

Stambol Studios – Dogu Taskiran, CEO/CTO

Company Showcase

- **Type of company:** Creative Technology Studio
- **Established:** 2016
- **Location(s):** Vancouver, BC – Surrey, BC
- **Company Size:** 22 Employees
- **Website:** <https://www.stambol.com>

Stambol is a creative technology studio based in Vancouver and Surrey that helps companies better communicate their vision through a range of technologies, including VR, AR and XR. Since its inception in 2016, Stambol has delivered numerous architectural visualizations and immersive and interactive real estate applications.

Company Origins

Dogu and Mehmet Taskiran, co-founders of Stambol Studios, grew up in Istanbul, Turkey. The two brothers got interested in computer science and programming at a young age, frequenting arcades and programming their own game at 11. Pursuing their passion, Dogu worked in military simulation while his brother developed 4D solutions for theaters. Facing a limited ecosystem in Turkey, Dogu moved to Canada in 2006 to develop award winning AAA game titles and engines for gaming giants EA and Ubisoft and developed the graphics stack of an innovative new computing ecosystem at Microsoft. Mehmet worked with architects, real estate developers and marketing agencies to create photorealistic CG visualizations and animations of real estate properties.

In 2016 Dogu and Mehmet reconciled the two visions – creativity and engineering – when they created their own studio, Stambol. Just like Istanbul, sitting between two continents and taking the best of this multicultural background, Stambol (a name derived from Istanbul), draws upon the different but complementary experiences of the two brothers. This collaboration between the left and right brains gave Stambol its unique approach and expertise.

Developing a platform

Through Stambol, Dogu and Mehmet developed one of the best room-scale VR experience, which caught the eyes of the construction and real estate industry. Instead of creating physical elements to help the clients visualize the final product, Stambol produces hyper-realistic virtual experiences that achieve the same objective. A VR experience offers many advantages: promoters can get rid of expensive physical showhouse that limits the number of people that can visit the place and requires them to actually come to the physical location.

The Stambol application not only removes many barriers, it also opens new horizons. For instance, clients can customize the experience (e.g., choose the furniture) to increasing their feeling of ownership, and imagine that they are already at home.

A VR application can be a challenge as many buyers are not familiar with this technology. Building on his experience in military simulation, Dogu decided to create an application that would not require any controller, which makes it easy to navigate in VR and helps reduce motion sickness. The Stambol team also gave careful consideration to the quality of the visualization, building pre-rendered assets to always ensure the comfort of the experience.

In fact, VR is just one piece of the Stambol platform. The visualizations are accessible via a web-based app, so it is not necessary to have a VR headset to access the platform. It was important for Stambol, from the very beginning, not to be limited to one medium.

Adding layers to our reality

New realities (VR/AR/XR) are promising technologies and already part of our lives. Few people understand that Snapchat's filters or Google's 360-degree videos are already using these technologies. That is because it is just a new layer added to a platform that the audience already used. It is difficult to make people download an AR application on their phones, but if we integrate these functionalities to existing services, they will use them.

That is the philosophy that guides Stambol Studios: building bridges and removing barriers to create frictionless experiences. For Dogu, the best way to democratize these technologies is to put marketing and engagement at the very core of Stambol's projects. The technologies must meet users where they already are and simply add a layer that enhance their experience.

This approach isn't limited to social media or the construction industry. Stambol has indeed identified needs for platform-agnostic, frictionless, high-quality applications in the healthcare sector. Stambol is helping to develop a space for health and innovation and a neuroscience centre thanks to its experience in construction and in digital realities. The company is also involved in a research project that combines VR, biometrics and neuroscience to address cognitive disorders.

Challenges and solutions

The gaming market being saturated, and showing low revenue opportunities, it was natural for Stambol to explore other use cases of VR/AR/XR. It made also sense to use their expertise to tackle "real world issues" (e.g., e-health, training, etc.). However, digital realities are still facing major challenges.

For people to adopt VR/AR/XR, there must be an important amount of diversified content available but as Dogu observes, we are not quite there. New technologies require not only a specific mindset, but also a unique skillset ranging from programming to UX to CG modelling. Having access to skilled talent can be a challenge, especially for start-ups or SMEs competing with larger studios. According to Dogu, access to capital remains the greatest challenge, in particular in a climate of consolidations, closures and mergers.

Fortunately, Stambol is based in Vancouver and can tap into a large talent pool. With an increasing number of IDM company headquarters, Vancouver is one of the best places to develop VR/AR/XR projects and has the advantage to be in the same time zone as the Silicon Valley.

Building the future of VR

The first advice that Dogu would give to his peers is to expand their perspective. VR is just one tool in an increasingly complete toolbox. Diversification and open-mindedness are key to the survival in this sector. We are witnessing the concurrent blossoming of many technologies (XR, 5G, AI), and they shouldn't be treated as isolated technologies.

VR and AR will become even more immersive (but less isolating) thanks to eye tracking, high resolution, surround audio, haptics, etc. These technologies do not matter only in the entertainment space, but also, for instance, in the simulation sector, where it is crucial to have a reliable awareness of your surroundings and potential hazards.

Collaboration will define the future of this sector. Every stakeholder needs to play a part in this story to survive together. As Dogu says, it is not about taking a greater share, but making a bigger pie. It is also important to be transparent, approachable and to show pedagogy. Dogu equally insists on the necessity to get out of your comfort zone. There is not enough awareness among people outside the industry. You have to meet people who are not familiar with digital realities but for which they would be beneficial: go see people in marketing, in health, and tell them why new realities are game-changing.