

OMG FUTURES

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AT THE EDGE

The next decade in tech

The future, as glimpsed at
the Slush Tech Conference 2022

WHAT IS SLUSH? AND WHY DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IT?

Slush is most likely the best tech conference you've never heard of. Hosted annually in Helsinki, despite its modest profile, Slush is in its 13th year and is home to a cornucopia of provocative start-ups and edge technologies – and OMG Futures went there to stand at the edge and glimpse the future. If you're looking for a 2033 trends doc, this is probably the closest you'll get.

Slush sees future-facing exhibitors vie for the attention of investors, crystal-ball gazers, or just the incurably tech-curious. The system works well: in previous years, Slush start-ups have attracted over €1bn in funding from visiting investors, EU Commissioners and Silicon Valley CEOs.

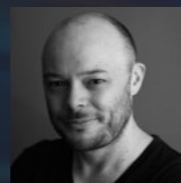
However, crucially, Slush is not like other tech conferences. Whilst CES or MWC showcase technology that may be in the consumer market within 12 to 18 months, the technologies showcased at Slush may not come to maturity for considerably longer. That's because it's not only a trade show but also a laboratory: some start-ups will begin their journey right there in the exhibition hall when an investor pulls out their cheque book; other ideas on display will fail spectacularly; some concepts may simply be before their time and will need to go into cold storage until society requires them to be thawed out.

To that end, what follows is OMG Futures glimpse of a set of future scenarios – not necessarily future trends. Distant echoes from the decade to come, presented in the form of potentialities, pathways or possibilities, and evidenced via the start-ups we consulted across the two days.

On initial reading of this report, talk of green biofuels, remote-driven vehicles and Nordic business practices may appear to have little relevance to the marketer of today. But that is not true. The technological and cultural undercurrents witnessed at Slush 2022 point the way to a very different future that will affect every consumer on earth – together with the way they interact with their brands. And so, whilst you will see little mention of media technologies here, look closely at the great social, biological and technological change embodied by the Slush start-ups and you will get a glimpse of where humanity is headed.

Though Slush is about parallel human futures and as-yet-unwritten narratives, that doesn't mean that brands and businesses don't need to be ready for change. Rather, it means the opposite: we're early enough in the timeline to ready ourselves for when the course of the river wends left or right. Preparation is key.

To be prepared – read on!



Phil Rowley
Head of Futures
OMG Futures

NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

In previous years, Slush could be found foreshadowing tech-zeitgeists like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and our obsession with Blockchain and Crypto.

Slush 2022 was different: there was very little mention of AR or VR. There was scant reference to AI. There were few nods to Web 3.0 and no NFTs in sight. Instead, this year's conference was very much a post-pandemic one. Themes were based around kindness, assistance, protection, connection, fairness and

responsibility. It seemed as if there had been a reckoning in the tech world; a re-prioritisation of what was important.

One start-up in particular (which we'll detail later) seemed to encapsulate this new frame of reference. Medixmicro offered a breakthrough in pain-free medicine through a radical innovation in needle-less inoculation. Though this was a specific piece of technology with a particular use case, after the last 3 years of COVID, war and cost of living

crisis, this was the spirit of Slush 2022 in microcosm: delivering on deeper human needs, whilst making it as painless as possible.

Thus, though we are often open-mouthed at the Metaverse, and titillated by Twitter takeovers and crypto collapses, Slush 2022 seemed more in tune with signals that reflected a deeper concern for humanity's collective sense of wellbeing – something OMG Future has spotlighted in their previous work [Hit The Switch](#) – The Future of Sustainable Business.

There were 5 signals in total. Signals that we should strain to hear through the noise. Signals that hint at the shape of a future society:

- 1 GENTLE TECH**
Expressing humanity, inclusivity and diversity through technology
- 2 FRUGAL TECH**
Identifying prudent but efficient solutions for a pennywise age
- 3 ULTRA-TELEPRESENCE**
Aiding smoother communication with near-real presence
- 4 OPTIMISING THE WORKPLACE**
Fixing work via tech-infused practices
- 5 SUSTAINABILITY AS STANDARD**
Proving all things have a sustainable angle

#1 GENTLE TECH

**EXPRESSING HUMANITY,
INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY
THROUGH TECHNOLOGY**



GENTLE TECH

GENTLE TECH IS A COLLECTION OF COMPANIES WITH BIG HEARTS AND BIG BRAINS, BAKING ASPIRATIONAL VALUES INTO THEIR PRODUCTS AT SOURCE.

Away from all the online debates over free speech vs hate speech and trolls and bots, some start-ups have been working on solving bitterness and division in a smarter, more wholesome way. Enter Gentle Tech, a collection of companies with big hearts and big brains, baking aspirational values – inclusion, tenderness, learning and communality – into their products at source. Whilst ‘benevolent’ billionaires attempt to shape the course of history in accordance with their grand plan, Gentle Tech concentrates on providing practical and immediate solutions for communities on the ground.

