SUMMER 22

SUNSHINE ON OUR MINDS

accent_design_group

accent
CREATIVE DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

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A FORCE
TO BE
RECKONED
WITH!

Karen

WELCOME

A newsletter when we have sunshine on our minds? I must admit that a summer offering is a first for Accent. This either demonstrates the organisational prowess of our new Office Manager – or maybe we just have more to talk about this year!

Since our last magazine at Christmas (which doesn't seem like 6 months ago), we've enjoyed meeting clients face-to-face again at our new home in The Enterprise Centre and have expanded the team, but more than anything have just enjoyed getting refocussed.

In this round-up, we introduce you to our new front-end man Abdul, take a closer look at developing software from spreadsheets (for a somewhat topical sunbed supplier), look at website scroll journeys, and reflect on the importance of designing for mobile users. Members of the team discuss a wide variety of topics that interest them at the moment: Dave delves into Interplanetary File Systems, Reza introduces you to the Metaverse, and Nick looks at the potential future of nuclear energy.

We also look at keeping a brand on trend, in this case, one we know a fair bit about, being our own – as we stride forth into our 32nd year in business.

I hope that you enjoy this latest collection of our musings and ramblings. But, more importantly, you get out there and relish the sunshine!

Wishing you the very best in your summer adventures.

GEOFF
MANAGING DIRECTOR

WELCOME ABDUL

THE EAGLE-EYED FRONT-END SPECIALIST

Having a keen eye for great design, Abdul is our front-end specialist—developing everything you see on a website or web application.

Enthusiastic about all things technology, he is entirely self-taught and treats programming & web development as a professional craft.

Abdul works on his grand magnum opus when he's not studying code, which seeks to combine the best and most important ideas from all known disciplines.

ACCENT NEWS

KEEPING IT SOCIAL

You may remember the Accent offices being home to a pool table and various game consoles; we've always appreciated the need for winding down after a long week. Now that the Team are remote, we've been exploring different ways of continuing the social aspect of Accent. Spring has been all about online Mario Kart and our champ Abdul, who races streets ahead of the Team whilst also giving a running commentary! We think a change of game may be in order!

KEEPING YOU SAFE

It's fair to say that world events affect many elements of our day to day lives, and we've been braced for an increase in cyber attacks on our services this Spring. During February and March, we saw a 39% increase across our firewalls; our robust systems blocked a shocking 450k hacking attempts from all over the world.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Sustainability is an essential ethos of Accent as we play our part in building a greener internet. By continually reducing our carbon footprint across all services by building efficient web systems and using green renewable energy providers. Last year, our hosting partner helped us save 204 kilograms of carbon, equivalent to turning off one lightbulb for 29 weeks. If sustainability is important to you, get in touch to see if we can reduce your footprint even further.

SUNBEDS AND SPREADSHEETS
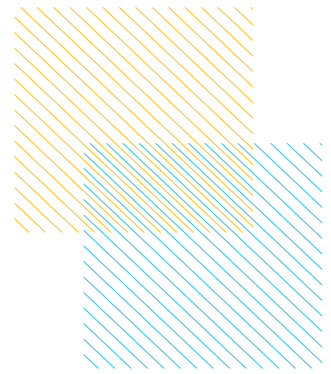
SPOTLIGHT
HELIONOVA

Helionova has been supplying and maintaining sunbeds to beauty salons and leisure centres across the country since 1979. The company managed their whole operation using a mix of paper, spreadsheets and an access database, but over the years this led to drawn out processes with data being replicated into multiple systems, and also increased the chance of data integrity issues throughout the system.

UNDERSTANDING THE REQUIREMENTS

Accent worked with Helionova's directors to analyse the company's processes and define the requirements of a new system. The requirement was essentially for an integrated CRM system to replace the old processes, allowing customer details to be maintained and quickly recalled, enquiries to be tracked, and the history of services and orders to be retrieved. The system also had to keep an itinerary of spares, accessories and suncare products, and assist in customers placing orders over the phone. Finally, the system also had to track maintenance enquiries that required a visit from an engineer and assist in the planning of the engineers' 'tours'.

