

Ponzi scheme theme in 'Made Off' videogame

May 6 2009



Disgraced Wall Street financier Bernard Madoff arrives at a US Federal Court in March 2009 in New York. Mobile phone users worldwide will soon be able to play Ponzi scheme scammers in a new videogame based on the financial ruin wreaked by jailed US fraudster Madoff.

Is there a bit of Bernie in you? Mobile phone users worldwide will soon be able to play Ponzi scheme scammers in a new videogame based on the financial ruin wreaked by jailed US fraudster Bernard Madoff.

New York city-based Cellufun said "Made Off" will be available beginning May 11 for free download at its website.

"We thought it would be a very appropriate and interesting topic to create a mobile game around," said Cellufun chief executive Neil Edwards.

"You can learn something about how fund manager schemes are working."

Players begin by choosing whether to be fund managers or [investors](#).

In true Madoff style, the faux fund managers need to create tempting investment portfolios and then recruit people to sign on as investors. No real money changes hands, but fund managers get "funny money" called "Cellupoints" for luring new investors.

"A fund manager has to continually work to get more investors because if they don't they will go under," Edwards said.

"Another part of it is that some time in June the feds are coming in to bust up the Ponzi scheme. Fund managers walk away with Cellupoints and investors still in the game lose everything."

To come out ahead, investors must shrewdly siphon off profits, hedge bets, and time the market, according to Cellufun.

"Think you've got what it takes to build a better Ponzi scheme than Bernie?" Cellufun asks at its website.

"Always wanted to rob, cheat, and steal from innocent investors? Well now's your chance!"

Edwards said the game could just as easily be called "Wall Street."

"It's about how money markets work and what went wrong," he said.

"We think of it as a Monopoly for the Madoff generation."

For decades, Madoff operated a massive fraud, conning investors into depositing billions of dollars that were then used to pay fictitious returns.

The 71-year-old pleaded guilty to federal criminal charges including fraud, money laundering, perjury and theft, and faces sentencing that could send him to prison for the remainder of his life.

"Made Off" can be played on Internet-linked mobile telephones and on computers. Edwards contends that the social nature of mobile telephone use makes it an ideal platform for the Ponzi game.

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Citation: Ponzi scheme theme in 'Made Off' videogame (2009, May 6) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-05-ponzi-scheme-theme-videogame.html>

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