



Selling Disruption™ Show

With Mark S. A. Smith

*Virtual Reality Disruption and How to
Capitalize On It*

Joel Comm

Mark S A Smith: My guest today is Joel Comm who's been in the internet space since 1995, causing disruption, innovation, and just overall goodness in the world of online commerce. He's an author. He has written 15 books of which several have been a New York Times best-seller. That's the real best-seller my friends, not somebody who had a bunch of friends, bought a book on Amazon for one day. He's been on TV such as Jon Stewart's The Daily Show, CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and many, many other places. His work has showed up in Forbes Entrepreneur, the Social Media Examiner. He's a keynote speaker. I saw him just a couple weeks ago doing a fantastic keynote at the Guerrilla Marketing Conference World Summit. He was just inducted into the Guerrilla Marketing Hall of Fame.

He's an entrepreneur with one of the first websites on the planet, today to talk about augmented reality and the virtual reality. Welcome, Joel Comm.

Joel Comm: Hey, Mark. I'm actually virtual myself.

Mark S A Smith: In bits and pieces digitized across the planet.

Joel Comm: I own an Oculus Rift, which is one of the consumer grade virtual reality headsets that are now available for anybody to buy. I have a really high-powered PC that I have mine attached to. I just received a PlayStation Fender Stratocaster guitar that you use for rock band. They now released for the Oculus Rock Band VR. When we're done today, I'm going to unbox that puppy and go live on Facebook demonstrating, because I'll capture my screen and it puts you in the rock band experience. Now, you're not just watching it on the screen, but I should be able to see myself on stage with an audience and the other band members. I can't wait to see what this is like.

Mark S A Smith: That's amazing.

Joel Comm: I'm such a VR nerd.

Mark S A Smith: That's one of the reasons why you are on the show. You've been playing with VR for a long time. I love that idea. I'm a musician. I have Fender guitars. I'd probably will be watching that unboxing. I'll put the link up to this, so that people will watch that too.

Joel Comm: I am not a musician by the way, but I was a DJ and DJs are frustrated musicians. You can't play your own music, you play somebody else's music. I dabble on piano, and guitar, and drums. I can keep a beat. I can play a few chords, but I'm not a real musician. This gives me the opportunity to rock out and pretend to escape for a few minutes.

Mark S A Smith: I think that's a really great thing. I was a DJ as well as you can hear from the voice. We share that in common and I decided to learn how to play.

Joel Comm: Good for you. My first entrepreneurial gig Mark was as a mobile DJ. That was my business before the internet business. I got my own gear. I realized you get paid

a lot more to have your own business and do private functions to DJ them than you do as a radio DJ or a nightclub DJ.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. That's the reason why I became electrical engineer, to make way more money with my head and the transmitter and tower than I could in front of the microphone. That's not the reason why we're here. The reason why we're here is to talk about the disruptive nature of augmented reality and virtual reality. Tell me your take on what's going on right now on those areas.

Joel Comm: Virtual is more my expertise, because I've got more experience with it. We can talk a little bit about augmented. VR is finally arriving on a consumer grade level. We are at still in the early adopter phase. We've moved from pioneering to, okay now there are consumer ready devices. The Oculus Rift, which of course is owned by Facebook and Facebook actually released their first social app for the Oculus Rift that integrates some Facebook functionality in the VR space, which is really cool. In fact, it's called, "Facebook Spaces."

Then we've got the HTC Vibe, which is the unit for the PlayStation. I just bought a PlayStation 4 and I'm seriously considering getting a Vibe so that I can test and experiment with it as well. Those are the two main ones. There's the Samsung Gear, Microsoft is coming up with the HoloLens, which is more AR type unit. We finally have affordable virtual reality. With gear that's not really too clunky. Yeah, you still got to wear this headset, but it's not heavy, it's not uncomfortable or overly geeky. Yes, they're going to get smaller and more compact as years go on. I have had my Oculus for, oh, a year and a couple months. I had my pre-order in very early and I got one of the early units.