DELIVERING THE SOLUTION, INCREMENTALLY

Accent's team prototyped and built the solution as a bespoke web-based application and delivered the system incrementally, with the most important functionality being released first, and further functionality developed and added every few weeks. This process allowed for the system to be used and fine-tuned in real-time and for changes in requirements or priorities to be incorporated as the project developed. The final application allows admin staff to call up client details whilst they are on the phone, to take orders which are passed on to the separate packing team, and to mark enquiries for follow up by a manager to arrange an engineer's visit. Managers have access to see enquiries that need following up and to plan engineers' visits, as well as keeping track of overall sales and stock figures.

Whilst there was some initial trepidation in moving away from longstanding processes, the Helionova team quickly adapted to the new web-based application, the streamlined processes, and the better customer service that it allows them to provide.
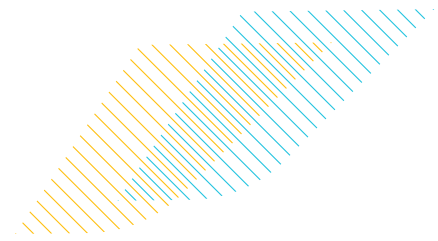
SOLID FOUNDATIONS TO BUILD ON

As digital developers, it's always sad to stop working on something enjoyable and challenging, as this project was. However, setting up solid foundations and software systems to achieve future growth is part of our approach.

The web application was developed with the potential to extend the system further. For example, engineers could access the system from mobile devices to access and track data in real-time, online and offline ordering and stock control could be integrated, or the system could be integrated with external services such as payment gateways or accountancy systems.

We look forward to seeing how the Helionova team challenge Accent to expand and develop the web application in the future.
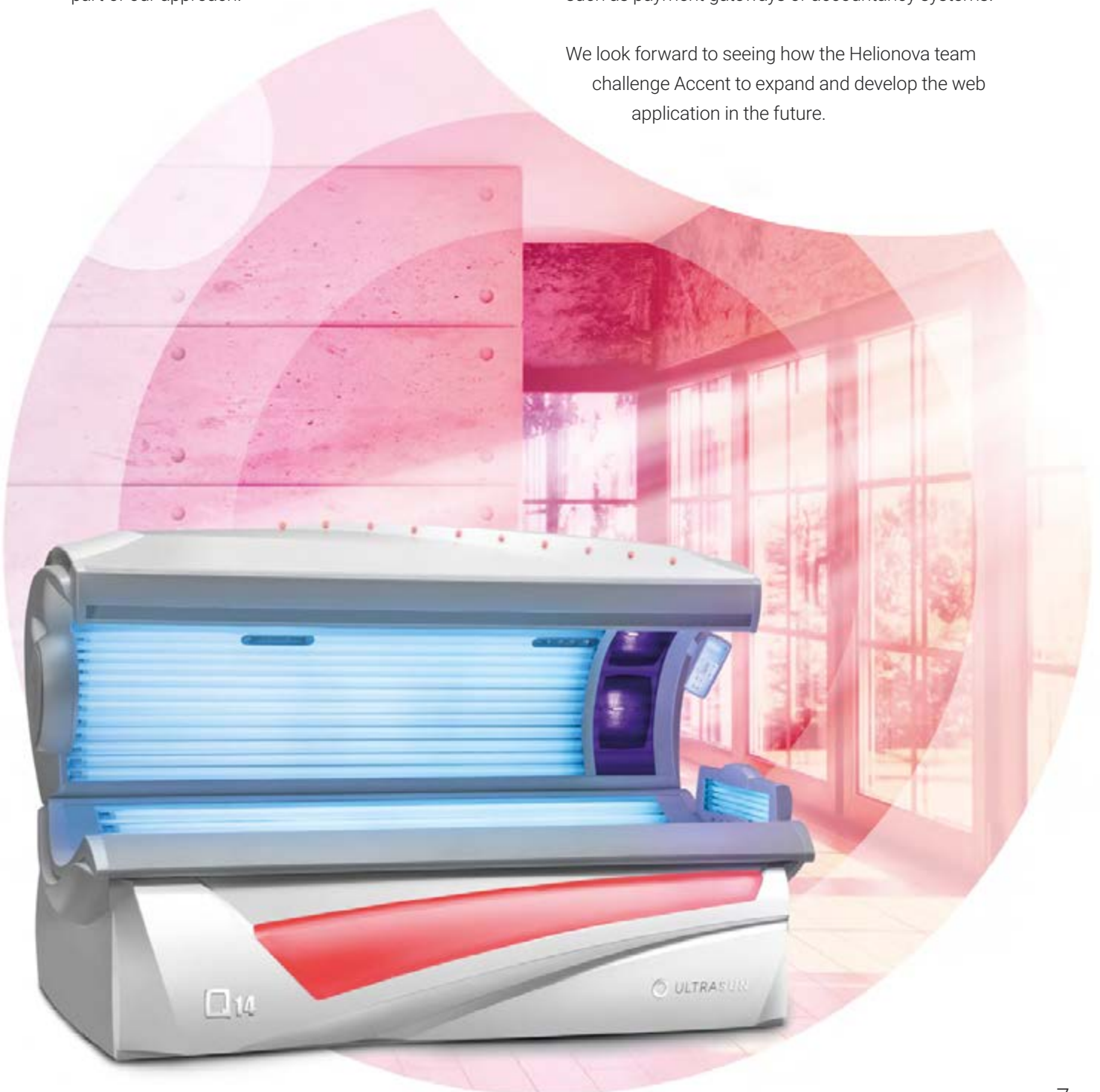
TELL A STORY TO DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS

SPOTLIGHT
SPECTRA PACKAGING

WordPress website scroll journey communicating a considerable amount of information in a short space of time in the most engaging way.

Spectra Packaging has been at the forefront of plastic bottle design for over a decade and has created an impressive standard range of bottles. As high street packaging frequently changes, the need for innovation is an attractive proposition. Spectra wanted to promote the adaptability of the standard range and inspire their clients to create something unique.

Accent worked closely with Spectra's sales and marketing team; we needed to show how standard bottles could inspire potential clients to use the standard range more imaginatively. Presenting visitors with a wall of text was not going to work. Instead, to engage Spectra's potential clients, we needed to tell a story in pictures and detail the journey and options available for a standard range bottle.

THE RESULTS

Using the whole browser window, we developed a scroll journey that animated the images and textual content of the page as you scroll, allowing you to control the presentation as you scroll the page. The scrolling animation illustrates how Spectra can offer a bespoke look when custom tooling is not an option, including selecting the material, bottle, cap, colour and decoration.

Accent created 3D illustrations showing a bottle at every stage of the process, with each option being offered until the final product is sitting on a bathroom shelf.

"For me, working together with Accent is a truly creative partnership that delivers results beyond expectation. I really can't recommend Dave and his team highly enough."

Mark Kingston, Spectra Packaging Marketing Manager

Select your colour

We can precisely match any colour you
desire from a multitude of sources

MOBILE VS DESKTOP:
THE BATTLE OF USER EXPERIENCE

ARTICLE BY
KAREN FULLER

In 2022 there are 5.1 billion people on the internet, with an equal share of mobile and desktop users in the UK. Although desktop computers are hardly on the decline, the continuing upward trend in mobile use means that businesses need to take more than basic measures to keep their customers happy.

Before rewriting your digital marketing plan or tackling optimization, think about your customers. What would put them off spending time on your site? Perhaps, it's not responsive, the text is difficult to read, and the navigation is hard to use; chances are they'll leave and find a different business to spend their money with.

Designing for both mobile and desktop is all about balance. Both devices have their use in different scenarios during the day. Phones are prevalent throughout our busy daytime lives, browsing on a lunch break or waiting for a coffee, and those stolen minutes soon add up. In contrast to shorter mobile browsing, desktop users tend to spend longer sessions on the web, often leading to more time viewing the same website. However, there are still tasks users prefer to do on a desktop, perhaps it's the smaller screen format or touch controls that are off-putting.