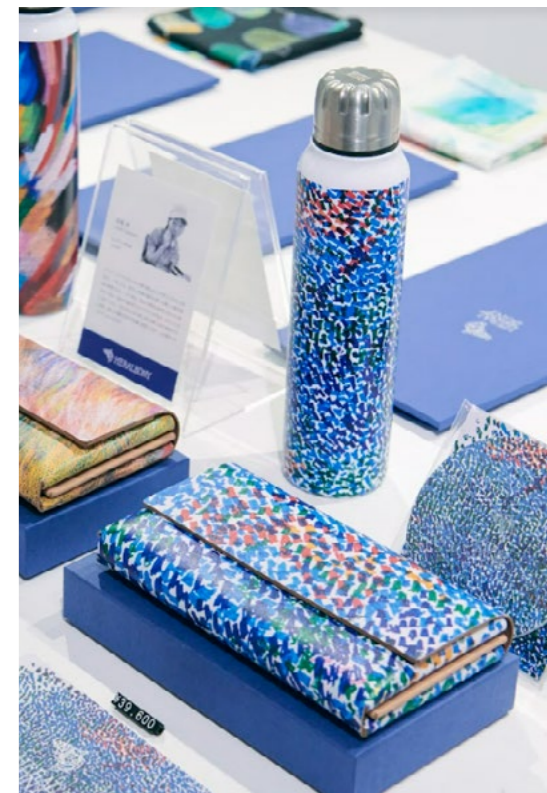
Five companies of note:

NEURODIVERSE BRANDING Heralbony

Japanese start-up Heralbony seeks to harness the creative talents of neurodiverse individuals to provide a stunning alternative to bland corporate branding and drab design. Set up by Japanese twins, the brothers noticed their third sibling, born with autism, was taking great pleasure in feverishly producing stunning works of art and felt he deserved an audience for his creativity. In recent years, Japanese ‘outsider art’ – art created by individuals not considered artists and often with complex conditions – has gained traction. Heralbony seeks to cultivate that community of neurodiverse individuals blessed with unorthodox talent and licence out the artwork for use in commercial communication.

From product packaging to outdoor ads, to clothing lines, to corporate logos, Heralbony allows brands to access a standard of wild and raw creativity that traditional graphic designers or indeed DALL-E artificial intelligence programmes may not be able to match. Most important, of course, Heralbony is at heart a philanthropy-driven licensing deal, where artists receive adequate remuneration for their efforts. This is vital as in some cases their condition may have otherwise prevented them from working in traditional roles. Brands who are seeking to support D&I initiatives would do well to take note.

www.instagram.com/heralbony/?hl=en





DIGITAL WOMEN'S HEALTH
Maven Clinic

Whilst there are many digital platforms that naturally have a more female audience (Pinterest for example) there are few dedicated to the complexity of women's health specifically. Enter Maven Clinic, founded by Kate Ryder and designed to address what she saw as gender disparity in female patient care. Maven Clinic is a cross between a health and wellbeing app, a social network, a telemedicine platform and a direct-to-consumer service, covering a host of female-oriented issues, from pregnancy and menopause to relationship advice and mental health support: think Mumsnet's forum meets WeChat's functionality meets telemedicine app Pushdoctor. Crucially, this is a fine example of narrow-slicing a vertical or category to focus deeper and further on its subject matter, and thus provide an all-encompassing end-to-end service to address the issues raised. Fundamentally, it is deploying a blend of technologies to address gaps in representation within society, and so is yet another example of Slush spotlighting solutions that seek to tackle deeper human needs.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/company/stories/maven-kate-ryder-tumed-women-family-health-startup-into-unicorn/>

AUDIO TECH FOR KIDS
Yoto

Given the ubiquity of screens in our daily lives, together with their dopamine-inducing notifications and enticements to endlessly scroll, it's no wonder that many parents are mindful about effects on children's development. Whilst a device that plugs into a global hive-mind to answer any question can be enormously educational and beneficial, parents must also be vigilant of the billions of pages of unsavoury content, plus privacy issues, posing a danger to young minds. Yoto is a possible solution, providing a tactile, child-friendly audio player that eschews the gaudy, synapse frying distractions of the modern smartphone in favour of a more robust, tactile and safe introduction to modern technology.



Like a cross between a Fisher Price Walkman and an off-grid smart speaker, Yoto delivers the functionality and connectivity of modern tech whilst sidestepping worries over whether you are being monitored from the cloud or being exposed to suspect digital content. Using NFC chip-enabled smart cards to deliver wholesome audio experiences, from bedtime story audiobooks featuring Peppa Pig to Captain America, Yoto is exploding onto the scene and can barely catch its breath such is its growth. Yoto's appeal flows both from solid design principles and from its selective disconnection from the internet to effectively protect and educate its audience.

<https://uk.yotoplay.com>

ANTI-BULLYING TECH
Tietoevry

Software company Tietoevry in conjunction with Swedish anti-bullying group, Friends, has produced a platform for identifying pupils who are the target of bullying to ensure early intervention. Survey data collection blended with machine learning algorithms helps create a functional digital twin of a school, which can be used to digitally model and thus identify real world warning signs given off by at risk pupils, triggering necessary mediation.

