

## POLICY WATCH – October 2021

### In This Issue

- Meet the Metaverse and Why It Matters
- CEOs Outlook for 2022
- Why you should surround yourself with more books than you'll ever have time to read
- Upcoming Events
- Members in the News



Rolling into the last quarter of 2021, in this issue we explore some trends that are emerging as we look ahead. Have you been hearing about the Metaverse? I was and decided I needed to know more. And if you read this issue, you will learn what it is and why it matters. We are living in a time of rapid change and as we move into the Metaverse, it promises a lot more change in how we work and live. The pandemic has been an accelerant of change and this is one of them!

We also look at what CEOs around the nation are predicting for 2022. And unfortunately, most forecast conditions to worsen rather than improve over the coming year. We are seeing continuing impacts from the pandemic with supply chain delays, workforce scarcity and skills mismatches, lingering uncertainty on economic recovery, no end in sight for the housing crisis and growing impacts from climate change.

On the lighter side, we hope you enjoy the article on the importance of having more books than you will ever be able to read. I found great wisdom in this article and hope you do, too!

We wish you and yours a Happy Thanksgiving with the hope that you can celebrate with your vaccinated family and friends this year!

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia Murray". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Cynthia

### Meet the Metaverse and Why It Matters

The next normal will be many things but to be sure, it will be different than today. We are beginning to see what life and work will be like as we better understand the pandemic and our response to it and the next pandemic. This will affect how and where we work and live. We are starting to grasp that climate adaptation is needed now and not something to do in the future. Fires, drought, heat, and floods have driven home that we need to act quickly to save our planet and ourselves. And beyond those understandings here is a new one: the metaverse.

We are hearing more about the metaverse because of Facebook but also because of the many changes brought upon us by the new world we live in. What is the metaverse? Here are some explanations.

In [What You Need to Know About the Metaverse — and Why It Matters for Your Bottom Line](#) by Courtney Connley, [\(Link\)](#), Cathy Hackl, Founder of the metaverse-focused consulting company Futures Intelligence Group, defines it as, “with web 1.0 we connected information and got the Internet, with 2.0 we connected people and got social media, and now we're going into web 3.0. Web 3.0 connects people, places, and things. And sometimes these people, places, and things can be in a fully virtual synthetic environment, or sometimes it can be our world with some level of augmentation.”

In [EXPLAINER: What the metaverse is and how it will work](#) by Kelvin Chan and Matt O'Brien [\(Link\)](#) they say, “Think of it as the internet brought to life, or at least rendered in 3D. Zuckerberg has described it as a “virtual environment” you can go inside of — instead of just looking at on a screen. Essentially, it's a world of endless, interconnected virtual communities where people can meet, work and play, using virtual reality headsets, augmented reality glasses, smartphone apps or other devices.”

Victoria Petrock, an analyst who follows emerging technologies says, “It's the next evolution of connectivity where all of those things start to come together in a seamless, doppelganger universe, so you're living your virtual life the same way you're living your physical life.”

In [What Is the Metaverse, and Do I Have to Care?](#) By Adi Robertson and Jay Peters [\(Link\)](#) say, “But in most current discourse, ‘the metaverse’ arguably isn't a fixed set of attributes. It's an aspirational term for a future digital world that feels more tangibly connected to our real lives and bodies. Matthew Ball favors the term ‘metaverse’ because it creates a clean break with the present-day internet. ‘Using the metaverse as a distinctive descriptor allows us to understand the enormity of that change and in turn, the opportunity for disruption,’ he said in a phone interview with The Verge. ‘It's much harder to say, ‘we're late-cycle into the last thing and want to change it.’ But I think understanding this next wave of computing and the internet allows us to be more proactive than reactive and think about the future as we want it to be, rather than how to marginally affect the present.”

Connley says, “While the concept of the metaverse may still feel otherworldly to many, Hackl says the remote work culture of the pandemic has forced some company leaders to think about the possibilities of operating and leading in a 3D virtual world. Already, tech CEOs like Microsoft's Satya Nadella and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg have talked about the role their companies could play in this futuristic realm.”