The experiences that I've had in virtual reality are absolutely amazing, whether it's going to the 360 photos app and going really anywhere in the world and standing in the midst of an environment, whether it's the Amazon Jungle or the foot of the pyramids of Egypt, or the Great Wall of China to be able to place yourself into a space and look around as though you are there, because for all intents and purposes, that's what you're experiencing at that moment without the smells of wherever it is you are.

Doing that to mountain climbing in the Himalayas or in the Canyon or using Google Earth VR and really being able to put myself on the ground or above anywhere in the world instantly, we've all experienced Google Earth on our computers and marveled at how cool it is, but imagine being able to put yourself into the space in full virtual reality. It's finally arriving and it's getting more and more social. Of course the games are fun and watching movies in the space is fun. It's arriving for the masses soon.

Mark S A Smith: It's just a matter of computer power that really makes all this work, because if you have any lag, it makes people throw up.

Joel Comm: Yeah and the ability to render full virtual reality, when you're watching some films, there's still some pixelation in it. On Oculus Rift, with the two-touch hand

controllers, the \$600 and you need a PC that's going to run you at least a thousand dollars to be able to run this. Of course, if you're going to get a HTC Vibe, you need a Sony PlayStation 4, which those started about 250. Then you also need the Vibe unit itself, which is \$700 to \$800. It's not cheap, but considering people are probably going to pay \$800, \$900 for an iPhone when they come out, it's really to have this experience. The hardware is going to get faster, the prices are going to go down. I have a prediction that by holidays 2019, just two and a half years from today is when we're going to see the breakout of VR that there's going to be a unit that runs an experience that people have to have.

Experiences sell hardware. We don't buy the hardware just because it is a cool piece of hardware. We buy a Nintendo unit, because of the new Mario game. The games and the experience itself. There's going to be an experience. It might be a social one, but whatever it is, it's going to be the breakout experience that triggers everybody wanting to have, must have a VR unit. It's going to happen quickly. It's going to be a craze. I don't know exactly what it's going to be yet, because my crystal ball is still fuzzy, but I'm going to predict by Christmas 2019, we're going to see the Tickle Me Elmo VR.

Mark S A Smith: I think that we're going to probably see something that's highly social and actually something that does good on the planet. It could be everybody's out searching for a lost child by tapping into video cameras and public access networks and things like that. I suspect it'll be some heroic element that's going to trigger that. I'm just guessing.

Joel Comm: I hope so. At the same time, look at what triggered the first phenomenon of AR. What do you think of when we talk about augmented reality?

Mark S A Smith: Pokemon GO!

Joel Comm: Pokemon GO was the first craze. It hit and myself and my friends out the part at midnight watching people play. I've never seen anything like it.

Mark S A Smith: True that.

Joel Comm: It was just as amazing snapshot, this two-week period in time where everybody was curious. Now, that didn't sell iPhones, because the iPhone had such an installed user based. It made it possible, but what we're talking about with VR is the need to adopt new technology in order to make it work. Now, you can do VR with just your phone. In fact, there's some really great experiences if you want on a budget. You don't need to have a sophisticated Oculus or an HTC Vibe. If you've got your iPhone or your Android device, you can Google cardboard, which you can actually make yourself or go to Amazon and spend 20 bucks on a headset unit that you slip your phone into. There's a lot of VR apps that are available, some of them for free.

If you haven't tried it yet and you want to go, "All right, what is this VR thing like?" Go get a basic VR headset and download a few apps, slip your phone into the headset and be amazed. You'll be like, "I want more."

Mark S A Smith: You can get started right away and if you have not played with VR, at least make that \$50 investment. You also need to grab a couple controllers or at least one controller to make this work.

Joel Comm: Yeah, it helps. I had the Oculus Rift with just the Xbox controller that it comes with for probably seven or eight months before they came out with the touch hand controllers. Depending upon the experience, one of my favorites has been an app called, "The Climb." It's a mountain climbing app and using the touch controllers, you are placed into these environments where you reach with your hands and you climb this mountain up to the top and you face obstacles along the way and they can fall and plumb it to your untimely death. Unfortunately, not get hurt, just start right where you left off. You find yourself getting a little bit of a workout. There is a physical aspect to it with your arms reaching and climbing and pulling.

