

Second Life ... for Sports Businesses

What Is It?

Second Life is an Internet based virtual world. Each user is represented by an avatar, a "virtual-me", which can move through the world, interact with objects, and talk to other users. The BBC, IBM, Adidas and Toyota are just some of the global companies already using Second Life for marketing, entertainment and business purposes. Second Life already has over 10 million registrations, most users accessing the world for free.

Why Use It?

Whereas the Internet is about information, virtual worlds such as Second Life are about experience. They engage with users on an emotional level. Going far beyond what is possible in an Internet forum or chat-room, or even a fan-site, a virtual presence can let your fans connect with you at a level only one-step away from being there in person.

Who is using it?

It is undoubtably early days for sports within virtual worlds. However Ajax has already built a replica of their stadium in Second Life, Major League Baseball (MLB) in the US has already broadcast games into the world, and both MLB and IBM (using Wimbledon tennis data) have done work on replaying games actually within the world.

The Virtual Club House

The best analogy for a virtual world sports presence is a virtual club room. Imagine a space where fans could go, as avatars (and probably in virtual replica strips) to meet, talk about you and your sport, watch video together. They may even get to take part in virtual meetings with star players. Yes, a lot of this could be done through a web site, but with a virtual world fans get to see the other fans, and talk directly to them. They build community far quicker, and far more naturally than they would do in a chat room.



Monetarising the Experience

It is perfectly possible to make some area of the "club" paid-for areas with unique content. On a web site you don't know who has access to the premium areas. In a virtual world you watch them go through the green beize door – and want to follow. You can also sell virtual products (like strips and logo'd outfits), and even link users straight to pages on your web site for real-world merchandise.

Stadium, Pub or Lounge?

When considering your approach to the virtual world you need to consider which metaphor works best. Are you trying to recreate the stadium, the big-screen down the pub, the club-house or the living room. Stadiums might look impressive, but technical limitations in Second Life mean that you'll never be able to get more than 200 people inside!

Next Steps

If you would like to know more about Virtual Worlds and Second Life, and how they could help your sport's business then please get in touch today and we can arrange a free demonstration at your office.

Second Life is at <http://www.secondlife.com/>

Our SL office is on the Daden Prime sim.

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