Connley goes a step further in citing the metaverse's role in business. “Janine Yorio, Head of metaverse investment platform Republic Realm, says she predicts that the virtual world's impact on businesses will be similar to the rise of the Internet in the late '90s, where company leaders eventually had to adapt and evolve in order to not be left behind.

"There were a lot of companies that didn't think they needed a website and they let small upstart companies get a headstart on them because they thought, 'Well, I've got my main street location,'" Yorio says. "Now, fast forward to more than 25 years later and every business on the planet has a website. I think the same will happen with the metaverse."

For decades, the \$300 billion gaming industry has operated in a metaverse-like world, allowing players to interact with each other, make purchases, and create whole lives in a virtual reality as an avatar. But what's making this digital universe more popular to other industries today, is not only the increased

demand for digital social interactions, but also the increased value of cryptocurrencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs).

"The metaverses that people are buzzing most about today are built on the blockchain," Yorio says. "As bitcoin has increased in value and crypto adoption has started to skyrocket, the idea of metaverses that are built around cryptocurrency economies has really taken off."

Take fashion, for example. High-end brands have expanded their legacy businesses into the digital world, with Balenciaga partnering with Fortnite on a collection, Elite Model World partnering with Tommy Hilfiger to develop avatars of models, and Gucci creating an NFT video for its Fall 2021 collection that sold for \$25,000 in June.

While the concept of the metaverse is still new, Yorio says we're already seeing how it could potentially impact the economy and businesses in the long run.

She points to the Philippines as an example where many residents affected by the pandemic are earning money by playing the video game Axie Infinity. The game, which operates in a metaverse-like world, allows players to earn income through NFTs by breeding, battling, and trading digital pets called Axies. These pets can then be sold for cryptocurrency, which players then convert into their respective currency. As of September 2021, Axie Infinity had an NFT sale volume of over \$2 billion, making it the most expensive NFT collection.

But beyond the job opportunities that the metaverse can create, business leaders who start to think about the 3D digital world now will also be able to diversify their revenue streams. For example, Fortune made \$1.3 million in its first NFT sale of its August/September 2021 digital cover. And Taco Bell, the first fast food chain to test out NFTs, recently made over \$18,000 for one of its digital collectibles that sold on the NFT trading platform Rarible.

"I think it depends on the company and the brand, but if you're a product company, then you need to ask, 'How does my product translate into the metaverse?'" says Hackl. "If you're a service company, then you need to ask, 'What is the service that I can provide in the metaverse?'" Similar to the dawn of the Internet where company leaders had to pivot and adapt to the new digital world, Hackl says it's imperative for executives today to think about the many different ways in which they can lead and operate in the metaverse now.

Next month, Yorio and her team are launching an online educational institute called The Realm Academy to educate executive leaders about the metaverse and how it can be useful for their business. Her goal, she says, is to get more diverse leaders to start thinking about the metaverse and how they can be pioneers in the space to ensure that this future ecosystem is beneficial to everyone.

"Gaming is already a largely male-dominated industry, but the metaverse doesn't have to be," she says. "I'm really excited about getting women into this space early on when the rules are being made and the culture is being formed. I think it's important to think more inclusively about how we build a metaverse now that truly captures everybody."

And if you believe the metaverse shouldn't be owned by a handful of companies, there are new technologies that could facilitate less centralized virtual worlds, like cryptocurrency and non-fungible

tokens or NFTs. These metaverse visions overlap with the concept of Web3, a term covering decentralized internet services where users retain more personal control over the data they put online.

In [How the Metaverse Will Change the Future of Work](#) by Emma Ascott ([Link](#)) we learn, “Remote work and online communication are becoming increasingly normalized. The future of work may involve something far beyond the likes of Zoom. Big investments in technology hint at a metaverse that will open up the possibility of new forms of work called the “infinite office” and reshape the digital economy.”

Ascott says, “Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella recently said that his company is working on building the “enterprise metaverse.” “As the digital and physical worlds converge, we are leading in a new layer of the infrastructure stack; the enterprise metaverse,” Nadella said.