I was watching my son who's a grown young adult playing a game and I can't remember what the name of it was, but a lot of activity. Shooting at robots that are attacking you and tearing them up and grasping bullets out of the air as they're flying and throwing them back. He's heavy breathing. He's like, as he's playing this game. It's a real workout.

Mark S A Smith: Sure. Jumping jacks and all kinds of arm flailing and why not.

Joel Comm: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Create some fitness just by having a great VR experience.

Joel Comm: There will be fitness apps. There will be those applications that are designed specifically for that. Hey, you want to do yoga in Thailand? Guess what, sit down here, pull out your mat and put on your headset and start doing your thing and you're in this actual space. There's already a unit and I can't remember what it's called, but basically, if you'll picture a circular treadmill that's like running on a ball so it goes any direction and its got these barriers around it so that you can't go running off of it.

We're going to see action games in VR with people in these units that they stand in and they're going to be running through the jungle taking out bad guys and leaping across chasms or just jogging and say, "Hey, you want to go for a run in Tokyo?" Great. This program in that I want to jog in Tokyo and then you just run through the streets of Tokyo in virtual reality.

Mark S A Smith: Let's extend this to business. Now, we can take people into a brick and mortar experience with VR and they don't even have to go to your store. They can do

everything. It's just pick and choose Amazon style delivery. That's going to make the retail apocalypse even more intense.

Joel Comm: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: That we walk down almost any shopping mall today and 20 to 30% of the stores are shuttered. I see that even in airports today. They're closing stores in airports.

Joel Comm: Yeah, retail is hard.

Mark S A Smith: It's hard.

Joel Comm: What if you could shop in virtual reality? What if instead of saying, "I want to go to the department store," I'd put on my headset and I walk through the store and I can see the things that are there, I can tap on them, maybe even pickup the virtual item, turn it over, read the back, drop it in my cart.

Mark S A Smith: Wait a minute, try it on.

Joel Comm: Absolutely. Let's say there's a piece of clothing and you've got your avatar that is accurate to your height and weight and this large should fit me. Let's see how this actually fits and you get an idea of a true fit and then you put it in your cart and they ship it to you.

Mark S A Smith: Right before we pushed the start button on this session, you showed me your 3D mini me.

Joel Comm: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Talk about that for just a moment. I think it's application in the VR and AR.

Joel Comm: Yeah. There's a business out there that's called, "Doob3D, D-O-O-B 3D." It's a 3D digital imaging photography. They have a retail shop in Washington DC, in Los Angeles, in San Francisco, and they might be opening others. It's a storefront. Basically, you walk into their photo booth. It's about a 12-foot diameter round booth and in that booth are 8 stacks of 8 cameras all the way around it. You're surrounded by 64 cameras. You smile, say "cheese," you make your pose in all the cameras, take your photo at one time. It's like the Matrix bullet time, how they froze the moment. Then you step out of the booth, you're unharmed and they scroll through the 64 photos so you get a view of. This is you from all these angles.

Once you approve your photo, they take that, and they create this rescind 3D image of you. It's a mini me. I'm actually holding right now on my hand a 6-inch Joel. I'm 6-inches tall. It's amazing, the attention to detail, the wrinkles in my shirt, the washed out part of my jeans, the gray in my hair, my facial hair. It's this remarkable replica of myself. At first, it's creepy and now I'm attached to it.

When I show it to people, they either say that's really creepy or that's super cool. My kids thought it was creepy. Everybody else thinks it's cool.

Mark S A Smith: Then the next step is to make those files available for our 3D VR experience so that we can actually see ourselves. How do you read accuracy?

Joel Comm: Yeah, the early social apps on VR have included, oh like for example, one of the early ones is called, "AltspaceVR." In an Altspace, you create a little cartoony avatar of yourself. You pick a robot or the slender guy. They're very cartoony. There's not detail. Every male avatar looks similar. You can't really customize it, but you can enter into a virtual space as we're talking about business applications, starting to see how virtual events and virtual networking are going to become a thing. Now, we've got Facebook spaces that when you step into there, it's still cartoony, but it's based on your profile picture on Facebook, which you can then modify hair color, hair length, style, your eyes, your nose, your mouth. You can customize it and make it more your own.

