

Second Life creates virtual world for businesses

November 5 2009, by Glenn Chapman



A woman chats with an avatar via the internet. Linden Lab, the firm behind the virtual world Second Life, has announced it is adding a new dimension to the online reality to give businesses private places for virtual meetings.

Linden Lab on Wednesday announced it is adding a new dimension to Second Life online world to give businesses private places for virtual meetings.

Linden launched a beta, or test, version of [Second Life](#) Enterprise "behind-the-firewall product" with a price starting at 55,000 dollars (US).

Companies dabbling with Second Life Enterprise behind the safety of their computer fire walls include IBM, Northrop Grumman and the US

Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC), according to Linden.

"Second Life Enterprise version offers a great combination of collaboration, content creation and communications tools and resources," said IBM vice president of innovation initiatives Francoise Legoues.

"We were one of the early adopters of the Second Life platform, and having that technology behind the firewall gives us the opportunity to expand our use of the platform enterprise-wide."

More than 1,400 businesses, schools, government agencies and other organizations around the world reportedly use Second Life for meetings, training and other work gatherings that typically involve employees traveling.

In Second Life, people are represented by animated characters referred to as "avatars" and can simulate socializing by commanding in-world proxies from work or home computers.

IBM estimated it saved more than 320,000 dollars by holding a recent conference in Second Life instead of in a real-world setting, according to Linden.

Second Life Enterprise lets businesses hold virtual private gatherings on their own computer networks or on Linden computers instead of at public in-world venues.

"Virtual worlds have the potential to provide a safer, more cost-effective approach to some of the Navy's current mission areas," said Douglas Maxwell, program technology lead for NUWC Metaverse Strategic Initiative.

"Hosting the Second Life Enterprise on a secured network allows us to

conduct training, concept of operations exercises and collaborative engineering activities using sensitive information in safety."

Second Life was an online sensation after Linden launched the virtual world in 2003 as a place for people to play, socialize and do business.

Second Life's popularity has faded in recent years, leaving Linden to promote its potential as a venue for meetings, concerts and other events in a world of ever-tightening purse strings.

"We've worked very closely with our enterprise customers to develop a solution that would fit seamlessly within their existing networks while also solving real business challenges," said Linden chief executive Mark Kingdon.

"The fact that major corporations such as IBM and Northrop Grumman have embraced Second Life Enterprise Beta is tremendous validation for the product and our enterprise strategy."

The San Francisco firm said it will open a Second Life Work Marketplace for business software and virtual goods early next year.

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