“The eagerness with which tech companies are rushing to populate this digital frontier will completely alter the future of work and the workplace,” said Ascott. “Instead of Zoom calls, the metaverse allows you to interact with coworkers in a virtual environment that feels nearly real. You can purchase houses, play video games, interact with friends, attend concerts, shop and buy items.”

“Eric Yuan, CEO of the videoconferencing app Zoom, said he believes AR and VR will play a big role in the future of work, especially remote work.”

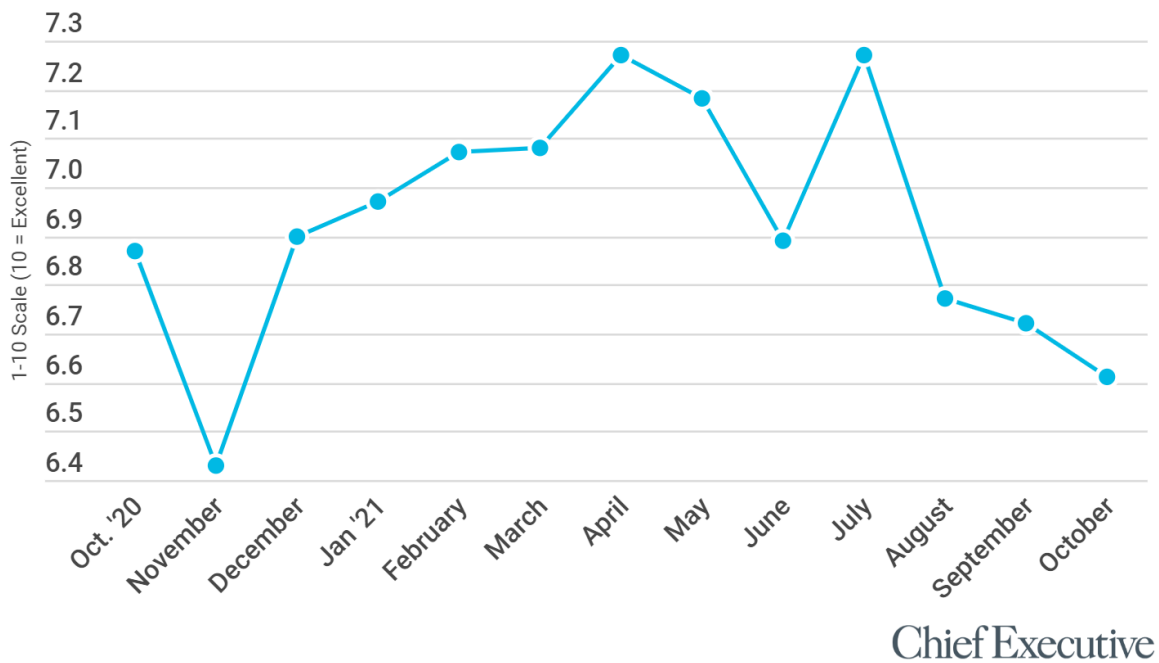
It is good to see that the Marin County Office of Education has been in the forefront of providing training on Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality in its XR Marin Leadership Council. Given the potential impact that the metaverse will have on our work, we need to prepare students to gain the needed skills to succeed in those jobs.

## **CEOs Outlook for 2022**

According to Chief Executive’s latest survey, the leading indicator of CEO sentiment has hit its lowest level since November 2020, as a greater number of CEOs now forecast conditions to worsen over the coming year rather than improve.

The last time the indicator was this low was in November 2020, pre-vaccine approvals. Polled CEOs say frustration with Congress, supply chain disruptions, labor constraints, inflation pressures and the fact that the pandemic is still impacting business are part of the long list of reasons for their declining optimism.

## CEO Rating of Business Conditions One Year from Now



Source: CEO Confidence Index, Chief Executive Group, <https://chiefexecutive.net/category/ceo-confidence-index/>

## Why You Should Surround Yourself with More Books Than You'll Ever Have Time to Read

To brighten your day after the last article, we share [Why you should surround yourself with more books than you'll ever have time to read](#), by Jessica Stillman ([Link](#)).