One of the largest increases in mobile use is eCommerce, which makes up 72.9% of total worldwide sales. If you are an online store, make sure your site is responsive, uncluttered, fast loading and secure. Although every site should be responsive, eCommerce stores are losing business if they do not optimise their mobile site.

There's no indication of mobile traffic slowing down; they're a major part of today's internet browsing and will only continue to rise in prevalence.

Whether you're concerned about responsiveness, design, usability, security or hosting, we have your back.

Avoid these mobile web design pitfalls:

Slow page speed
Non-responsive design
Poor readability
Confusing mobile navigation
Cluttered website design

INSTAGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

E.R.A.N.C.E.

Reducing
our Carbon
fOO print

// accentdesign.co.uk
REMOTE V

Twice weekly, we post on our social media channels. We like to think this gives more of an insight into the personality of Accent, the beating heart of the company, if you will. We curate a range of stories, showcasing new and old work, social musings, or creativity and inspiration. We hope there's something you find engaging, and we look forward to seeing you there!

Please give us a thumbs-up on the following social media:

KEEPING YOUR BRAND ON TREND

ARTICLE BY
KAREN FULLER

ACCENT
DESIGN GROUP

Accent
Graphic Art Production Services

1990

To understand Accent's first logo, we need to begin with the 1980s and Memphis Design. Memphis was hugely influential throughout the decade, showcasing bright, bold colours and geometric shapes. At the end of the decade, the Memphis style dominated commercial design. The most recognisable and defining type styles included italicised fonts in neon colours.

1997

The 1990s saw the rise of digital technology and the mainstream internet. In these early days, designers used skeuomorphism to help people adapt to this new digital world by using real-life objects onscreen to help people become accustomed to the interface, such as a floppy disk for saving and a bin icon for deleting. In design, depth was added with gradients, drop shadows and faux textures.

At the end of the 1990s, digital design was in the ascendance and resulted in a cleaner appearance, a welcome change after the preceding scruffier years..

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Less is more. Into the e
became on trend. Simp
design marked a distin
and laid the foundation
come as people becan
with the digital world. T
years for branding (esp
giants), and logo desig
of a brand's success.

accent
CREATIVE DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

accentdesign
established 1990

2020

2010

Although we're at the beginning of this decade, already we're seeing a resurgence of 3D illustrations, monochromatic palettes and bold typography. Accent's most recent logo draws from these trends. We're ever-evolving, and our logo communicates this.

The popularity and range of mobile devices exploded in the 2010s, and as a reaction to the tech-driven world, vintage styles were everywhere. However, minimalism was not done, and Accent adapted to a clean, typographic logo with minimal distraction to the core message. We kept this logo throughout the decade, and it worked well alongside flat illustrative imagery.

05

early 2000s, minimalism
ble, watermarked logo
ct change in advertising
s for the decades to
me more comfortable
The 2000s were boom
ecially for the tech
n was at the forefront

Accent was established in 1990; we're currently in our fourth decade of on-trend design. Being on trend means evolving with ever-changing and developing styles, whether design, technical or social. Gone are the days of a logo remaining unaltered for 20 plus years; to stay current, we must adapt. Although this doesn't mean a complete overhaul every year, small, subtle changes can make all the difference. So let's delve into the Accent archives and discuss our logo and the evolution of style.

WHAT IS THE INTERPLANETARY FILE SYSTEM?

ARTICLE BY DAVE FULLER

The official IPFS documentation definition states:

IPFS is a distributed system for storing and accessing files, websites, applications, and data.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koala

By visiting that web page, your computer requests the information from one of Wikipedia computers, most likely located on the other side of the world.

However, this is not the only option; there is a mirror of the Wikipedia page stored on IPFS with the link below:

https://ipfs.io/ipfs/ QmXoypizjW3WknFiJnKLwHCnL72vedxj QkDDP1mXWo6uco/wiki/Koala.html

IPFS knows how to find that Koala page by its contents, not its location. The IPFS version of the Wikipedia content is represented by a string of numbers that uses IPFS to ask computers worldwide to share the page with you. Koala information can be downloaded from anyone, not just Wikipedia.

