

Second Life

What Is It?

Second Life (SL) is an Internet based virtual world. In Second Life each user is represented by an avatar, a human or non-human character. This avatar can move through the world, talking to other users, interacting with objects, attending meetings, and going to gigs and parties. Unlike worlds such as The Sims or World of Warcraft there is no plot, and no hard-coded rules. In Second Life users just do what they want to do.

Second Life is by no means the first or only open-ended virtual world. Alpha World has been around longer, and "There" is simple and fun; but Second Life is currently the market leader with over 2.6 million inhabitants (x20 growth in 1 year) and attracting big name clients such as the BBC, IBM, Adidas and Toyota. The typical SL user is also in their mid 30s, there is a 50:50 male/female split, and 50% of new users coming from outside the USA.

Building, Scripting and Land

Every player can build objects and structures, and own "virtual" land. Objects, whether buildings or devices, are built using a simple on-screen design system, and functionality is added through a computer scripting language. Media files, including video, can be brought in from the outside world. Using web-services you can even access web-based information and corporate IT systems.

Land is sold in plots which range from small (but expensive) areas for advertising, through standard building sized plots, to whole private islands (as bought by the BBC, IBM and Duran Duran). The going rate for a 512m² plot is around L\$8000.

Second Life Economics

Second Life works on Linden Dollars. The current exchange rate is around L\$280 to \$1. Linden Dollars can be both bought *and sold* for real money.



Why Is It Important?

Second Life is the most developed virtual space from a business point of view. It is attracting both big companies and affluent users, and is laying the foundation for future virtual commerce. The in-world economy turns over around \$1m US dollars a day.

Real world businesses can use SL in a two main ways – either as a sales, marketing and PR tool, or as an environment to support their real-world activities – such as data or concept visualisation, and communications.

If you want to start exploring this whole area then SL is the best place to start. You may not think that virtual worlds are important, but the next generation is growing up in them (see Runescape).

How Can I Get Ready?

Think about how your business could make use of a virtual world like SL. Do SL users match your market? Could your use of SL make you a thought-leader in your industry? Could you use SL for in-world or real life business? Setting up a virtual presence needn't be expensive, but it needs thought.

Next Steps

If you want to know more about SL and how you can get involved then give us a call. We'd be more than happy to discuss the opportunities with you.

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

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