<https://www.tietoevry.com/en/success-stories/2022/friends-digital-twin/>



PAINLESS MEDICINE
Medixmicro Microneedle Patch

With a solution based in pure science, Medixmicro's Microneedle Patch seeks to solve for the logistical and technical difficulties surrounding traditional inoculation: from the transport of delicate vials to the shortage of trained nurses able to administer injections, to the 30% of the world's population who consider themselves needle phobic. The micropatch looks like a microchip, a tiny square fitted with an array of microscopic ultra fine dissolvable needles, all loaded with tiny amounts of vaccines or pharmaceuticals. Patches can be applied to the body by the patient themselves – almost like a miniature nicotine patch, and left for a short time for the drugs to administer. In an era of ageing populations and healthcare systems buckling under the strain of pandemics, solutions that democratise medicine and unburden medical services may gain traction.

<https://www.helsinki.fi/en/innovations-and-cooperation/innovations/commercialisation-research/microneedles>



GENTLE TECH: Implications for Brands and Business

ENSURE YOUR MARKETING IS KIND

In our most recent report, *The Future of Wellbeing*, OMG Futures outlined how brands should be cognisant of the tremendous pressure bearing down upon populations over the last three years, and how it can directly affect their behaviour as consumers. Consequently, we urged brands and businesses to actively invest in practices and initiatives that guided their customers through troubled times – whether that be ensuring sympathetic customer services that delivered humanised interactions, guaranteeing representation of minority groups in communications, or ensuring messaging does not set unattainable standards for its audience. The above emerging technologies and platforms demonstrate this effect ever more keenly and reminds brands that they

have a responsibility to help their customers, not just to make more informed purchases, but to assist them in a more human way as we navigate through troubled times. Most pertinent, innovation does not have to mean advancement of technology merely for the purposes of efficiency and utility, but also to deliver on imperatives beyond profit: inclusivity, empathy, community.

To that end, brands should actively engage with difficult questions about whether they are serving their customers, not just in terms of quality of product, but also to question if technology can be deployed to make consumers' lives easier to live. In short, to be considered, be considerate.

#2 FRUGAL TECH

IDENTIFYING PRUDENT BUT EFFICIENT
SOLUTIONS FOR A PENNYWISE WORLD

FRUGAL TECH

As the cost of living crisis bites for people, the sound of purse strings being tightened can be heard in many markets around the world. Big tech layoffs at Amazon, Twitter and Meta demonstrate the knock-on effect of a slowing global economy. But in times of fiscal rectitude, there can also be winners. In the world of business, non-premium retailers are benefitting from people seeking more value for money. In the world of tech, too, there is also focus on affordable alternatives to protect bank balances. Hence at Slush we saw a rise in start-ups proving that, with only a few tweaks and shortcuts, they can do what the big boys do, but at a fraction of the cost.



UNMANNED RETAIL MADE SIMPLE Selfly

Amazon Go Stores are demonstrating what is possible at the cutting edge of retail. Their system employs AI cameras, body tracking and weighted shelves to provide an unencumbered and frictionless shopping experience for the 21st Century. Likewise, in China and Japan, entire stores are unstaffed, with social media codes and CCTV ensuring compliance. In most UK supermarket chains, the self-service checkout is ubiquitous. But these solutions are inordinately expensive and beyond the reach of small to medium enterprises. Selfly is the affordable shortcut. Swapping AI tracking cameras for simple, miniature RFID codes – the kind attached to clothes in fashion stores, and changing

social media logins for good old fashioned contactless, Selfly gets close to the Amazon experience of picking up, browsing, putting back, paying and leaving, without the multi billion dollar investment – and all via the use of existing technology. Whilst Selfly's 'Little Tech' is undoubtedly old school compared to the advanced nature of 'Big Tech', it means that corner shops, schools, hospitals, canteens and leisure centres can get rid of their clunky coin operated vending machines (the one with the built-in bottom flap where the food falls) and join the retail revolution using self-service microstores, all for a fraction of the outlay.

<http://www.selflystore.com/>

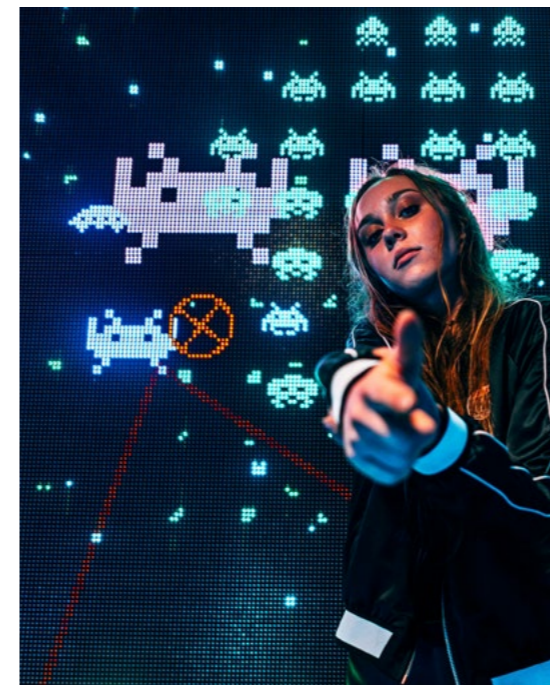
DIY METAVERSE Yahaha

Though we've all borne witness to the fevered commentary surrounding the M-word over the last year, there was surprisingly little on the Metaverse at Slush. One start-up of note did embrace it, however, aiming to do for the Metaverse what Selfly did for retail. One of the common motifs of Slush over the years is to take a complex technology and demystify it through do it yourself drag and drop editors; like Squarespace did for websites, or at a stretch, Instagram filters did for digital photography. Yahaha is DIY Metaverse, allowing third parties to create virtual environments instantly and easily without the need for any coding or specialist knowledge. Naturally, the 'sandbox' editor can already be found in many Metaverse-style games, from Roblox to Decentraland, but what makes Yahaha different is that it is not beholden to the distinctive visuals and restrictive rules that come with a proprietary virtual world. For example, in Roblox you can only make games for Roblox that look like Roblox, but Yahaha means you are free to design a virtual world to look any way you wish, without inheriting the house-style of more famous worlds. The issue for Yahaha now, it must be said, is scale and portability. The 'network effect' – the more people use something and know it exists, then the more people use it and know it exists, has not yet catapulted the platform to

