F8 2017: Camera effects platform and more from day one

F8 2017, the annual Facebook event where developers and businesses come together to explore the future of technology was held in the McEnery Convention Center in San Jose, California on 18-19 Aprils 2017. More than 4 000 people attended the event and millions watched the keynote via Facebook Live.

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Mark Zuckerberg opened the conference to talk about how technology can help us build stronger communities, from the local level, up to the global level. For the past decade, Facebook has focused on connecting friends and families. Now, with that foundation, our next focus will be giving people the power to build community.

Technology gives communities new ways to connect, and one of the most exciting areas for this is augmented reality. Mark talked about how the camera is the first augmented reality platform and announced the Camera Effects Platform.

Other keynote speakers were chief technology officer, Mike Schroepfer; VP of platform and marketplace, Deb Liu, head of social VR, Rachel Franklin; VP of product partnerships, Ime Archibong; and VP of messaging products David Marcus.

Camera Effects Platform

Facebook is offering a suite of open creative tools to give its community of artists and developers the power to create a full spectrum of effects for the new Facebook camera, from simple photo frames to interactive effects and masks, using the latest in augmented reality.

The Camera Effects Platform includes two products: Frames Studio and AR Studio. Frames Studio is an online creative editor, now available globally, that allows users to design frames that can be used either as profile picture frames or in the new Facebook camera. The AR Studio, now open for beta applications, can be used to create masks, scripted effects, animated frames and other AR technologies that react to movement, the environment or interactions during live videos.

See how live effects work by checking out two starting to roll out in Facebook Live: This or That and GIPHY Live. Both effects are powered by AR Studio and are designed to respond in real time to what is happening in a live broadcast.

Facebook Spaces

Facebook Spaces is a new VR app where users hang out with friends in a fun, interactive virtual environment as if they were in the same room. Facebook Spaces launched in beta for Oculus Rift during the convention.

With Facebook Spaces, users can view Facebook content with friends in VR, including 360 videos and photos that can transport them to new places. Users can draw in the air with a virtual marker to create anything they can dream up, from a decorative hat to a handmade tic-tac-toe board. Facebook Spaces lets users easily phone a friend in the real world with Messenger video calling, so they can bring even more people into their VR space. They can answer the call on their phone to open a window instantly into a virtual world. Of course, there is a selfie stick too. Use it to take photos of the experience and share the memories created in VR with friends on Facebook.

Developer Circles

Facebook announced a new program for developers all over the world to connect, learn, and collaborate with other local developers. Developer Circles is a community-driven program that is free to join and open to any developer. Members of the local community, who act as leads for the circle, organising events offline and managing a local online Facebook community, lead each Developer Circle. Developer Circles are forums to share knowledge, collaborate, build new ideas and learn about the latest technologies from Facebook and other industry leaders.

Places Graph

Also launched is Places Graph, providing free access to data on over 140 million places around the world. These places range from restaurants and parks to retail stores and local businesses and the data includes place names, addresses, photos, Facebook consumer ratings and more. Apps can use this data to create location-aware experiences that help people learn more about where they are so they can make informed decisions about where to go and what to do.

Identity

If users have an app and a Messenger bot, Facebook has made it simpler for them to connect with the same person using both. The new API allows users to map between a Facebook Login ID and a Messenger ID, so they can serve their customers smoothly across both experiences.

Facebook Analytics

Facebook Analytics, formerly known as Facebook Analytics for Apps, is a powerful, free product for accessing rich audience demographics and measuring customer behavior across channels. Facebook announced new capabilities designed to help users understand and optimise their complete customer journey across the channels that they use to interact with customers, such as their app and website.

The new Automated Insights tool uses advanced machine learning and artificial intelligence to bring valuable insights directly to users. With this new feature, they will see insights such as changes in purchases for a new version of their app, or variations in engagement across people in different cities.

New features for Messenger

Since the Messenger Platform debuted a year ago, it has become an essential channel for businesses, developers and consumers. The ecosystem has more than 1.2 billion people, 100,000 developers and 100,000 monthly active bots, and 2 billion messages are sent between people and businesses on Messenger every month.

Some of the new features and advanced tools announced include:

- A new Discover tab that allows people to find the bot for Messenger they are looking for in an intuitive and thoughtful way, right from the home screen in Messenger. In addition, it has enabled discovery in the physical world with new parametric Messenger codes. This gives people the option to scan Messenger Codes through the Messenger camera and link to their favourite brands and businesses.
- Chat Extensions, which allow multiple people to chat with the same business at the same time. People can now add in a bot directly in a group thread and share the conversation and experience.
- Messenger's AI assistant, M, now offers the ability to order food through delivery.com. For instance, if one is chatting with friends about what to grab for dinner, M will suggest placing an order. The whole experience can be completed in Messenger, including group ordering and payment.
- New rich game play in Messenger including game bots and much more
- Smart Replies, which help Pages to respond to the most frequently asked questions that small businesses receive, such as business hours, directions and contact details.
- Hand-over Protocol, a new way for businesses to work with multiple developers for different experiences on Messenger.

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