

# Second life ready for business

Life



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BUSTER**

What problems can Second Life help businesses solve? Second Life provides businesses with tools for online conferencing, online collaboration, knowledge management, and prototyping. Companies can test new products using Second Life's 3-D rendering programs. They can experiment with new marketing and advertising campaigns to see how people react. They can receive feedback on real-world products or services.

Considering what you have learned about Second Life, how could you, as an individual, create a modest start-up business on the Grid? What goods would you sell? Why would this be a good choice of product? What, in simple terms, would your business plan be? Why would it work? One potential new business would be to sell furnishings for online spaces. People inherently want to furnish and decorate their private spaces. The products could be bought and sold using Lindens. The start-up costs could be low since there aren't any inventory costs. You can create the furnishings as they're ordered. A business plan would include advertising ideas, marketing ideas, how to deliver the products, customer follow-up ideas, and financial planning.

Visit eBay on the Web and see what Second Life items you can find listed for auction. How would you rate the activity surrounding these items? Are you surprised by what you see? Why or why not? Obviously the information for this question will fluctuate. As of this writing, eBay offered 211 items. They included how-to manuals for making money on Second Life, a guide to selling land, and business opportunities on the site. One item in particular was a vending machine business package available for \$4.99.

The individual offering the item was an eBay Power Seller with 6, 483 feedback postings. He was obviously an established eBay seller. Other items for sale include a Gym Workout package for \$4. 99 and a macro that makes navigating the skies of Second Life easier. It sold for \$12. 99. Answers to the last three questions will vary by student. The point is to have them realize how advanced and pervasive sites like Second Life have become.

How important is interoperability between 3-D worlds like Second Life and other Web sites such as Amazon, MySpace, and YouTube? Do you think that Second Life can survive and prosper on its own? What is the future of these entities? Separate or integrated? Interoperability between 3-D worlds and other Web sites is very important because of the increasing popularity of all the sites.

People don't want to continually learn new and different skills. Rather they want to transport their skills and software from one site to another. It's doubtful that Second Life could survive and prosper on its own. Demand for the site will increase if it becomes more entwined with other sites and even real life. As people continue to combine offline and online activities, they want easy ways to transition from one to the other. This is where the people component of the three dimensions of information systems becomes apparent. Obviously this leads to more integration in the future.

What obstacles does Second Life have to overcome in order to become a mainstream business tool? Does it face fewer or more obstacles to become a mainstream educational tool? To what do you attribute the difference? Second Life needs to overcome the idea and perception that it's " just

another game site.” Other obstacles include ease-of-use, interoperability between pre-established business systems and Second Life’s proprietary system. It needs to create ways to import and export data between its system and external business systems—don’t require data to be re-input into either system. Second Life faces more obstacles in trying to become a mainstream educational tool. Educators are inherently opposed to online, distance education because it supposedly lacks the face-to-face communication between teachers and students. However, as more education is carried online, Second Life has all the tools in place to make it easy to conduct classes, especially its online collaboration tools.

What kinds of businesses are most likely to benefit from a presence on Second Life? Why? Retail businesses that are already used to doing business online may have an easier time of establishing a viable presence on Second Life. They are used to advertising and marketing to customers online and have the systems built for taking orders, accepting payments, and shipping products. Other companies, like IBM, that have established online collaboration systems and online knowledge management systems will probably have an easier time using Second Life as another outlet for these activities.

Would you like to interview for a job using Second Life? Why or why not? Obviously the answers to this question will vary from student to student. Some may prefer interviewing for a job using Second Life since they may see face-to-face interviews as extremely nerve-wracking. Other may prefer a face-to-face interview rather than trying to create an avatar that adequately represents them.

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Is Second Life a precursor of how business will be conducted in the future or a corporate experiment? Justify your answer. Second Life probably is a precursor of how business will be conducted in the future. Online presence and activity is increasing, not decreasing. Businesses are continually turning to online services to change the way they do business and move many of their offline activities to online ventures.