**THE DEMOCRATISATION
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EVERYDAY CREATORS.**

fame, and of course behemoths like Fortnite and Minecraft will continue to dominate for now. Also Yahaha must find a way to be able to export worlds built on their platform and embed them across the Metaverse and internet. But it demonstrates that the democratisation of creativity will always be trope in tech; wresting control of the tools of production from big developers and placing it in the hands of everyday creators. Soon, creative agencies may be able to access tools like Yahaha enabling them to build branded worlds with the flick of a mouse and for a reduced cost.

<https://yahaha.com/>



FRUGAL TECH:
Implications for Brands and Businesses

SEEK INGENUOUS INNOVATION ALTERNATIVES

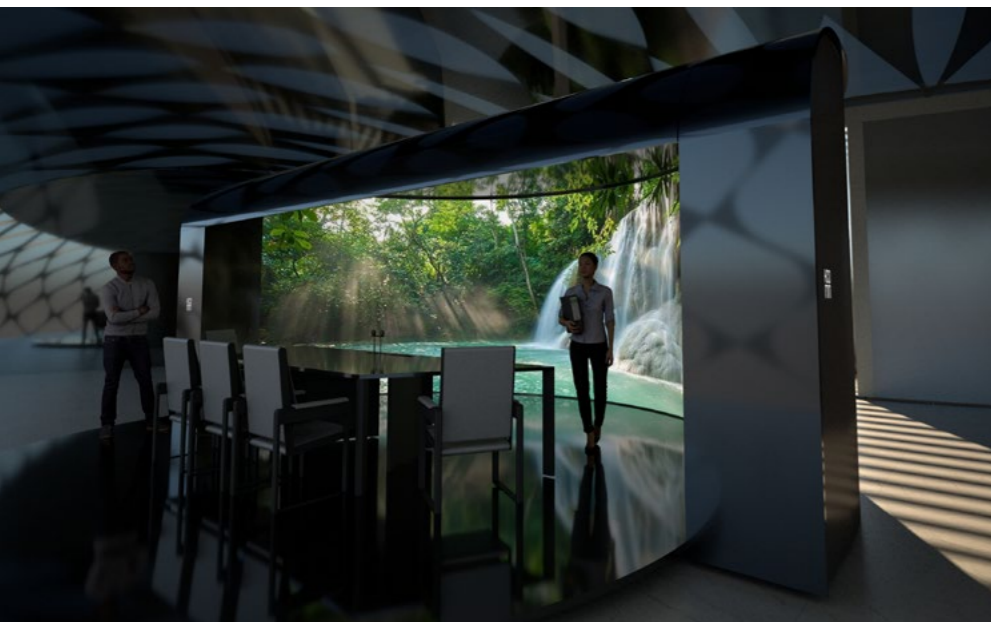
There is a misconception that all innovation must be a stunning disruption to the status quo, redefining the category for years to come. In reality, innovation is a spectrum: at one end, yes, we have those game changing moments. At the other, however, we have incremental improvements, nudges, hacks and shortcuts that are just as valid and can deliver real value. As we batten down the hatches in preparation for a possible downturn, we should not be abandoning innovation, rather shifting our frame to incorporate those innovations that are affordable and accessible; smart solutions that bring new and exciting ways of operating but without breaking the bank. Presuming automated retail has an enduring future (it's not guaranteed), we've seen we can have our own Amazon Go Stores without Amazon. We've also seen we can have our own Metaverse without Minecraft. So ask: what other innovations can brand and businesses deliver with clever shortcuts and effective alternatives?

#3 ULTRA-TELEPRESENCE

**AIDING SMOOTHER HUMAN CONNECTIONS
WITH NEAR-REAL PRESENCE**

ULTRA-TELEPRESENCE

Though there has been much debate over the relative merits of working from home versus being present in the office, it seems many businesses are falling into a hybrid working style as default. Regardless of the pandemic's retreat, it seems as if home offices and Zoom meetings will continue to play a key role in the working day from here on in. Accordingly, many start-ups at Slush were eyeing the market for accelerating standards of telepresence. Notably, however, rather than cartoon virtual avatars, the theme this year tended to be towards introducing as much reality into remote telecommunications as possible. Three companies of note embodied this:



ULTIMATE VIDEO CONFERENCING HCOMM

Italian Emirati start-up HCOMM offers towering wraparound multisensorial video walls in ultra-high definition. The aim is to provide a hyperreal immersive communications chamber, with two immediate use cases. First, as high end video conferencing, HCOMM allows delegations to sit face-to-face with other delegations, backdropped by either pristine digital wallpapers or indeed overlaid with interactive data visualisations to fuel the conversation. In brief, imagine a 4K Zoom meeting conducted via a giant sleek, curved wall, but with large groups of people conversing. In 2022 it was revealed that Google, too, was also

moving into hyper-real video via [Project Starline](#), with commentators praising the unnerving clarity of their opposite conversationalist. Clearly Big Tech see this is a growth area, then, and as MS Teams, Google Meet, and Zoom become a more regular part of our working day, an option for a dazzlingly premium version of the video call may be a differentiator. Second, HCOMM also say their wall can be fitted with audio and olfactory stimuli or smells, meaning it can be used in hospitals as the ultimate immersive relaxation tools before, during or after treatment.