This applies to any type of content that a computer can store and not just a web page, including documents, digital art, emails, etc.
If Wikipedia was to be taken down, imagine the information that would be lost. IPFS makes it possible to download a file from many locations not managed or controlled by a central organisation. This has three significant advantages for the internet:

Resilient internet - Wikipedia could be taken down by a hack or catastrophic server malfunction. IPFS would allow you to get to that content elsewhere.

DECENTRALISATION

Harder to censor content - Files can come from multiple locations, meaning a single government or organisation would have difficulty blocking content.

Faster access to data - With IPFS, you can retrieve a file from a geographically closer server, which means you can get that data faster. This feature is only available to more extensive, more expensive server infrastructures; IPFS makes this available to everyone.

Finally, the InterPlanetary File System gets its name from its ambition to work across places as far away as planets. Whilst interplanetary travel might be a way off, IPFS will prove helpful on planet Earth in the meantime.

9 St

B 5

17 St

9 St   10 St   12 St
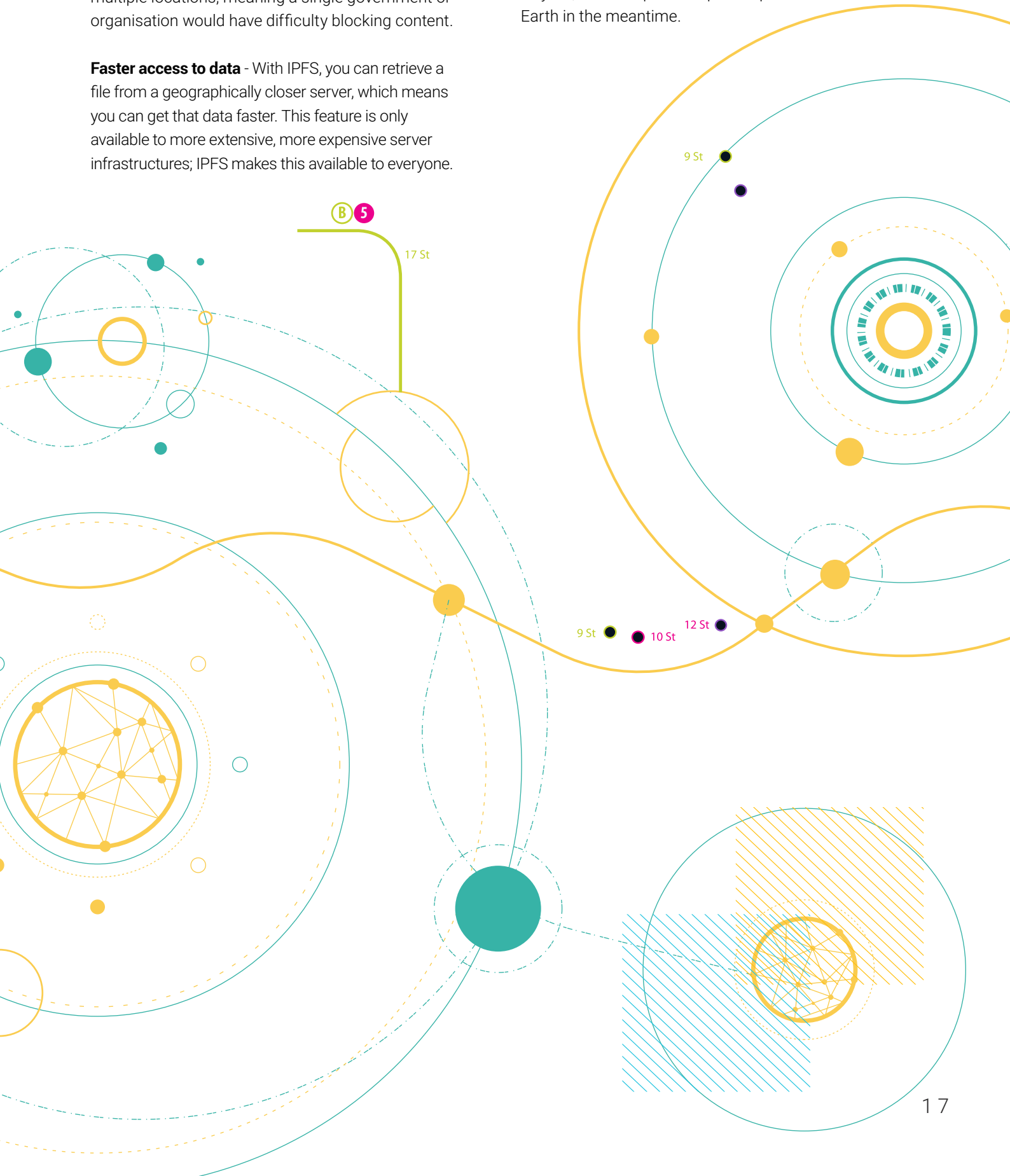
METAVERSE
ARE YOU READY PLAYER ONE?

ARTICLE BY
REZA BASHIRI

Most of us remember the early days of the internet and how magical it felt to be instantly connected worldwide with unlimited information at our fingertips. We had many new and strange technologies to learn from ISPs to email, which are now a regular part of our everyday lives. At the moment, the Metaverse may feel like those early internet days; what is it, and how will it expand into our lives in the future? Let's dive into this fantastic technology and discover why we would spend time and money in Metaverse.

WHAT IS METAVERSE?

The concept of virtual reality has been around since the 1950s. Still, it was not until the 1980s that a more realistic simulated experience became widespread. A person – generally using a headset – could move and interact with an artificial world and the virtual items within it. 'Metaverse' was created by author Neil Stephenson in his 1992 book 'Snow Crash', which explored an all-encompassing digital world which existed in parallel to our own.

Metaverse is still being defined; it can be broadly described as a shared virtual space that is interactive and immersive. Your avatar would exist with digital assets, a 3D version of the internet where you can spend your digital life.

MORE THAN A VIDEO GAME

