

Mixed Reality as a stand-alone solution? You are doing it wrong!

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Is the future of MR glasses being viewed through proverbial rose-tinted glasses? Not at all! Mixed-reality solutions will change the industry - but companies will have to rethink and start digitising their processes.

More emotional sales experiences, more efficient service processes and new ways of intuitively transferring knowledge – just three examples of the possibilities Mixed Reality offers companies. [Microsoft HoloLens 2, which was recently presented at the Mobile Word Congress](#), shows the enormous progress in hardware development, especially in much-criticised areas such as wearing comfort, field of vision and usability, and the potential this technology offers for the industry. The technology could also experience a boom in the consumer sector with new services such as [Microsoft's Azure Spatial Anchors](#) or devices such as Magic Leap One.

Here, however, one thing stands out: what we have encountered so far at trade fairs, conferences and stylish Youtube videos from the Mixed Reality sector are above all prototypes and proofs of concepts. Very few of them actually make the leap into real-world implementation. The reasons for this are that most companies limit themselves to gaining experience with mixed reality and set their focus too narrowly when considering the business case.

Integration into business processes

This is the decisive point, because the full potential of Mixed Reality does not come into play in stand-alone solutions. What many companies underestimate is that the greatest potential of mixed reality solutions arises when they are integrated into complete business processes and do not take place in isolation.

One example is HoloLinc®, a digitised sales process for stair lifts [presented by thyssenkrupp Elevator, Microsoft and Zühlke last October in Essen](#). Here, mixed reality, classic enterprise development using an Azure backend and connection and mobile development each contribute a good third.

Microsoft HoloLens as a measuring instrument

The Microsoft HoloLens not only serves to visualise the future stairlift for the customer, but is

also used as a measuring instrument. This enables thyssenkrupp Elevator to give its customers a much better idea of what the new stairlift will look like while also saving the sales staff a lot of time measuring the staircase. Just some of the advantages of mixed reality.

But the real highlight of HoloLinc® is that measuring the staircase and configuring the lift with the aid of Mixed Reality is just the beginning of a completely digitised sales process. In the next step, the data is transferred to production via the cloud at the touch of a button. The faster communication between the sales staff, production and administration via the direct ERP integration between configuration, ordering and production is beneficial for everyone. And above all, it shortens delivery times by a factor of 4 – a major competitive advantage in an industry where every day counts.

Combining Mixed Reality with Artificial Intelligence

There is also enormous potential when mixed reality is combined with other technologies or methods, such as artificial intelligence. This opens up completely new possibilities in the context of automatic image recognition and how the acquired data can be used in the respective business process. HoloLinc® could thus also be further developed with the help of Artificial Intelligence.

Data collected when measuring staircases using Microsoft HoloLens, including technical details of the staircase and which stairlift was configured for it, can be meaningfully applied to the sales work. This data could form the basis for assistance systems for the sales staff, such as automatic suggestions generated by Artificial Intelligence as to which types of stairlift are likely to be suitable for the buyer.

Efficient spare parts management

The combination of Mixed Reality and Artificial Intelligence also offers promising approaches for servicing applications. For example, automatic image recognition could determine part numbers and thus identify spare parts and order them automatically. But here, too, the decisive point is that these new possibilities only bring real added value if they are embedded in a business process. This is the difference between proofs of concept and solutions that deliver real efficiency gains.

Only one component of many

The use of mixed reality technologies offers many possibilities in the sales, maintenance and training environment. However, one should always be aware that mixed reality solutions only reach their full potential if they are just one of several components of a digitally transformed business process. Otherwise, this promising technology remains what skeptics laughingly call

all the prototypes and PoCs: a nice gimmick.

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