

Facebook unveils upgraded wireless Oculus headset in VR push

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Facebook, which last year unveiled its wireless virtual reality headset Oculus Go, on Wednesday announced a more powerful wire-free device called Oculus Connect

Facebook on Wednesday unveiled an upgraded Oculus virtual reality headset with power to handle the intensive graphics of digital worlds in a

wire-free experience.

The new Oculus Quest headset showcased at the Facebook unit's developer conference is being aimed at gamers seeking immersion in virtual worlds, with other potential applications likely in the future.

"This is the wireless [virtual reality](#) experience we have been waiting for," Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said as he unveiled the new hardware and reaffirmed Facebook's commitment to virtual reality.

The standalone VR headset boasting the same quality experiences as the Oculus Rift but without wires will hit the market early next year at a price of \$399.

Oculus vice president Hugo Barra said Quest combined the capabilities of Rift and the portability of Go, the current headgear in the company's lineup, with a strong focus on games.

Rift was the first VR gear released by Facebook-owned Oculus, but needs to be plugged into computers powerful enough to handle the graphics rich, immersive nature of digital worlds.

Go is a lightweight portable headset for virtual reality.

Step into 'Star Wars'

Oculus promised 50 [game](#) titles available at launch, including "Vader Immortal," which will let Quest users play through the opening episode of a new virtual reality experience set in a castle of infamous "Star Wars" villain Darth Vader.

The "Star Wars" virtual reality experience was described as a combination game and immersive film.

In a self-deprecating moment on stage, Zuckerberg recalled setting a goal of getting a billion people into virtual reality after buying Oculus some four years ago in a deal valued then at \$2 billion.

He chuckled along with the audience as he shared a graph showing they were a scant one percent of the way to that goal.

"This isn't a question of whether we are going to get there, it is how," Zuckerberg said, while acknowledging the path may be longer than first expected.

He said a speed bump on the road to adoption that Quest was intended to solve was making VR more convenient and portable.

A second challenge, he said, was creating a vast, enticing ecosystem of games, films, meeting spaces and other experiences in virtual reality.

The two-day Connect conference was intended to inspire software makers to help create that ecosystem.

"We are going to make some big leaps in both technology and content," Zuckerberg told the gathering.

"This is all still early, but this is the basic road map."

Virtual visits

Anshel Sag, analyst at Moor Insights & Strategy, said the Quest could make it easier to get into virtual reality gaming at a reasonable price.

"I think this brings console quality gaming and experiences to a price point that previously wasn't possible," Sag said.

"It makes it easier to get into virtual reality without spending a lot of money."

Despite technology advances in recent years, virtual reality gear remains the stuff of early-adopters like video game lovers and hasn't gone mainstream with consumers.

Facebook's vision of virtual reality goes far beyond games to a time when members of the leading online social network can virtually visit one another with the help of avatars.

"There is simply no substitute for being there," vice president of augmented and virtual reality Andrew Bosworth told the gathering.

"Tools we are building in AR and VR have the opportunity to answer the question of what it would be like to be transported."

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