Stillman says, "Lifelong learning will help you be happier, earn more, and even stay healthier, experts say. Plus, plenty of the smartest names in business, from Bill Gates to Elon Musk, insist that the best way to get smarter is to read. So, what do you do? You go out and buy books, lots of them. But life is busy, and intentions are one thing, actions another. Soon you find your shelves (or e-reader) overflowing with titles you intend to read one day, or books you flipped through once but then abandoned. Is this a disaster for your project to become a smarter, wiser person?"

"If you never actually get around to reading any books, then yes," says Stillman. "You might want to read up on tricks to squeeze more reading into your hectic life and why it pays to commit a few hours every week to learning. But if it's simply that your book reading in no way keeps pace with your book buying, I have good news for you (and for me; I definitely fall into this category): Your overstuffed library isn't a sign of failure or ignorance, it's a badge of honor."

Stillman explains, "That's the argument author and statistician Nassim Nicholas Taleb makes in his bestseller [The Black Swan](#). Perpetually fascinating blog Brain Pickings dug up and highlighted the section

in a particularly lovely post. Taleb kicks off his musings with an anecdote about the legendary library of Italian writer Umberto Eco, which contained a jaw-dropping 30,000 volumes.”

“Did Eco actually read all those books?” Stillman asks. “Of course not, but that wasn’t the point of surrounding himself with so much potential but as-yet-unrealized knowledge. By providing a constant reminder of all the things he didn’t know, Eco’s library kept him intellectually hungry and perpetually curious.”

Stillman says, “An ever-growing collection of books you haven’t yet read can do the same for you, Taleb writes: ‘A private library is not an ego-boosting appendage but a research tool. Read books are far less valuable than unread ones. The library should contain as much of what you do not know as your financial means, mortgage rates, and the currently tight real-estate market allows you to put there. You will accumulate more knowledge and more books as you grow older, and the growing number of unread books on the shelves will look at you menacingly. Indeed, the more you know, the larger the rows of unread books. Let us call this collection of unread books an antilibrary.’”

“An antilibrary is a powerful reminder of your limitations — the vast quantity of things you don’t know, half-know, or will one day realize you’re wrong about. By living with that reminder daily you can nudge yourself toward the kind of intellectual humility that improves decision-making and drives learning. ‘People don’t walk around with anti-résumés telling you what they have not studied or experienced (it’s the job of their competitors to do that), but it would be nice if they did,’ Taleb claims.”

Stillman say, “Why? Perhaps because it is a well-known psychological fact that it’s the most incompetent who are the most confident of their abilities and the most intelligent who are full of doubt. (Really. It’s called the Dunning-Kruger effect.) It’s equally well established that the more readily you admit you don’t know things, the faster you learn.”

“So, stop beating yourself up for buying too many books or for having a to-read list that you could never get through in three lifetimes,” Stillman urges. “All those books you haven’t read are indeed a sign of your ignorance. But if you know how ignorant you are, you’re way ahead of the vast majority of other people.”

## Upcoming Events

### **Business Edge Breakfast Briefing**

Talent Wars: What Employers Need to Do to Win the Battle to Find and Keep Employees

Wednesday, November 3, 2021

11:00 a.m. - Noon

#### PRESENTERS:

Craig Nelson, Chairman, Nelson Family of Companies

Maggie Blanc-White, Director Human Resources & Talent Development, Overaa Construction

Tim Howard, Area Director of Operations, Sonesta Hotels International

Online Event - Registration: \$25.00

To purchase tickets, visit: <https://employeetalentwars.eventbrite>

## **POSTPONED:**

The Leaders of the North Bay Awards Luncheon has been postponed until Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 at the Embassy Suites. Ticket information will be released in March.

## **Members in the News**

### **Santa Rosa Junior College Finally Breaks Ground on Student Residence Hall**

Students will be able to choose from a few room options among the 258 units.

### **Basin Street Properties is Pleased to Welcome Rodman & Associates PC to 3562 Round Barn Circle at Fountaingrove Center**

Basin Street Properties, a prominent northern Nevada and northern California real estate investment, development, and management firm, is pleased to welcome Rodman & Associates PC to 3562 Round Barn Circle at Fountaingrove Center.