<https://www.hcomm.eu>

REAL TIME TELEPRESENCE

Nokia

Finnish company Nokia was at Slush showcasing its real time telepresence platform. The technology enables workers to be virtually present at specific sites where a degree of interaction is required beyond the frame of the video call. In short, it's less about the people on the call and more about the place where they are, or indeed what's behind and around them. It works by slaving the movement of a remote camera to the movement of a VR headset's accelerometer, from miles away and all with almost no latency. A flick of the head generates a corresponding flick of the remote camera meaning users are gifted with the power of remote viewing. Now, distant users can be telepresent in real locations in real-time to look around and interact with a space and whatever is in the space alongside their physically present co-workers. This might have uses for people back in HQ directing their construction workers in real-time, overseeing production lines from overseas, or organising shows or events from afar.

<https://ventures.nokia.com/project/rxrm>



REMOTE DRIVING

Elmo

Elmo offers drivers the ability to operate a car whilst sitting in an entirely different location. Like Nokia's platform above, the remote piloting technology comprises a static seat, pedals and gear stick, but also an additional bank of screens that show live feeds from all angles surrounding the car. With a real-time one for one correspondence between the remote controls and the vehicle's movement, the hope is that the service may act as a midpoint between driver operated vehicle and fully automated – with the latter often raising concerns about placing our lives in the hands (or steering wheels) of AI. With Remote Driving, however, taxi passengers can relax safe in the knowledge a human is operating the vehicle, even if they are not present alongside them. Furthermore, the more hazardous



trips attempted by long haul truckers can be shared without any logistical switchovers. This is not as far fetched as it sounds, with Second Life founder, Philip Rosedale recently [tweeting](#): "Why are we trying to make driverless cars when instead we could make

it possible to remotely drive cars (or trucks), which would let drivers easily swap jobs with other drivers and better enjoy their work".

<https://www.elmoremote.com/en/>

ULTRA TELEPRESENCE: Implications for Brands and Businesses

MAKE REMOTE INTERACTIONS FOSTER TRUE CONNECTION

The pandemic has introduced a new set of behaviours into consumers repertoire, loosely categorised as 'remote living'. That is not to say that e-commerce or video calls did not exist before 2020, but rather the skill of interacting with life without being present, has become much more prevalent and indeed necessary over the last three years. However, the yearning for human contact remained throughout COVID and still does, and even now is exerting downward pressure on our tech solutions. Thus, there are lessons for brands and businesses here: namely, mediated communication should be as close to the real thing as possible. The increasing sophistication of telepresence technology demonstrates that the closer we feel the experience is to reality the more impactful it is, which has important implications for brand communications. The future may involve ultra high quality remote consultations or detailed product demonstrations and walkarounds, but most important it may signal that the era of faceless customer service – a robotic chatbot or a disembodied voice in a distant call centre may not survive when sophisticated tech provides a workaround.

#4 OPTIMISING THE WORKPLACE

FIXING WORK VIA
TECH-INFUSED PRACTICES



OPTIMISING THE WORKPLACE

To complement the idea of ‘remote life’, and in keeping with the general theme of benevolence and wellbeing, there were quite a considerable number of work based solutions on display at Slush. The recent phenomenon known as The Great Resignation saw thousands of employees treat the pandemic as an opportunity to reassess their life, quit their jobs and head off to find something more fulfilling. Soon, however, The Great Resignation had turned into The Great Regret, with free and easy employees now seeking a return to work to cover bills in the face of mounting costs (as well as perhaps missing human proximity). Given a labour shortage in many sectors, many employers, too, started to think about ways to entice colleagues to return. Beyond pay packets this could include better working environments, improved range of services and enhanced perks and initiatives. At Slush, therefore, we saw companies seeking to tap into this idea that employees, not employers, were now on the front foot and were in a position to demand more from the trappings of their working life – whether that be working hours, quality of the office environment, or company culture. There were three items to note:

EMBEDDING NORDIC WORKING PRACTICES

Slush Serene Stage

Though strictly speaking not a start-up, one of the main draws of Slush 2022 was a lively on stage debate codifying the reasons behind the proportional over-representation of successful Nordic and Scandinavian start-ups versus their Silicon Valley equivalents. On stage, Ilkka Paananen, CEO of Supercell, detailed what he deemed to be the secret sauce of success: relinquishing control to talented subordinates and creating a culture of ‘psychological safety’ to actively encourage making mistakes, purely in order to learn from them. Paananen also commented on the idea of creating autonomous units to act as petri-dishes for experimentation, with no expectation of results. Paananen was also at pains to point out that Supercell’s no nonsense approach

to game development, built on a ruthlessly high standard of quality control, is still driven by individual programmers given the authority to drop a project if they don’t think it’s of a standard befitting the brand. In other words, a positive company culture built on honesty and transparency can still deliver cutting edge results; an approach that seemed in stark contrast to the extreme expectations we see set by some Californian operations. In short, work based culture stands at a crossroads: will companies want to emulate Nordic success by embracing their open, egalitarian and trust based culture, or will they go for the nose to grindstone hustle of Silicon Valley and increasingly the Chinese tech scene too.

