Facial Recognition Is Suddenly Everywhere
WIRED25 recap:
Introduction

After the success of last year’s 25th Anniversary celebration, Isobar were pleased to return to WIRED25 for the second year in a row as WIRED’s Digital Experience Agency.

With a theme of “Move Fast, Fix Things”, this year’s event focused on the people who are working to fix what is broken, and shape the future of policy, privacy, politics and potentially even what we eat.

As WIRED’s Digital Experience Agency for the past two years, Isobar have attended the event, and developed and maintained Get WIRED, WIRED’s official mobile app in partnership with the people at WIRED.

As part of this year’s WIRED25, Isobar and WIRED collaborated on the launch of the “Experimental” section of the App with a deeper look into WIRED’s recent coverage and future outlook on facial recognition, while the experiment itself provides users with the ability to better understand how exactly cameras and computers look for faces, and aren’t always right.

The “Experimental” section of Get WIRED was created to expand on WIRED’s coverage of particular topics through the development of hands on experiments by the innovation team at Isobar that are designed to help users better understand the technologies and topics that are being written about.

Many of those same topics were discussed on stage at WIRED25, and this recap highlights some of the key takeaways from this year’s event from the people at Isobar who were there, and a few who were watching online.
Addressing Climate Change

A question that came up throughout WIRED25 was, “What’s the biggest challenge we’ll face in the future?” One answer came up again and again—Climate Change. This single issue galvanized speakers around the single truth that we all need to take action.

One company that seems to be standing out in that respect is X. X is colloquially known as Alphabet’s Moonshot division with the goal of creating products as good for the world and as valuable for Alphabet as Google has been. These moonshots solve huge global problems with radical solutions using breakthrough technology. Astro Teller, Captain of Moonshots at X, explains, “I would say our goal is to find and solve huge problems in the world. And the climate crisis is the single biggest problem the world has right now.”

Understandably, most of these projects fail, but some do succeed. Astro Teller described this process, “We want to [mitigate the climate crisis] so badly that we’re willing to stop doing something, no matter how good it makes us feel because the short-term brutal honesty is in service of this really long-term goal of solving this problem.” One project was a successful attempt to turn seawater into methanol using a carbon-neutral process. Unfortunately, the lowest price that could be achieved was $15 a gallon.

That project was closed, but the team went on to create Dandelion, a geothermal heating solution that is now thriving.

Another way WIRED25 speakers are working to mitigate the effects of climate change is by addressing the processes by which we get food. According to Adam Rogers of WIRED, “Livestock raised for eating are the main producers of methane in the world, the most potent greenhouse gas.” Uma Valenti, CEO and Co-founder of Memphis Meats created a process to grow meat from stem cells, “The speed of innovation is incredible, it’s only a matter of time until we bring these products to market.”

Young people are getting involved as well. A group of young Americans is currently suing the government for violating their constitutional right to a safe and livable climate. One of the plaintiffs, Levi Draheim, 12, spoke out, “Our generation needs to be one that is taking action for our future and our lives. If we’re not there might not be a future for us.”
The gray area between security and privacy

While on stage at WIRED25, Anne Neuberger, Director of Cybersecurity of the National Security Agency (NSA) said, “There is no perfect security and there is no perfect privacy. You need both. And there’s tension in that and that’s good.”

As an intelligence agency in a democracy, there is an innate tension in working at the NSA. One of those tensions is how to choose the right tools for communication. In the WIRED25 green room, Anne informed founder Brian Acton that the NSA uses Signal because of its end-to-end encryption.

Brian Acton was unsurprised stating on stage later, “At Signal...we take privacy and security to the next level. We not only protect your message contents, but we protect your message metadata so we take it a step further.” It’s part of Signal’s mission to bring NSA-level privacy to the masses. By making end-to-end encryption available in every person’s pocket, everyone is afforded an elevated level of protection that wasn’t afforded before.

That privacy has its downfalls by allowing that same level of encryption to be potentially used to do harm. Edmund Burke famously said, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Both the NSA and Signal are taking actions to address these vulnerabilities. “We made a commitment to recognize that it wasn’t enough to write a classified report and we had to ensure that the information we had made its way to people who could do something about it,” said Anne Neuberger. Brian Acton added, “We need more security, we don’t need less. We need more encryption, not less. When you have a product like Signal where we bring it to the masses, we’re actually bringing more safety to you. We are the good men doing good things.”

Anne Neuberger recognized that these are gray areas will evolve and change with technology, “[The] best minds are working on those areas that are really not black and white, they’re gray. And balancing the gray to get to the best outcomes.”
Data ownership and the Blockchain solution

As Dawn Song, CEO of Oasis Labs, shared during her talk at WIRED25, “Data is the new oil of our modern economy.” WIRED25 speakers discussed the current business culture of data and indicated that there is a need to innovate away from the traditional model where companies mine raw data from users in exchange for free surfaces before selling it to advertisers.

This data-centric traditional business model has unquestionably fueled innovation, but it has cost users control of their data. Song went on to clarify that when it comes to your data, “You don’t know what happens to it, who uses it, what it’s used for.” Users don’t have any influence on what data is recorded, where it’s stored, and who has access to it. As Malkia Devich-Cyril, founding director of MediaJustice, puts it, “this is about companies who know every single thing about us, but we know nothing about them.”

