

Second Life

... for Charities and Third Sector

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.

Why Use It?

Whereas the Internet is about information, Virtual Worlds 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 audience connect with your cause at a deeper level than they would do on the web.

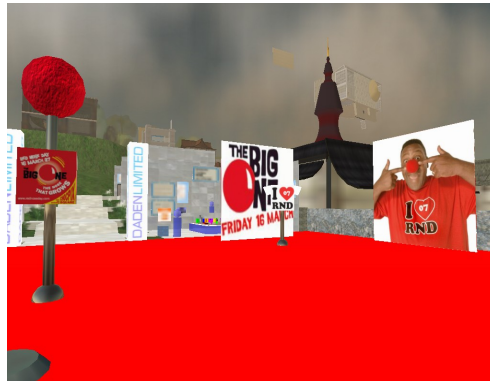
Who Is Using It?

A number of charities and Third Sector organisations have already started using Virtual Worlds. For instance:

- The American Cancer Society's “Race for Life” raised over \$75,000 in Second Life in 2006
- Save the Children have sold virtual Yaks to highlight poverty issues
- Comic Relief sold virtual red noses for RND07
- The US Centre for Disease Control created virtual flu, and a virtual flu vaccine for the Habbo Hotel virtual world
- PR company Ogilvy flooded parts of Second Life to highlight global warming issues for one of their clients
- Envirolink used a virtual globe within SL to plot seismic data and other environmental news and information

Awareness, Education, Service Delivery or Fund Raising

Overall, you need to be very clear about why you are using the virtual world and what you expect to gain – as the aim will dictate not only the sort of project that you do, but even which world you do it in.



Virtual Economics

You may well have to pay close attention to the economics of the world. How much in-world money do players have, and what are the typical prices of things? This is particularly an issue in a world like Second Life where the in-world currency (Linden Dollars – L\$) is freely convertible into pounds sterling. A £1 donation may not seem much but within Second Life £1 equates to around L\$500, enough for an expensive suit or a sailing boat, and often as much as a user will have in their wallet. Mentally users may equate that donation to its “real world” equivalent, in this case more like £250, not £1.

Social Action

Virtual Worlds are proving to be a viable forum for different levels of social action. At their most basic they provide a virtual meeting space, where you can talk to others, relating avatar to avatar – a step beyond just a name in a chat-room, or even a voice on the phone. In more developed examples Second Life is already seeing rallies and protests in support of issues ranging from environmental (eg the “flooding” of Second Life) to the political (eg “red shirts for Burma”).

Next Steps

If you would like to know more about Second Life, and how it could help your organisation then please get in touch today and we can arrange a free demonstration at your office.

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