[Watch the session](#)

WILL COMPANIES EMULATE NORDIC SUCCESS BY EMBRACING THEIR OPEN, EGALITARIAN, TRUST-BASED CULTURE?





REINVENTING WORKSPACES

Vetrospace

The pandemic left us with two important societal artefacts. First, though the trepidation we felt whilst sharing enclosed spaces with others may have subsided in recent months, remnants of our newfound vigilance remain: some people are still wearing masks, some are still PCR testing when they fall ill, some are awaiting news of their next booster jab. These rituals are baked into our culture now, at least at some level. Second, beyond physical health, the return to the office has made us re-evaluate the geography of our desk space and ask important questions about whether having to don headphones to escape the grinding noise of the coffee machine or scowl at that one

guy who has his Teams call without headphones is conducive to a good working environment. Concerns over proximity – physical and audio – are at the heart of solutions provided by Vetrospace. We’ve all seen the rise in single TARDIS like workpods over the last few years, but Vetrospace aims to go one better, making pods both small and very, very big that allows workspaces to be divided up and reshuffled more efficiently and equitably. Crucially, however, it is the technology contained within that’s the differentiator. Vetrospace claims to have made a breakthrough in ventilation and extractor fans, and antimicrobial surfaces, going so far as to say that in their pods it is impossible for diseases like COVID

to be passed from one person to another. The pods also boast world class soundproofing and the power to control CO2 levels and blue light filters to artificially stimulate creativity. Whilst Vetrospace does not represent a category disruption per se, it does point the way to a future of carefully controlled and optimised working environments, as a draw for workers reluctant to return to the office.

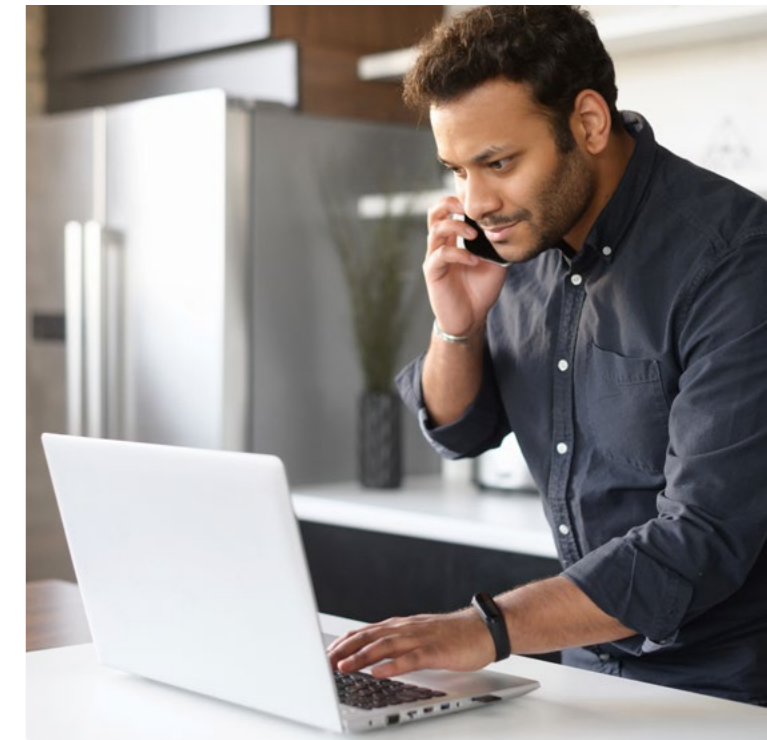
<https://vetrospace.com/>

GLOBAL REMOTE WORKING

Toptal

Increasingly companies are seeking candidates that fulfil only two requirements: immense talent and a fast broadband connection. As work moves online, and Western nations continue their transformation into ‘knowledge economies’, businesses can now look further afield for their talent to build a truly diverse, globalised workforce. Though not exactly a new entrant to the HR and employment scene, through the pandemic, Toptal has further honed its capabilities to surf the growing trend of hiring employees from anywhere in the world, offering employers intensive vetting processes involving remote interviews, real-time tests and assignments and peer review, to deliver to clients what they claim is the top 3% of workers in a chosen field. Given the bend towards much more human-centric working practices as laid out above, it will be interesting to see if remote employers can offer the same flexibility and perks to workers who they may never actually meet in the flesh.

