

Corporate presence and virtual environments

“A lot of other real-world businesses are paying attention. That's because virtual worlds could transform the way they operate by providing a new template for getting work done, from training and collaboration to product design and marketing.... A consortium of corporate training folks from Wal-Mart Stores, American Express, Intel, and more than 200 other companies... is experimenting inside Second Life with ways for companies to foster more collaborative learning methods.”

(My Virtual Life, 2006)

Important Dates

Information released on Blackboard: Monday, January 28
Assignment Due: Tuesday, March 4

Business Report

MCS*2020: Information Management (Winter 2008)

Corporate presence and virtual environments

The internet has made it possible for people to participate in MMORPGs (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games) like *World of Warcraft*, *EverQuest*, and *Star Wars Galaxies*. In these games, players choose characters and then negotiate the virtual world to complete tasks and improve their rank. In addition to role playing games there are a rising number of virtual worlds, like *Second Life*, where users can create their own character (called an avatar), build new environments, and explore a completely fantastical world. Some analysts believe that virtual worlds are the wave of the future, pointing to the fact that *Second Life* is large enough to have its own economy and currency. Others suggest that the trend will never catch on because people will always prefer a real experience to a virtual one. Regardless, corporations are starting to notice these worlds and are debating whether or not to join in.

Scenario

The company's VP of Marketing is always looking for new methods and avenues to extend the company's brand. Currently, he is intrigued by the possibilities of these virtual worlds in reaching younger consumers. He has asked you to investigate corporate presence in virtual environments. He wants to know whether these spaces are worth the money.

Your task is to summarize and analyze the arguments in this debate and then make an appropriate recommendation for the company. Do virtual environments provide competitive advantage for corporations? Or, are virtual environments too insignificant for corporations to invest their marketing efforts?

Begin with the readings you find below:

(1) Read the article that first got businesses interested in virtual worlds

My Virtual Life [Electronic version]. (2006). *Business week*, (3982), 72.
Retrieved September 6, 2007, from ABI/INFORM Global database.

(2) Read Gronstedt's overview of Second Life

Gronstedt, A. (2007). *Second Life* [Electronic version]. *T+D*, 61(8), 44-49.
Retrieved September 29, 2007, from Business Source Complete database.

(3) Read Rose's perspective on Second Life

Rose, F. (2007). How Madison Avenue is wasting millions on a deserted Second Life. *Wired*, 15(08), September 29, 2007 from
http://www.wired.com/techbiz/media/magazine/15-08/ff_sheep/

These readings are intended to get you started, but you are expected to find additional articles to help you formulate your paper. Be sure to find a sufficient number of quality articles to cover each perspective on the issue. You should expect to find at least three (3) additional sources, but you are encouraged to research more thoroughly than that. You may use academic journals, industry publications, newspaper articles, or information available on the broader internet to compose your paper.

Assignment Requirements

Your report should be 1200-1600 words (6-8 pages, double-spaced) in length. It should be organized logically written in an appropriate business report format (see below). Reports are due in class on Tuesday, March 4 (in class). Any papers submitted after class time will be subject to late penalties.

Your paper should include:

- An executive summary
 - Short overview of the subject matter
 - Short summary of findings
 - Mention of the final recommendation
- Introduction
 - Overview of the topic
 - Set the scope of the report (what is going to be covered?)
 - Statement of objectives (what is the purpose?)
 - Terms of reference (who is the report for?)
- Findings and Research
 - Summary of main perspectives on the topic
 - Use appropriate sources
- Conclusions
 - Analysis of the findings (strengths and weaknesses)
 - Findings should be applied to the current context (our company)
- Recommendations
 - Solution for the problem (what should the company do?)
 - Acknowledge the implications of the recommendations (will it cost a lot of money?)
- References (in APA style)
 - Include all of the articles you consulted
 - In-text citations should be used when when borrowing others' ideas

Assignment Grading

This assignment will be marked out of 30 (see below for breakdown) and will be worth 15% of your final grade.

Executive summary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concise summary of the entire report	2
Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of topic (define unfamiliar terms)• Explanation of scope and objectives	3
Findings/Summary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summary of major perspectives• Multiple perspectives are represented	6
Conclusions/Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengths and weaknesses of arguments• Relates to the company/business context	8
Recommendation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicates a clear perspective on the issue	3
Reference List <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Properly formatted, correct use of APA style• Quality of additional sources	4
Writing Style <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spelling, grammar, readability• Organization of content, presentation of ideas	4
Total	30