

Unreal Engine's latest innovation is about building games while inside virtual reality

Dean Takahashi

@deantak

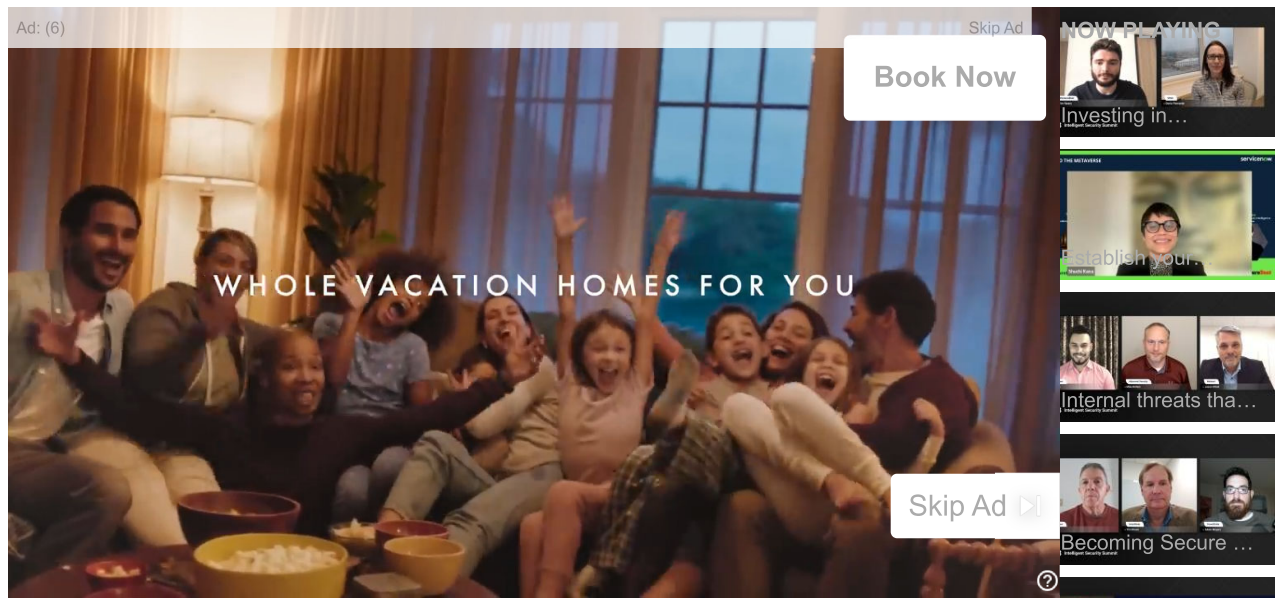
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[Epic Games](#) is unveiling a new virtual reality edition of its Unreal Engine game-development tool today that enables you to create a video game from within VR.

The move shows that VR, which is expected to be a \$30 billion market by 2020 according to tech advisor Digi-Capital, has the power to transform how we create things. Video game artists will benefit, but so will plenty of real-world artists such as painters, sculptors, and architects. Epic Games considers VR to be a transformative experience that will affect how we do everything, from our day-to-day jobs to how we play in virtual environments.



“We’ve been supporting VR [from] the early days, but building VR content up until now has been done outside of VR,” said Tim Sweeney, the chief executive of Epic Games, in an interview with GamesBeat. “You do it sitting at a PC, looking at a monitor with a keyboard and mouse. That’s pretty backwards given the VR revolution. The big news here is we have extended the Unreal Editor to support VR. You can now be within VR, building VR content, in a completely immersive and intuitive way.”

He added, “It’s fairly revolutionary, in the combination of ease of use. What you see is what you get, and the sheer fun of it.”



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Above: Editing a game level using
Unreal Engine in VR.

Image Credit: Epic Games

Mike Fricker, the technical director and one of the leads on UE development, said in an interview that you can use your hands to control interactions in the virtual world. You use motion-control devices like the Oculus Touch or HTC Vive hand controls to make things happen. You can grab objects and place them in the world or aim at them with a virtual laser pointer and then move them around.

Unreal Engine VR editor -- Epic's incredible new tech

“It’s a magical feeling, like using touch on the iPad,” Sweeney said. “Your brain already knows how this works. Instead of doing that on a two-dimensional screen, you just reach out and pick up an object and move it from place to place. You can even pinch to zoom like on the iPhone. You start out at human scale. You can move objects around. You can move yourself around. You can walk around. But you can scale the world down using pinch to zoom and then you’re like Godzilla, looking at the world from above. From that vantage point, you can manipulate things at a much higher level of granularity. It brings the intuition of the real-world actions into video game editing.”

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The project has drawn inspiration from a variety of places. [Google has been demonstrating its Tilt Brush VR app](#), which lets you paint from inside a 3D environment. And Oculus VR has shown Medium, a way to sculpt environments inside VR. Epic has taken those ideas and applied it to the laborious and technically difficult process of creating video game worlds.

The amazing thing about editing in VR is that it enables the developer to feel like he or she is inside the world as it's being created. That makes it easier to see flaws, and it eliminates the time you'd waste when you have to pause your work and look at it through a visualization on a PC monitor, just to check if the perspective is correct on a piece of art. That makes artists much more productive than they are now, Sweeney said.

Editing in VR enables the creator to ensure that metrics are correct and that the experience he or she is creating is comfortable without having to separately preview changes. You don't have to test the experience on a device because you already know what it looks and feels like.

You can grab the sun in the sky and move it in order to change the time of day inside the world. Sweeney said the VR editing reminded him of the scene in the movie *Minority Report*, when Tom Cruise solves a mystery by grabbing a bunch of items and rearranging them in a virtual space in front of him.

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"This is a huge simplification of the process," Sweeney said. "You can directly manipulate things, like a *Minority Report* approach. This is the way everything will go, and it will go very quickly, given

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how fun it can be compared to a computer and a mouse.”

Epic plans to show off the technology at the upcoming [Game Developers Conference](#) in March in San Francisco.

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