

Bit Space

Company Showcase

- **Type of company:** Content creation and VR hardware (headsets)
- **Established:** 2015 (to be confirmed)
- **Year began working in VR:** 2015
- **Location(s):** Winnipeg, Manitoba
- **Company Size:** 1-10 Employees
- **Website:** <http://bitspacedevelopment.com/>

This Winnipeg-based firm is creating interactive educational experiences, and producing specialized hardware to bring those experiences to consumers across Canada and internationally.

Company origins

Daniel Blair did not intend to found a VR company – he was working at another successful startup on a side project, an educational game using panoramic 360-degree photography. Eventually he got an office where there was a group of student interns available, and began building games. Later, he began networking with other businesses in Manitoba, and after 6 months realized that they had become a de facto VR studio. They were conducting research, from which they developed new technology, and were working with a hardware manufacturer to produce it.

Pursuing growth

Daniel gave a TEDx talk in June 2016 in which he emphasized VR's ability to reach a new set of eyes. Taking a scientific approach to VR means learning new ways of telling stories using video and interaction. He sees VR as a stepping-stone to AR (augmented reality), and eventually to physical computing. Importantly, he would like to develop tools to bring dangerous situations into safer settings, like the classroom, or a museum installation, where they can become active learning experiences.

Bit Space is hard at work building two key components of its overall strategy:

- Building XR (VR and AR) tools to facilitate educational experiences (e.g. to bring a training course 'to life' through interactive elements)

- Building a research company devoted to the study and creation of educational content.

An example of the first element might be a custom headset attachment designed to monitor the effects of the technology on the body. Bit Space is working with numerous partners, including MS hololens, HTC, Oculus, and universities (who may have the training and resources needed to tackle large or especially complex problems).

Factors for success

Daniel sees Bit Space's competitive advantages as lying in its access to the local market, the constant focus on VR research, and the presence of professional educators on the team, leading to a very high-level understanding of research in the industry. In Daniel's view, Bit Space's main goal is to help clients explore these new technologies in order to solve problems.

In terms of challenges, Daniel notes a lack of digital media-focused VC (venture capital) firms. As a result, Bit Space is concentrating on a bootstrap model. Additionally, developers can be very expensive, and he stresses the need to locate them early on in the process. Finally, there are challenges relating to access to the innovation ecosystem (e.g. IRAP). As a company focused on the intersection of learning and VR, it can be difficult to see where the proper funding pathways lie.