<https://www.toptal.com/>



**OPTIMISING THE WORKPLACE:
Implications for Brands and Businesses**

**RETHINK YOUR AUDIENCE'S
RELATIONSHIP WITH WORK**

Post-pandemic, many workers seem to be in a position to demand more from their employers. Working practices that build more mutual trust into the system may also deliver more flexibility as a result – either in working hours or location, and may mean people come into the office less, or if their office environment is much improved, they may wish to come in more. Either way, traditional working patterns, the default 9–5, is changing. The technology on display at Slush is both responding to and enabling that change. Thus, brands and businesses thinking about targeting audiences through work routine media moments – the commute, the lunchtime dash for a food, drivetime radio, may need new media models to track the evolving workday behaviours of consumers, from the channels they use to the way they use them.

#5 SUSTAINABILITY AS STANDARD

**PROVING ALL THINGS HAVE
A SUSTAINABLE ANGLE**

SUSTAINABILITY AS STANDARD

The tech world is turning its collective intelligence to solving for the biggest existentialist crisis in living memory, and it's notable how far-reaching the response can be. Out of ignorance, we might think that there are only so many products that can be greenified and that there are natural speed limits on transformation given how ingrained some industrial processes are. But Slush 2022 demonstrated that there are no boundaries when it comes to sustainability, and that if you can think of it, then it can be transformed to be more ecologically sound. Actually, Slush has a long history of addressing sustainability through its visiting start-ups; a fact that led OMG Futures to raise the topic of Deep Tech – big bold solutions to planetary problems in our report [The Next Decade](#) at the beginning of 2022. Staying with that theme, this year there were four companies to note:



CLIMATE-READY CLOTHING

Coveross

Japanese company Coveross aims to adapt our wardrobe for the new climate, providing science based modifications to cool, heat and sanitise clothing – whether it's a new garment or an old one. The increasing prevalence of perilous heatwaves, devastating floods and cold snaps that threaten our bank balance mean that global society may have to adapt to the accelerating frequency of extreme [weather events](#). On the clothing rail on the day, there was a coat fitted with tiny built-in patches that emanated a small amount of heat to warm the garment, items made 100% water-repellent with a spray, as well as anti microbial and antimalarial textiles. Most important, however, whilst Coveross technologies can be baked into manufacturing processes at source, they also have many solutions that can extend the life of old clothing via the retrofitting of existing garments – an idea in opposition to the much derided and resource heavy fast fashion of recent years. The key takeout is this: that delivering a sustainable alternative can be based on circular solutions and does not have to mean buying new.

<https://coveross.com/>



ECO-EGGS

Onego

At the time of writing, the FDA in the USA has just [certified](#) lab grown meat safe for public consumption. Unlike meat alternatives, like Quorn or Beyond Meat, lab grown meat is ostensibly real meat except without the need to kill an animal – rather it is grown from cells in a lab. For many years, though meat alternatives have grown to be a multibillion dollar industry, vegans have had scant options when seeking alternatives to the egg. Onego reckon they now have the answer via their 'precision fermentation' process which can produce egg whites without a chicken in sight. The technology, akin to brewing beer, is already employed in producing enzymes for the food industry and can be reversioned to make ovalbumin. Though the yolk remains out of reach for now, vegan and vegetarian omelettes, meringues, cakes and cocktail recipes using albumin are now within scope. Historian Yuval Noah Harari postulated that the chicken was the most abused animal in all human history, not just because of the meat and eggs each bird provides, but due to the untold billions of chickens exploited for those resources throughout the aeons. In that sense, Onego is providing another avenue through which to reduce animal cruelty.

<https://www.onego.bio/>

THERE ARE NO BOUNDARIES WHEN IT COMES TO SUSTAINABILITY. IF YOU CAN THINK OF IT, THEN IT CAN BE TRANSFORMED TO BE MORE ECOLOGICALLY SOUND.



SUSTAINABLE CREDIT CARDS

Tietoevry

We know many brands and businesses are mindful of the gargantuan amounts of plastic packaging binned every day across the world. So too, we see the move towards recyclable and sustainable sourced materials, switching from plastic to cardboard and from rebuying to refill. Much of those efforts lie within the FMCG / CPG vertical for obvious reasons, but there are also untold stores of hidden plastic in products and services that barely register with the consumer. Credit cards or charge cards is one example, with some statistics predicting over 30 billion in use by 2026. Software company Tietoevry, already featured here for their anti-bullying platform, are also working on a response to the issue, creating sustainable alternatives to the plastic square we keep tucked in our pocket. On display were functioning cards made from corn starch, wood and reclaimed ocean plastic, reducing CO2 production by up to 75%. Tietoevry’s solution reminds brands and businesses that, when it comes to sustainability, production lines should be examined end-to-end for opportunities to level-up ecologically. Marketing – from the planning and buying, to the media owners employed – is part of that chain too.

<https://www.tietoevry.com/en/success-stories/2021/payment-cards-go-beyond-plastic/>

GREEN SPACE TRAVEL

Pangea Aerospace

As the new race for space reignites, and as SpaceX, Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin vie for the skies, critics point to the enormous environmental cost of burning millions of tons of fuel merely in the quest to get a decent view of the ground. When it comes to emissions, whilst rocket launches are still a drop in the ocean compared to the commercial airline industry, the visionaries behind human’s return to space travel are nonetheless tuned in to the environmentalism of the modern age. Pangea Aerospace is at the cutting edge of work to turn space travel from blue then black, to green. Early experiments in advanced biofuels at their laboratories point to a future where the space industry – not just tourism, but largely commercial satellite launches can be considered sustainable.

