who we are, right? So, I don't think that's gonna happen, I hope to God it doesn't. I look for real world use cases to where VR and AR can actually be used and be effective. There are a lot of them. There are also a lot of ideas that are really, really bad. Okay, now, I'm not saying these are bad ideas. But the reason why we have to be a little critical of this industry and at least have some cautious optimism as to where it can go is because when we watch a movie, for example, the director tells us where to look, right? They move the camera, they make a sound, we always know where to look based on what the director is telling us, that's been a film-making principle for a hundred years. In VR, if it's a 360-degree scene and I'm looking over here, but the director wants me to look over there, he or she just lost, right? So, how can you make a movie, a really, really good virtual experience, as opposed to the traditional 2D model? Not saying that it's not possible, it's just a long way away from people actually figuring it out.

Video games. So, gaming is gonna be the thing that drives VR, at least in the interim, in the short term. One of things that people are really underestimating, both with movies and video games, is, trust me, that headset is gonna get very uncomfortable after about 15 minutes. So, gamers, and some of you probably know what I'm talking about in this room, you have this, you play your games for hours and hours at a time, the gamers have told the headset manufacturers, "We have no interest in wearing the headset for four hours." And that's just a fact. Now, some will, their eyes may be burning, they may have headaches, who knows, but it's a really, really different way to experience gaming. Now, it's cool. Don't get me wrong, it's really, really cool. I just like to be cautiously optimistic. Another thing to think about with games is, with the exception of like a first-person shooter game, if I'm trying to play a sports game and I need to literally run across the room in VR, because that's what happens in the real world, that's probably not possible in my living room, right? So, when you think about maybe playing Madden in virtual reality, what's the one position that really would be the only one that applies? Probably the quarterback, right? Because you're gonna stand there, you're gonna fake-throw it. You're not gonna be a linebacker and go tackle your mom in virtual reality, it's just not gonna happen.

(audience laughs) So, these are the things that we have to be thinking about going forward, and, you know, the news and the media just wants to write "VR, VR, VR, VR", there is a lot of investment money going into it, probably rightfully so in a lot of areas, but I think we really need to stop and think for a little bit about what makes sense, what doesn't, what's good, what's bad, and what people are actually gonna do in the long run.