

How Mark Zuckerberg Totally Fucks Up Everything He Touches

By [John Herrman](#)



Lost. Photo: Meta

A few years on, Silicon Valley's brief obsession with the metaverse has assumed the quality of a bad dream, half-remembered. Legless avatars beckoned us into [barren digital landscapes](#) to ... stand around and talk about NFTs? Parcels of "property" sold for millions of dollars? It was a ... virtual world? No? A mixed-reality game? No? A new frontier? An escape from meatspace? A layer on top of it? Companies raised and spent billions of dollars on the metaverse without ever quite getting their stories straight about what it was supposed to be or do — they didn't just lack a good pitch beyond "getting in early," they lacked a coherent concept *to pitch* in the first place.

The metaverse was a term in search of a trend; a trope in search of instantiation; a failed act of summoning by leaders who really thought they could control the weather. In an obituary [published on Insider](#), Ed Zitron suggests the ultimate cause of death was the arrival of yet another next big thing:

The Metaverse fell seriously ill as the economy slowed and the hype around generative AI grew. Microsoft shuttered its virtual-workspace platform AltSpaceVR in January 2023, laid off the 100 members of its "industrial metaverse team," and made a series of cuts to its HoloLens team. Disney shuttered its Metaverse division in March, and Walmart followed suit by ending its Roblox-based Metaverse projects. The billions of dollars invested and the breathless hype around a half-baked concept led to thousands — if not tens of thousands — of people losing their jobs.

But the Metaverse was officially pulled off life support when it became clear that Zuckerberg and the company that launched the craze had moved on to greener financial pastures. Zuckerberg declared in a March update that Meta's "single largest investment is advancing AI and building it into every one of our products."

He lays a great deal of responsibility for the hype at the feet — or in the space below the floating torso — of one man. “Zuckerberg misled everyone, burned tens of billions of dollars, convinced an industry of followers to submit to his quixotic obsession, and then killed it the second that another idea started to interest Wall Street,” he writes. Which is fair: Changing Facebook’s name to Meta was a bold attempt not just to rebrand a company but to set an industry agenda, and while it ultimately failed, it sort of worked for a while.

Zuckerberg smirks as he's told 'perhaps you believe you are above the law?'

One question worth dwelling on, however, is why it worked at all — and why people like Zuckerberg were so zealously committed to it, despite the massive costs. Low interest rates couldn’t have hurt. Crypto-adjacency had something to do with it. A sense of impending stagnation among tech giants surely provided some anxious fuel. Maybe they just read *Snow Crash* in high school and thought: *What if that, but not cool?*

Empty offices and newly [empowered](#) employees drove some tech executives *out of their minds*, and the Metaverse promised a solution, or at least functioned as a response. It represented an intoxicating fantasy, just not one that most of us would recognize — or, if we did, one that we might recognize as sort of a nightmare.

Executive fantasies — and executive autonomy in general — get short shrift in most popular theories about How Things Work, I think, especially in the tech industry, where superstar founders and CEOs are given considerable deference and leeway. They live weird lives, develop idiosyncratic views of the world, and have unusual amounts of power. It’s fair to assume that the leadership at a big tech firm is interested in

maximizing efficiency and profit, for themselves or for shareholders. It's the job description and often explains a lot, but not everything — sometimes it legitimizes what can seem like much more instinctual and personal decisions made under the auspices of the cold logic of capitalism. It certainly falls short in the case of Elon Musk's Twitter, for example, where executive whims are the only thing with any remaining explanatory power.

Consider what crypto looked like from the very top: not just a potentially promising area for investment, a modest but meaningful grassroots phenomenon among users, or an engine for wealth, but also the crude fantasy of total regulatory freedom, a path to a stateless, tech-centric world. AI, too, represents, among other things, a profound tech-exec fantasy: an endless supply of cheap and obedient labor and a chance to take ownership of the means, of, well, everything. The metaverse was for Facebook/Meta, as Zitron suggests, a "means to an increased share price," but it also resembled an executive crusade — it was the awkward Zuck in those metaverse announcement videos, more animated than he's ever been — and it's not that hard to imagine why.

The metaverse was another supreme executive fantasy. Most broadly, it offered the prospect of a new frontier, the likes of which Zuckerberg hasn't seen since, well, his conquest of the last one. More immediately, it was a way to make remote work more like in-office work for everyone, but [especially for bosses](#), who understood it as a way to regain control and authority over their newly WFHing employees. It was a theoretical solution to the suddenly pressing problem of expensive and empty real estate — replacing a finite resource with an infinite one. (Meta has long talked about being a remote-work-friendly company but pays for millions of square feet of office space around the world.) From one executive to an audience of other executives, the metaverse — at least Zuck's take on it — offered a vision of the future in which everything was different but also pretty much the same: a disruptive technology that maintained the basic order of things, and where you once again knew what your employees were up to, even if they were just avatars.

