

Sparring Twitter And Facebook Titans Face Challenge From New Deep-Tech Platform Rival Targeting Global Movers And Shakers



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AS tech titans Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg weigh up settling their enmity with a bizarre cage fight, they should look over their shoulders at an ambitious real-world challenger.

Admittedly, Dubai-based and British-born serial entrepreneur and author Reg Athwal might look like a ‘David’ pitted against these billionaire US ‘Goliaths’ in the social media, virtual reality and AI space, but he is backed by Middle East financial muscle and a formidable India tech powerbase.

Such support has enabled Athwal to launch Verchool, the company’s name neatly punning and summarising the advanced virtual extended reality and artificial intelligence (AI) deep-tech underpinning its B2B community platform.

Dubai-based and currently well on its way to a \$125 million lift-off Series A funding target, Athwal confidently predicts that Verchool will be a billion-dollar unicorn corporation within 12 months, and a serious rival to the Musk and Zuckerberg tech and media empires – without the need for a cage fight confrontation. But he is quick to point out



Photo by Reg Athwal

that Verchool is no ‘me too’ operation either. Athwal explains: “The essence of Verchool is not to create another metaverse or social media platform welcoming all comers and muddying the waters for the biggest financial players. Instead it will create specific virtual extended reality and artificially intelligent enabled ‘zones’ relevant to the specific B2B interests of billionaire families and financial ‘movers and shakers.

“It’s a kind of ‘virtual business speed-dating’ if you like, in which ultra-high net worth individuals can meet, and be introduced quickly and securely and far more frequently to drive collaboration and commerce.

“They can use virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) boardrooms and attend live virtual conferences in 3D to press forward with mutual projects and share content, without the need to jump on an aeroplane.”

London-born Athwal, 50, is part of a multi-generational Asian family business and single family office with a portfolio of many businesses, and he alone has created 12 start-ups in 30 years.

In demand as a keynote speaker and published business author, Athwal has chaired and facilitated 2,000 meetings and family forums globally since 2002, and completed a 13-city event tour in 16 days across South Asia, impacting over 1,000 family firms.

But his most recent work has been developing major opportunities and wealth

creation for ultra-high net worth individuals and billionaire family offices and one of those vehicles is another of his companies, Fobillion, which demonstrated the need for focussed and trustworthy networking between the higher echelons of business and investment.

This led naturally to the birth of Verchool, with the development of a deep-tech platform with its first Family Office Zone community B2B product, backed by virtual extended reality and regenerative artificial intelligence tools. It launches in September with 200 global family offices.

“It highlighted how the men and women at the top can deal with each other rather than relying on advisers,” said Athwal. “There has been a lot of metaverse hype but we don’t believe this works well for high level business people. They are time poor, so virtual meetings with their counterparts in our targeted zones saves time and builds relationships fast.

“They are also not so much interested in the tech that makes all this happen though Verchool has some cool tech already and is developing client digital-twin AI-enabled avatars so that the whole meeting process can be smoothed. This has been enabled by a young and innovative tech deep-tech team in India – with one of the top developers aged just 20.”

“We also describe Verchool as a series of private metaverses or marketplace zones, a key attraction for many proposed users being the highest level of security, something at risk when using more mainstream networking opportunities.

“Ultimately, there will be many zones on the Verchool platform, but we envisage several

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pillars or key headings and often driven by philanthropy; many wealthy people now recognise that one more yacht or mansion means little when they can only live in one place at a time and there are so many global issues, notably climate change and health and longevity. They also want to mentor others and create a legacy.

“So, we see healthcare and medical research, education, renewable energy, and climate action as fundamental themes for other private Verchool zones.

“We are also currently in discussions with two global authorities in South Africa and UK, to bring together deep-tech AI and AR possibilities that will challenge both Musk and Zuckerberg, but driven

by social impact and sustainability vs. algorithms and advertising.” Asked why the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in Dubai was chosen as Verchool’s headquarters, Athwal said: “Dubai is both an established base for Middle East capital and other major global investors, with the capability of networking that was so successful for Silicon Valley in the early days of the tech explosion.

“Even US investors now looks to the Middle East as a crossroads for the financial and business world and want to find their next unicorn.”