Given its high-value projection, the Metaverse is seen as a significant player in growing the digital economy. There may be investment opportunities in areas including virtual homes, office space, advertising, cryptos and NFTs. But while the Metaverse is already considered the future of entertainment, fashion, and gaming, the most likely best-case use will be for education.

ARE YOU READY PLAYER ONE?

Some experts believe "many people will be in the Metaverse somehow" by 2030. The hardware it requires will be the first challenge. The second challenge that requires interoperability between platforms is allowing you to take virtual clothes or cars, for example, to different Metaverses. This will be vital for the Metaverse to work. There will also be legal and commercial challenges, apart from figuring out who will act as the police.

Perhaps we'll live in the Metaverse intermittently. Then, maybe, we'll laugh at this article a decade from now, thinking how naive people were to have questioned the rise of the Metaverse.

POSITIVE ENERGY

ARTICLE BY
NICK THOMPSON

This year Accent has been focussing on becoming a more environmentally friendly company and a collective of people trying to reduce our carbon footprint.

With an eye to the future, an area I'm personally interested in is Nuclear Fusion, of course, the idea of fusion instead of fission (atomic nuclei are combined to form one or more different atomic nuclei and subatomic particles instead of the splitting of a large atomic nucleus into smaller nuclei) has been around for longer than I have been alive.

Unfortunately, it has always been 'around 30 years away, that is until very recently with the advent of the MIT based SPARC design research programme. They have recently made a breakthrough in creating a small-sized yet large high-temperature superconducting electromagnet.

The most common form of these magnetic fields to use is in a Tokamak device, which is easiest thought of as a doughnut shape. While ITER in France uses giant electromagnets to achieve this, recently, the SPARC team managed the same magnetic forces with their new design of magnets, which are much smaller.

Compared to ITER, SPARC's whole reactor design is four times smaller at 3 meters across compared to 12 meters. The difference in the new type of superconducting electromagnetic materials is that they are made from flat, ribbon-like tape.

This unique design allows for the new conductors equalling the performance achieved in an apparatus 40 times larger in volume using conventional low-temperature superconducting magnets.

> " *I now am genuinely optimistic that SPARC can achieve net positive energy based on the demonstrated performance of the magnets.* "
>
> *Maria Zuber*
> *MIT Vice President for Research*

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