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*VRartistry: Merging Theatrical Performance
with a Virtual Reality Experience*
LOCATION AND IMPACT

Where will your venture call home, specifically? I want something more specific than a city. How does this location affect your costs? What about the market?

VRartistry will be housed in an off-Broadway theater in New York City to begin its mental health series although there is room to tour should the production find success in the city and want to expand to reach more people. The theater that seems like the perfect venue is The Joyce and Seward Johnson Theater at 155 First Avenue, New York, NY 10003. It holds 99-240 seats for which we would request 240 seats to be set and is currently available for rent for \$5,000/week (for the maximum number of seats). If we were to have a year-long run, we would pay \$260,000 for the space which has hosted a multitude of shows in the past, displaying that there is a pretty large market for theatre. There are about 60 off-Broadway theaters in New York City which signifies that the performing arts are emphasized and appreciated in the location although this also means that there is plenty of competition for spectators. VRartistry offers such a unique experience however that we do not believe there will be any close substitution for its productions and should thus have a competitive advantage.

Why did you choose this location? What are the disadvantages?

The Joyce and Seward Johnson Theater has received rave reviews online with customers noting the “staff’s hard and humble work,” the “comfortable seats with actual foot room and great service,” and the presence of a small cafe under the theater that serves coffee, wine, and desserts. Since VRartistry offers a meal option between shows, we could be in competition with this cafe that might offer a wider variety of refreshments or lower prices. On the other hand, this could also benefit VRartistry as people who stop in to the cafe not intending to see a show could become interested if they hear other patrons talking about it or the cafe advertising it.

What does growth look like for you and how does being where you are affect that?

Many shows that originate on Broadway or off-Broadway eventually go on tour whether that be national or international. If this were to happen for VRartistry, the show would not have a set theater it would reside in but would travel from theater to theater during the duration of the tour which would most likely be six months to a year long. The show might have to be adapted to fit these venues as some can hold upwards of 3,000 seats and have stages that are twice or three times that of The Joyce and Seward Johnson stage. However, this is contingent on the show being successful in New York and demanded in other regions so shifting the show from 240 seats to 3,000 is more a future goal and not something to focus on at the moment.

There is also the option of packaging the AR portion of the performance into a complete experience at a discount, or shrinking the performance to a more individual experience that can be experienced multiple times a day. For example, say in a 40 minute performance there is a combined 18 minutes of independently entertaining virtual performance/art. This could be cut down into an 8 minute VR video that plays as a promotion or follows the massage chair in the mall model. Especially in this venue, if a two minute \$5 teaser AR unit could be placed in the cafe that makes it look like there are extra people in the room, that becomes almost an experience in itself. This is less of an example of growth and more of a marketing tactic, but once you have a team developing AR experiences and a model to reasonably get them to consumers, you're almost tapping into a new market.

How will you impact your geographic community and vice versa?

Since New York City is considered to be a huge cultural hub, it houses many museums, concert halls and production stages, libraries, and theaters. Because of this, art is highly valued by residents and tourists alike and there are thousands of artists in the area that are eager to pick up new projects. This should help VRartistry not only find spectators for their productions but also actors, designers, and production crew members to produce the plays. Outside of practical impacts, there is also a huge opportunity for social impact when it comes to dealing with this subject matter. Since we plan to take such a strong stance on mental health, and are placed in a theater district, the mental health of performers can be a concern and significant point. Alongside the lives of the theatermakers, theatergoers to the spectacle-style typical Broadway and off Broadway shows will be asked to engage differently through the more intimate use of technology. There's a certain parallel between giant automated flying set pieces and futuristic headsets, but between our concern for health, the tangibility of the headsets,

and the variable levels of engagement with the performance, we are creating a more intimate and impactful performance than the New York theater scene is used to.

Also, since we are in such close proximity to these prestigious and powerful theaters, if the AR performance model is a hit then it would likely begin to spread. The expectation is that a large Broadway theater would probably see a model like VRartistry and consider it gimmicky like other VR/AR headset entertainment. However, our goal and business model in general is to begin doing something niche enough that the “gimmick” ends up adding significant value. A full-scale theater with a team of designers- especially media and projection designers and more modern design engineers- would certainly be nimble enough to imitate the structure of a VRartistry performance. In this case, the “impact” isn’t necessarily good for our business, as there could soon be competition in the mixed reality performance space. This is where the authenticity and mental health focus becomes a core element of the brand. By relying on and supporting our partners in mental health organizations and committing to showcasing important stories and experiences, we can remain differentiated in the Broadway theater scene. Of course, competition could go the other way as VRartistry becomes the leading edge of the new mainstream virtual reality theater future.