<https://pangeaaerospace.com/>



SUSTAINABILITY AS STANDARD: Implications for Brands and Businesses

DIG DEEPER FOR SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES

The sheer number of products and services that have discovered routes into sustainability is humbling. Indeed, whilst there are obvious green nudges and eco-initiatives brands and businesses can put in place, from green energy suppliers to carbon neutralised travel, there always remains work to be done.

In the media and marketing and creative industries, movements like Change The Brief and AdNetZero highlight where the opportunities lie within the ad industry. OMG Futures piece [Hit The Switch](#) – The Future of Sustainable Business also outlined a framework, the 5 Ps, for helping businesses transform their marketing

in the age of sustainability. The start-ups from Slush, however, demonstrate that when everything from clothing to credit cards to rocket fuel can be rendered sustainable, that there could be many more parts of the marketing process, likely hidden, that can be converted in the same way.

AT THE EDGE: SUMMARY

SIGNAL	BRAND IMPLICATION	MEDIA & MARKETING OPPORTUNITY
<p>GENTLE TECH</p> <p>EXPRESSING HUMANITY, INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY</p>	<p>Ensure your marketing is kind</p>	<p>Aim for a conscious inclusion of diverse groups in messaging to bring net positive impact on society. Be considerate to be considered</p>
<p>FRUGAL TECH</p> <p>IDENTIFYING PRUDENT BUT EFFICIENT SOLUTIONS FOR A PENNYWISE AGE</p>	<p>Seek ingenious innovation alternatives</p>	<p>Hunt down smart incremental innovations in media formats, channels and tactics to punch above your weight in comms</p>
<p>ULTRA-TELEPRESENCE</p> <p>AIDING SMOOTHER COMMUNICATION WITH NEAR-REAL PRESENCE</p>	<p>Make interactions foster true connection</p>	<p>Engineer brand touchpoints to be as humanised as possible. Do not automate values away</p>
<p>OPTIMISING THE WORKPLACE</p> <p>FIXING WORK VIA TECH-INFUSED PRACTICES</p>	<p>Rethink your audience's relationship with work</p>	<p>Align with new consumer behaviour and new forms of media consumption propelled by a change in workday patterns</p>
<p>SUSTAINABILITY AS STANDARD</p> <p>PROVING ALL THINGS HAVE A SUSTAINABLE ANGLE</p>	<p>Dig deeper for sustainable alternatives</p>	<p>Bolster ecological credentials by pinpointing parts of the marketing process that could be rendered more sustainable – either internally facing or consumer facing</p>

STRIVING FOR A PAIN-FREE FUTURE

We started this report by mentioning how MedixMicro was Slush in microcosm: a sustainable, painless inoculation administered by the patients themselves, effectively democratising health and cutting the costs of care. Indeed, this one start-up reflects broader yearnings in society: for ease and gentleness, for control and flexibility and frugality, both financially and ecologically.

When we look back at the 2020s, we will undoubtedly see it as a most challenging of decades. But, in time, we may also see humanity's response to those very challenges come to fruition via innovation. New ways of working that address the difficulties and challenges foist upon us.

Crucially, there is a lesson here for brands and businesses: we should always be planning for what comes next. OMG Futures exists for that very purpose: to translate the premonitions glimpsed at events like Slush into actionable strategy for brands. Seeking ways to incorporate innovations that aid the consumer, whether reducing friction, fostering human connection, or delivering sustainability. We can, and need to be, part of the efforts to improve the lives of fellow humans. Indeed, at the edge of the future, we see experts working on technologies that are striving to relieve our worries, clear our paths and return us to everyday living. We should be part of that too.

So, let's hope they succeed.

Omnicom Media Group UK

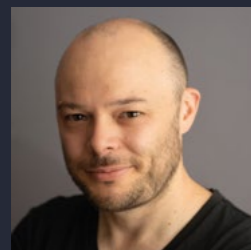
Omnicom Media Group UK (OMG UK) is the media division of Omnicom Group Inc., headquartered in London. OMG UK exists to power its four UK agencies – OMD UK, Manning Gottlieb OMD, PHD UK and Hearts & Science. The four agencies have open access to OMG's centres of excellence which provide market leading capabilities across Digital Transformation, Creative Solutions, Investment and Futures.

OMG UK agencies are holders of numerous Agency and Network of the Year accolades, including most recently; Campaign's Global Media Agency of the Year and Media Week's Best Agency Partner – MG OMD, Media Week's Media Agency of the Year – OMD and Best European Network at Campaign Global Agency of the Year awards – PHD. The group has also won multiple awards at the Global Festival of Media Awards, Cannes Lions, The Drum Awards and IPA Effectiveness Awards.

OMG Futures

Operating within Omnicom Media Group UK, OMG Futures is a special business unit dedicated to getting clients to the future, faster. It consults on future megatrends in media, tech and culture to deliver direct application for clients' marketing today.

OMG Futures has authored 10 flagship thoughtleadership pieces including: Beyond 2021 – The Next Decade ; Level Up – The Future of Gaming; Hit The Switch – The Future of Sustainable Business. It also delivers a Futures Accelerator programme to make future innovation opportunities tangible and actionable in the now. Finally, it also operates a programme of tech outreach to innovative start-ups and platforms that could form part of clients' future campaigns.



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