

Second Life

The virtual world 'Second Life' could offer many opportunities for businesses. Why is it proving so popular?

1 Read the comments on Second Life. Which is closest to your own reaction? Compare your answers with a partner.

(a) Second Life?
What's that?

(b) For people who
don't have a first life!

(c) Interesting
potential for
businesses.

(d) Love it. Here's
my Second Life
business card.

2 Scan the article and underline the names of as many companies you can find in just one minute.

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Too busy to go to an interview? US companies are now recruiting in Second Life. Second Life, founded in 2003, is the most famous of the virtual worlds on the Internet, and it is growing fast. It now has over ten million registered users. Second Life is a 3-dimensional virtual world built by its residents. These residents create 'avatars' (or models) of themselves, which can interact with other users through text chat or audio. Residents create services and products, and buy and sell virtual real estate. They can make a profit – this world has its own economy, based on the Linden dollar, which can be converted to real US dollars.

IBM has the biggest corporate presence in Second Life. Intel, Hewlett-Packard, BP, Adidas and Coca Cola are some of the many other companies active there in some way. IBM prides itself on holding 'carbon-free' conferences. This is possible because in Second life, presenters can show their PowerPoint presentations to a virtual audience, and save on travel costs.

Initially, Second Life appealed to entrepreneurs – who were quick to see the opportunities it presented. Some even became millionaires. One reason Second Life is now of such interest to big companies like Toyota is that they can experiment through 'simulations' in a risk-free environment. Architects can build a model of a building they intend to construct in real life and gauge people's reactions. Potential tourists can visit a virtual Dublin before setting off for the real one. You can test-drive a car before paying for the real thing. The possibilities are seemingly endless.

Of course, Second Life has its critics. They point out that many of the negative aspects of real life exist in Second Life, such as fraud. The price of land in SL has risen in anticipation of more investment from companies such as Microsoft, to the dismay of many of the original residents. Whether or not you share the multinationals enthusiasm for Second Life, it is becoming harder for companies of all sizes to ignore it.

3 Read the whole article. What are Second Life's business possibilities? What are the criticisms?

4 Find one word which does not form a common collocation with 'virtual'.

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|-----|----------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 4.1 | (a) reality | (b) audience | (c) economy | (d) conference | (e) famous | (f) world | |
| 4.2 | VIRTUAL | (a) presentation | (b) presenter | (c) product | (d) resident | (e) interview | (f) 3-dimensional |
| 4.3 | | (a) building | (b) tourist | (c) enthusiastic | (d) car | (e) classroom | (f) environment |

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report your ideas to the class.

- (a) Which other companies do you know have a presence in Second Life?
- (b) Have you attended a virtual meeting or presentation? If not, would you like to attend?
- (c) Could Second Life offer any opportunities for your company?