

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Calling Planet Earth - Space Outreach to the General Public (6)

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LAUNCHING THEN THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE INTO SPACE TO DISCOVER PLANET EARTH

Abstract

How can we provide space outreach for the general public for whom space is often a distant and complex - technology driven topic? How can we make space relevant to a larger audience, not being a space or technology fan? How can we use the impactful view from space on Earth, experienced by so few, be experienced by many? How can we create ambassadors for planet Earth, just like astronauts?

These are the questions the non-profit SpaceBuzz organization asked itself, and answered by building an live like rocket vehicle that launches its passengers into space using the latest immersive technology (virtual, augmented reality and 5D effects) triggering deeper levels of curiosity and learning.

Harnessing the power of technology, SpaceBuzz created an XR-based education and outreach program that allows its passengers to follow in the footsteps of astronauts. A 18-meter long rocket was developed that allows for nine people to be launched into space in virtual reality. When the users sit down in the rocket and put a virtual reality headset on, their chairs move hydraulically, and the rocket is launched into space under the guidance of a virtual reality embodiment of an actual astronaut.

Spearheaded by European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut André Kuipers the SpaceBuzz rocketship has been traveling through various countries in Europe (France, Germany, Hungary and Italy) and the United States visiting schools, festivals, foundations and companies. It has allowed tens of thousands of people to experience what only few have experienced: a rocket launch resulting into orbit focussing on the topics space, STEAM, sustainability and planet earth. Followed by experiencing the Overview Effect, thus creating a new perspective on our beautiful but also fragile planet.

The program has an open acces philosophy, meaning it adjustable to any country in the world in terms of language, local astronauts as tutor and ambassador and content. In Europe for example earth observation is one of the main topics.

Experience so far learned that this program inspires young and old, companies and foundations, schoolclasses and festival audiences.

In the words of Iranian-American astronaut Anousheh Ansari, after her experience in SpaceBuzz: "I think it should be something that every human being, young and old, gets to see. Of course children will really enjoy it and will take this experience to heart, but I think we should take it to the UN and make all the world leaders do the same thing".