[Mark Zuckerberg did everything in his power to avoid Facebook becoming the next MySpace - but forgot one crucial detail.... No one likes a lying asshole \(archive.fo\)](#)

A rational CEO thinking about his shareholders certainly could have made any number of bad or misguided choices in Mark Zuckerberg's position, especially under the strange circumstances of a pandemic; still, it's hard to explain *Meta* without an unusually empowered CEO becoming intensely committed to a fantasy that, then and now, didn't resonate much with anyone but him, and maybe an audience of similarly disoriented corporate leaders.

What was unusual about the metaverse from the outside, circa 2021, was how little it offered to anyone *but* executives, who alternated between hyping it as imminent, far-off, or as already existing in games like *Roblox*, which was [news](#) to the millions of people playing them. It felt uncanny and hollow, and when people stopped talking about it so much, nobody who wasn't directly invested seemed to care. It's true that Silicon Valley has shifted its attention to AI, but what really killed the metaverse was workers returning to the office. In 2022, outside of tech, major firms that had shifted to remote work started demanding employees come back. In the tech industry, which has traditionally been fairly amenable to remote work, a season of brutal layoffs was accompanied by more stringent return-to-office plans. In a March [update](#) to staff and investors, which made only passing references to the Metaverse, Zuckerberg wrote about the need for a "year of efficiency":

Our early analysis of performance data suggests that engineers who either joined Meta in-person and then transferred to remote or remained in-person performed better on average than people who joined remotely. This analysis also shows that engineers earlier in their career perform better on average when they work in-person with teammates at least three days a week.

From the outside, this reads like an anti-pitch for the metaverse office, which Meta had been pitching just a few months earlier — or, for

Zuckerberg, maybe just a dream deferred until the [graphics are](#) good enough.

Accenture's virtual office in the metaverse pic.twitter.com/iggThmEWHZ

— Shirin Ghaffary (@shiringhaffary) [October 11, 2022](#)

It's fitting that Sam Altman, OpenAI CEO and the avatar of the industry's next executive fantasy, is the one who wants to bury the last one. "I think definitely one of the tech industry's worst mistakes in a long time was that everybody could go full remote forever," he said in an interview this week. "I would say that the experiment on that is over, and the technology is not yet good enough that people can be full remote forever."

Tucker Carlson: "Mark Zuckerberg is not simply censoring opinions, he proscribing which political opinions you're allowed to have."

Merely appearing in a video or photo with someone Mark Zuckerberg doesn't like is now enough to get you banned by Facebook.

This is the Communist Chinese social credit system but instead controlled by giant corporations with more power than entire countries.

Chilling.

[Mark Zuckerberg is Scum of the Earth ~ Mark Dice breaks down the massive pile of shit disguised as a human being.](#)

(hooktube.com)

[The first rule of Facebook is don't talk about anyone Mark Zuckerberg doesn't like, or you'll be banned by Facebook. That isn't a joke. It's literally their new policy. \(youtube.com\)](#)

Big (personal) data is becoming big tech's new currency – and most definitely a commodity well beyond its obvious usefulness, the latest revelation about Facebook's dubious business practices seems to suggest.

Leaked Facebook emails, chat logs, minutes from meetings and various other documents dating back to between 2011 and 2015 show that the company was willing to abuse personal user data in a number of ways in order to advance its business.

[NBC News said](#) that it has had access to the leaked material, consisting of thousands of pages. The picture they paint is of CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his executives playing ruthless corporate games in deliberate disregard of the privacy of billions of Facebook subscribers.

Facebook has now been exposed as using its unique, massive personal data collection to reward or punish allies and competition, as the case may be. While publicly declaring its commitment to user privacy, the company was looking for ways to use the data it collects to its maximum advantage.

As if sharing it to third-parties operating on its platform was not enough, the social media giant sought to trade it for more advertising money coming its way from other giants, such as Amazon, or to deny it to direct competition, such as an unnamed chat app, the broadcaster is reporting. And occasionally, the documents show, Zuckerberg would allow access to this digital gold mine to developers who were his “personal friends.”

Facebook has denied that it favored companies and developers for their advertising dollars, or for the sake of personal ties – and while it may be unethical, the practice laid out in the documents leaked anonymously and shared by UK investigative journalist Duncan Campbell with three media outlet, has not given rise to accusations that these actions were illegal, NBC News said.

But it should give pause to Facebook users who are discovering the arrogance of the company that likes to speak with a forked tongue:

calming concerns about its practices through PR efforts, and then giving the issue of privacy little to no regard, as the leaked documents show. Instead, Facebook was feverishly attempting to (ab)use the sensitive private data at its disposal, for all it is worth.

[Watch creepy Mark Zuckerberg sweat profusely.](#) (youtube.com)

THE CORRUPTION OF ZUCKERBERG

You Give Apps Sensitive Info. Then They Tell FACEBOOK...

Buried code reveals Zuckerberg threat to attack PINTEREST...