### **Keysight Technologies Bolsters 5G, Cybersecurity Portfolio Via Scalable Acquisition**

Keysight Technologies Inc. (NYSE: KEYS) on Monday announced it acquired Scalable Network Technologies, a leader in communications network simulation and modeling solutions for design, test and analysis, as well as cyber assessment and training.

### **Kaiser Permanente Gives Over \$2.5 Million in Grants to Sonoma County Affordable Housing Efforts**

Kaiser Permanente will give over \$2.5 million in grants to support Sonoma County affordable housing projects as part of an ongoing effort to help the region rebuild and recover in the wake of the 2017 North Bay firestorm.

### **Catholic Charities of Santa Rosa's Annual Report**

An update on all the great works Catholic Charities has done in the last year.

### **Basin Street Properties Gets Cypress Point Investment Management to Sign Lease at Shoreline Office Center**

Basin Street Properties, a prominent northern Nevada and northern California real estate investment, development, and management firm, is pleased to announce Cypress Point Investment Management has signed a lease at Shoreline Office Center.

### **Buck Institute for Research on Aging and Astera Institute Announce \$70 Million Collaboration to Redefine the Field of Research on Aging**

The Buck Institute and the Astera Institute today announced a comprehensive, multi-omics study of the biological effects of longevity interventions.

### **Sonoma County Office of Education's Superintendent Announces Retirement**

Dr. Steve Herrington announces his retirement.

### **Bank of America Increases US Minimum Hourly Wage to \$21 as Next Step to \$25 by 2025**

Bank of America announced it has raised its U.S. minimum hourly wage to \$21 as a next step in the company's plans to increase to \$25 by 2025.

### **Bank of America Recognized in PEOPLE's 100 Companies That Care 2021: Meet the Employers Putting Their Communities First**

Partnering with Great Place to Work, PEOPLE identifies the top U.S. companies supporting their employees and their surrounding communities

### **Sonoma County Tourism Trims Costs, Looks Forward to Reviving Travel**

Progress continues in shaking off the pandemic's economic cold shower effect on tourism, but keeping it going will require the ability to "constantly, flex and engage," said a top Sonoma County tourism executive.

### **Bank of America Exceeds Five-Year Goal to Hire 10,000 Individuals From Low and Moderate-Income Communities**

Bank of America today announced it has exceeded its five-year goal two years ahead of schedule to hire 10,000 teammates from low- and moderate-income (LMI) neighborhoods through its Pathways program.

### **The Buck Institute for Research on Aging's Scientists Get \$14M for Alzheimer's Study**

Two professors at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging in Novato have been awarded a \$14.3 million grant to look for connections between aging cells and age-related dementias such as Alzheimer's disease.

### **Redwood Credit Union Gives \$120,000 in Grants to Nine Napa County Nonprofits**

Redwood Credit Union (RCU) is distributing \$120,000 in grants to support the lifesaving and life-changing services of nine nonprofit organizations in Napa and American Canyon.

### **Kaiser Permanente Appoints Wall New Marin-Sonoma Public Affairs Director**

Kaiser Permanente recently appointed Alena Wall, MA, CHES, as the new Public Affairs Director for the Marin-Sonoma Service Area.

### **North Bay Business Journal Names Best Places to Work in 2021**

The North Bay Business Journal has announced this year's winners of its annual Best Places to Work awards.

### **Redwood Credit Union Helps Protect More than 3,150 People by Securely Shredding Documents**

This summer, more than 3,150 residents in Marin, Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino counties took action to protect themselves from fraud and identity theft by bringing old financial records and other paperwork to Redwood Credit Union's (RCU's) free Shred-a-Thons.



### **Who We Are**

Over thirty years ago, business leaders founded the North Bay Leadership Council on a simple premise: We can accomplish more by working together. Today, the Council includes 54 leading employers in the North Bay. Our members represent a wide variety of businesses, non-profits and educational institutions, with a workforce in excess of 25,000. As business and civic leaders, our goal is to promote sound public policy, innovation and sustainability to make our region a better place to live and work. For more information: Call 707.283.0028 / E-mail [info@northbayleadership.org](mailto:info@northbayleadership.org)

[www.northbayleadership.org](http://www.northbayleadership.org)