In the not too distant future, it's going to be more realistic that we'll enter into a VR space and you'll recognize me right away. I won't look like any other cartoon avatar. You'll be like, "That's Joel right there." We'll look back at the Oculus in these early days and say, "That was the brick phone of virtual reality."

Mark S A Smith: That's right. It's inevitable. It's a hard trend. It's going to be here my friends.

Joel Comm: It's coming quickly.

Mark S A Smith: Yes, very fast. I suspect this is going to be one of the fastest adapted technologies that we've seen in quite a while.

Joel Comm: Yes and no. The iPhone was adapted very quickly and VR is something they've been working on for decades. Now, we finally got consumer grade units, but it's really taking decades to get here. I think the advancement from here is going to be a lot faster than what it's taking to get to here.

Mark S A Smith: Yes, I agree. The whole issue of course has been computer power. Now, we're at that point where the compute power we have available to make this really work for the rendering. We have flavors of this, but it's been really expensive. Now, we're getting to that point where it's going to be cheap enough, but quite frankly, if you can buy a PlayStation for a few hundred dollars and a headset for \$600 or \$700 or \$1,000, you have a solid VR experience that at onetime the military paid millions of dollars for.

Joel Comm: Exactly. Once upon a time, a computer that does what your iPhone does now would take up a whole building.

Mark S A Smith: Oh sure.

Joel Comm: It's just amazing. There's a couple other real solid business used cases I think that we're going to see and make it a big impact in VR and I like to address those. The two industries that are going to kill it with VR and those of you if you're in this industry, and you start planting the seeds now for how do I do this? You're going to get ahead of the curve. One of whom is realistic, to be able to show homes or apartments, or condos, or land to say, "I'm having an open house and I'm showing five homes today," and you don't have to leave your house. All you get is put in your headset and watch as I walkthrough the homes and show you all the finer points of this particular property or piece of land. That's going to be powerful.

Then travel. The travel industry. Anybody that wants to sell vacations, cruises, timeshares, or second homes to be able to take people on experiences that they want to have in the real world and be able to give them a taste in virtual reality that wets their appetites. I'll tell you, when I'm in VR and I'm looking at places I've not been to like even using Google Earth, one moment, I'm on the Great Wall of China, next I'm looking down at the Eiffel Tower, next I'm standing in the Grand Canyon. It doesn't satiate the desire for me to go to those places. I just want to go more once I've seen them in VR. There's going to be huge opportunity for tourism, travel, and real estate, but you can expand that to anything where you want to provide an experience for somebody in order to build relationship with them.

Mark S A Smith: Sure. I can see this happening for sales calls and meetings, and we're going to be moving out of the halo rooms we used to use for telepresence. We're just going to scrap on our eyeglasses. We're going to be looking at each other as if we were sitting around the table.

Joel Comm: It's going to be amazing. A little creepy. I must confess, the first time I tried it it's like, "Okay, where is this all going? How is this affecting my brain? How is this rewiring my synopsis?" Technology in itself is a moral. It's either good nor evil. It's what we do with it. There will be no shortage of evil doers, of people looking for ways to steal, kill, and destroy. It's what bad people do, but I think the good that's going to come from it is going to far outweigh it. However, there's one more burgeoning industry, which I'm going to refer to, and that is if you're in the mental health profession.

Mark S A Smith: Interesting. I was thinking when it go for adult entertainment.

Joel Comm: No, because that would be the bad as far as ... I'm going to put a moral judgment on it right there and say that is not contributing positively to our society even though it's very high in demand.

Mark S A Smith: It's not. It is not, but it is also the entertainment space that drove VCR and internet adaption.

Joel Comm: Absolutely. The porn industry has driven all the technologies we have.

Mark S A Smith: Isn't that crazy?

Joel Comm: They drove E-commerce say like, "How do we find a way to get this into the hands of more people?"

Mark S A Smith: That's right, literally.

Joel Comm: Literally, and so that's what they're doing. No doubt a lucrative space.

Mark S A Smith: We checked that box. Let's talk about mental health.