When asked if he believed if this type of business model was toxic, Brian Acton, the CEO of Signal, acknowledged that advertising has helped build much of the internet we now use. Acton went on to say that advertising is an undue influence and that companies should innovate their business models to alleviate the tech sector’s reliance on data.

He added that the mobile game industry has been experimenting with alternative business models for years.

Jason Kelley, general manager of Blockchain at IBM, had a solution. He discussed how decentralized ledgers and smart contracts, would allow users to have greater control over their data. He explained how blockchain doesn’t place an overwhelming amount of trust on any one party to manage everyone’s data. Instead, it gives ownership to the individual, making it “The OS for trust.” Kelley went on to say that blockchain allows a user to control their data, determining who sees it and what’s done with it, saying, “When you share data, it’s the right data.”

Kelley echoed Acton’s perspectives stating, “The tough part is not the technology...the tough part is getting everyone to change their business models.”
Friday Speakers

Astro Teller
Captain of Moonshots, X

Anne Neuberger
Director of Cyber Security, National Security Agency

Stewart Butterfield
CEO & Cofounder, Slack

Adam Mosseri
Head of Instagram

Tracee Ellis Ross
Actor, Producer & CEO

Patrick Collison
CEO & Cofounder, Stripe

Dawn Song
CEO & Founder, Oasis Labs

Kelsey Juliana
Juliana v. United States, Youth Plaintiff & Climate Activist

Vic Barrett
Juliana v. United States, Youth Plaintiff & Climate Activist

Levi Draheim
Juliana v. United States, Youth Plaintiff & Climate Activist

Chris Cox
Former Chief Product Officer, Facebook

Uma Valeti
CEO & Cofounder, Memphis Meats

Matthew Prince
CEO & Cofounder, Cloudflare

Anca Dragan
Assistant Professor, UC Berkeley

Brian Acton
Executive Chairman, Signal Technology Foundation

Jeff Weiner
CEO, LinkedIn

Traci Des Jardins
Chef & Owner Mijita Cocina Mexicana; Chef & Partner, The Commissary, Arguello, Public House, School Night

Ben Horowitz
Cofounder, Andreessen Horowitz Venture Capital

Mihir Shukla
CEO & Cofounder, Automation Anywhere

Jason Kelley
General Manager, Blockchain Services, IBM

Malkia Devich-Cyril
Founding Director, MediaJustice

Laura Boykin
Computational Biologist Cassava Virus Action Project
Saturday Speakers

Chris Evans
Actor, Producer; Founder, "A Starting Point"

Rian Johnson
Director, Writer and Producer, Knives Out

N. K. Jemisin
Hugo Award-winning Author, The Broken Earth Trilogy

Adam Savage
Editor-in-Chief Tested.com, Executive Producer, and Host of Savage Builds

Laura Boykin
Computational Biologist, Cassava Virus Action Project

Evan Ratliff
Author of The Mastermind: Drugs, Empire, Murder, Betrayal. & Cohost of the Longform Podcast

Ester Wojcicki
Educator and Author

Ronald D. Moore
Creator, Writer and Executive Producer, For All Mankind

Ben Nedivi
Creator, Writer, and Executive Producer, For All Mankind

Matt Wolfert
Creator, Writer, and Executive Producer, For All Mankind

Maril Davis
Executive Producer, For All Mankind

Tyler Mitchell
Head of Imagine Impact

Godwin Jabangwe
Screenwriter, Impact 1 Creator

Laura Kittrell
Screenwriter, Impact 1 Creator

Emily Harper
ScreenwriterImpact 2 Creator

Kieran Mulroney
Screenwriter, Film Director, Actor & Impact Shaper

Tiffany Shlain
Founder The Webby Awards and Author 24/6

John Collins
The Paper Airplane Guy; Guinness World Record Holder, Farthest Flight By a Paper Aircraft

Ken Goldberg
UC Berkeley Professor of Engineering

Kieran Snyder
CEO & CoFounder, Textio

Christopher Fabian
Principal Advisor on Innovation UNICEF & CoChair, UN Innovation Network

Sunita Grote
Co-Lead, UNICEF Ventures

Rob McElhenney
Creator & Star of Mythic Quest: Raven’s Banquet for Apple TV+

Megan Ganz
Co-creator & Executive Producer, Mythic Quest: Raven’s Banquet for Apple TV+

Samantha Storr
Executive Producer of Original Content, Within

Jonny Ahdout
Director of Development, Within
About Isobar

Isobar is Wired25’s Digital Experience Agency for the second year in a row. We are a global digital agency transforming businesses and brands through the creative use of digital.

Our 6,500 digital experts in 85 locations across 45 markets in Americas, EMEA and APAC deliver experience-led transformation, powered by creativity through our end to end service offering.

Isobar’s clients include Adidas, Coca-Cola, Enterprise, KFC, Mead Johnson, Nestle and Philips, and is part of Dentsu Aegis Network, a wholly owned subsidiary of Dentsu Inc. www.isobar.com.

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