Joel Comm: Yeah, so mental health. They're distant cousins actually, because one leads to the other in many cases. There are going to be people that do disappear into virtual reality just like we have other means of escape. Now, there is internet addiction, there is video gaming addiction. Now, there's drug and alcohol, and television, and work. There's so many addictions. We, human beings, are always coming up with new ways. Anything that can be deemed as an escape to not deal with the reality of our own lives and our own problems, we have a tendency to find something to soothe that pain.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. You know what the most dangerous addiction is?

Joel Comm: Do tell.

Mark S A Smith: It's the one that you have.

Joel Comm: Oh, right. It's whatever you have. Exactly. I've decided that as they continue to expand the DSM, the diagnostic manual for the mental health profession, which gets thicker and thicker, because they have to put a label and everything, that I could be diagnosed with JCD, which is Joel Comm Disorder. Everything that's me, hey that fits me to a T, yup, that's me with all my flaws. Mental health, we're going to see especially I think younger people are at risk of disappearing and not dealing with reality and there are going to be rehab centers for virtual reality.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, VR detox.

Joel Comm: Yup, there will be. It's like, "Hey, come out and deal with reality." There are risks if stuff is not handled in moderation. Maybe when I was younger, I would have been more addicted to it as it is, I probably put my Oculus Rift on two times a month and spend maybe an hour in there playing around and I'm done, because I've got real world to deal with. It's entertainment, it's fun, I experiment with it. I like showing it off. I have friends come over, "You got to try this." I think collectively, people I know have spent just as much time in it as I have and I own it.

There is going to be a need for helping people where it becomes detrimental. I don't say that to scare anybody. I say it like, "Let's be realistic," and it's not a reason to avoid it. Again, the technology is a moral. It's what you do with it and

the wonderful things that can be done with a virtual reality, the experiences that we can have, the connections we can make, I think definitely are stronger than any negatives that might result.

Mark S A Smith: Absolutely. Every technology has a blessing and a curse in VR, just have a lot of blessings and a lot of curses. Let's shift gears a little bit and have to this conversation augmented reality, which is essentially virtual reality through a transparent painted glass versus blocking out everything. The idea here is that for example, I could be looking at you with my AR glasses and I could be seeing information about you to prompt me to have a more powerful social interaction.

Joel Comm: Exactly. I was thinking about this yesterday when I was out for my walk and I noticed that I just received the new Facebook Live audio functionality in my app. Everybody knows what Facebook Live is, you go live on video, but they're rolling out very slowly the ability to go live with audio only so that you can talk and have a radio show as you're speaking, but not have to be on camera, which is really great for people that you don't have their full attention. They might not watch, but they might listen, just like they do to a podcast.

As I was talking and sharing this with the people who were listening to me, while I was on my walk using this I thought, "The problem with this while I'm at walking is I have my phone in my hand and I'm having to look at the screen to see what your comments are." What if I was wearing glasses that those comments would scroll and I could see them just by looking up to the left or something and I could still be hands-free and having this live broadcast. That's the type of thing that we're going to see. The glasses are going to come out, that allow us to access information, the internet, our contact list, our email, whatever through the augmented reality glasses. We're looking at the real world, but there's an overlay of data.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. That's going to make things extremely powerful. I can see that being adapted very rapidly in the world of business. For example, any kind of supervised behavior whether it's preparing food or doing tech support is highly impacted by this concept of augmented reality. Since we have the artificial intelligence that can help figure out what people are doing, making suggestion is to make recommendations and supervise what they're doing. The whole new spin on any kind of minimum wage job that requires some semi-skilled person.

Joel Comm: Absolutely. It's coming.

Mark S A Smith: Faster than you can imagine. I see a lot of disruption for the augmented reality in a lot of areas of business.

Joel Comm: Even going back to real estate again, stepping into an empty house. This is going to be your home and you're thinking, "I need furniture." Using augmented reality app, you start placing furniture and you're looking around your room and you're moving the sofa with your phone. Then you look up and you see how does that look? How about this color? How about over here? What if there was a plant

over there, a picture over there, a chair, dining room set over there? You can basically shop to make your entire home fully furnished. Then you go, "Okay, that's what I want." You push the button and the furniture is delivered.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. It shows up the same day from the Amazon warehouse just down the street.

Joel Comm: They drone it in. Here comes your sofa.

Mark S A Smith: It comes in by hooey.

Joel Comm: Right.

Mark S A Smith: Imagine for a moment that we're having a dinner party. We use virtual reality to create the place settings and we have an avatar that's based on that person. We figure out who should be sitting next to each other and who should move.

Joel Comm: Exactly. "You're over there." Yeah, there's so many applications. A lot of people think that AR is going to become a thing before VR does. Apart from some very specific industries, AR is not consumer friendly yet VR is.

Mark S A Smith: Right, they're parallel.

Joel Comm: They are. I see VR first actually. I see VR, because I think there's more challenges to augmenting reality than there are to basically using a screen that puts you elsewhere. It's like watching a movie, only you're in the film.

Mark S A Smith: I could also see for augmented reality that when my computer disappears and my glasses take on that role and I sit in front of a artificial keyboard and it's just reading my finger movements and I get an auditory feedback of what's going on. It's going to be an amazing situation. A lot of things are going to change.

Joel Comm: No doubt. Very exciting times we live in.

Mark S A Smith: It is indeed. What else should we talk about in the world of AR, VR and we got this pretty well-covered for this show.

Joel Comm: I think we've probably blown some minds and yeah people are going to be looking into this thing. It's really where it starts, get curious. Most people don't know that their smartphone is VR capable right now. Your iPhone and your Android device. They're ready right now. Go to Amazon and drop 20, 30 bucks at a decent headset that your phone goes into. Then go to their app store and just search for virtual reality and download some apps. That's a great place to start. Of course, if you've not tried Pokemon GO or Snapchat whose got some cool augmented reality lenses that will put an object into a 3D space that you can then walk around it, dabble with a little bit and then start thinking, "Where could my business benefit from using or leveraging these technologies?"

People who are thinking that way now are the ones who are going to come up with the solutions that others years from now are going to go, "Wow, I wish I had thought of that."

Mark S A Smith: Now is the time my friends, because we are very close. The second suggestion, find a friend that has an Oculus Rift or Sony PlayStation and go play with it for an hour.

Joel Comm: I could start charging. It is actually a great model here. I think that it wouldn't surprise me to see holiday season, especially kiosks and shopping malls where there's a lot of people to do pay per play for 10 minutes. Sit down and put this on and we'll take you to Santa's workshop. There's going to be a whole animated experience that takes you to the North Pole, but instead of watching it like you're watching a screen, you're in VR and maybe it's interactive. You could open up a retail storefront with 20 units in and have people come in and play with these things and neither their time just like you do it a day [crosstalk 00:28:44].

I think we're going to see those. I think that it'd be highly profitable for somebody to do that for the next few years. Those are great business. If you happen to have a storefront and have access to funds to get the equipment, I think there's some good money to be made quickly, and build an affiliate relationship with Oculus so that you're actually selling units for them after people try it. That could be highly profitable.

Mark S A Smith: That's a great idea. Try, buy, and make money from the rental as well as the purchase. I like it. Then of course, if you really love it, go buy one and see what you can do and start writing some software and start building out some experiences. Thank you Joel for this extraordinary conversation about virtual reality and just a we bit of augmented reality, what do you have for our listener today?

Joel Comm: I've got a good freebie for everybody. I'm a big fan of live video. I have been using live video since 2008, really ramped it up a lot since the live video revolution has started. I do a lot of Facebook Live and Periscope and I help businesses and brands understand the power of live video to engage with their customers and to make more sales. I've got a 19-page beautiful PDF called, "The Live Video Playbook," which is an 8-step system that they can replicate to do exactly that. Use live video to get more customers and make more sales. If you go to lvplaybook.com, it stands for live video not Las Vegas, lvplaybook.com, it's my free gift to you. Go and download it and let me know what you think.

Mark S A Smith: Great. Follow Joel on social media. He is always doing interesting things such as unboxing's on live video. Joel, it's been an absolute delight to have you on the show today. Thank you so much my friend. Looking forward to much, much more and this is the Selling Disruption Show.