

The potential of Second Life for businesses is only starting to be understood

Second Life has grown rapidly since the first edition of this guide, which has been revised to take into account the introduction of ‘voice’ to the environment. In the past year we have seen the hype that accompanied the first wave of ‘bricks and mortar’ businesses entering the virtual world and the inevitable backlash. As was the case with the early days of the worldwide web much of this has been nonsense built on a solid foundation of ignorance. The best way to gain an understanding of the potential is to sign up and have a look round.

But, although there is online help - and avatar-assistants within the virtual world itself - there isn't a guide for businesses who are taking their first steps into this strange new world. This brief document is intended to help.

We have tried not to replicate the existing material too much, but instead provide a business perspective on getting started and how to connect with other businesses.



signing up ::

It is very easy to enter Second Life, or SL as it's known 'in world'. Simply go to www.secondlife.com and you'll see a big orange button suggesting that you "Join Now".

The sign up process is very straightforward. There are really only three things to consider

- Choosing your name
- Choosing your avatar
- To pay or not to pay

Choosing your name is restricted to a set list of surnames. We've no idea why they set it up like this, but that's the way it works. If you want your real life name (or RL as it's referred to) then you can, of course, have your whole name as your first name. So our Chester Orbit could have been PeterDunkley Orbit instead, for example. It's not the norm to do this, though, and there's no particular advantage to using your real name at this stage in the virtual world's development.

You can – and many do – have more than one avatar character, but the disadvantage of this is that Sod's Law dictates that you will inevitably meet Jeff Bezos, Amazon's CEO and an investor in Second Life, whilst in your transvestite-sex-slave-angel persona. If you are going onto Second Life to explore the potential for business, then keep it professional – at least until you understand how it works and what you are doing.

You are given a choice of avatars but you can change your appearance - even your gender - at any time. Even so, don't choose the CyberGoth as you'll look like an android and it's not really very business-like. You probably won't want to look too cute or hot (Chester was Mr. Muscles for his first few days), so the Girl/Boy next-door look might be the best option.

You can sign up without either paying or registering your payment details. There is a small signing on bonus (in Linden Dollars – L\$) if you register your payment details there and then. To be honest, a year's membership is only US\$72 – and for that you receive an income that equates to about US\$60 anyway. So on balance you might as well just pay up front, as the income you get will pay for new clothes, hair, eyes etc.

first steps ::

The first time you login as your new avatar, you will find yourself on Orientation Island, where you can get used to the look and feel of SL and operating your avatar. Use the left, right, up and down buttons, and the Page Up / Page Down buttons and see what happens in walk mode (default), or hit the FLY button and give that a try.



You can try CHAT with the other people you come across, or if you have a headset you can click on the 'Talk' button, bottom right of screen to use the new 'Voice' capability - but they tend not to be too communicative here – they're new after all. Before you move away from here you'll find some 'freebie dispensers'. This is as good a time as any to pick up free clothes and stuff. It's not a great time to start taking off clothes – as this tends to involve nudity, which is frowned upon.

etiquette ::

There are a few other basic etiquette points to bear in mind, even though you're new and will benefit from a certain amount of tolerance and understanding.

SL has a culture like any other community. Every culture imposes standards of behaviour that enable us to get along with one another without violating the rights of others. Guidelines are available on SL under 'community standards'. It is a fairly permissive environment, but there's a big 6 of no-no's that are enforced, and can result in expulsion; namely:

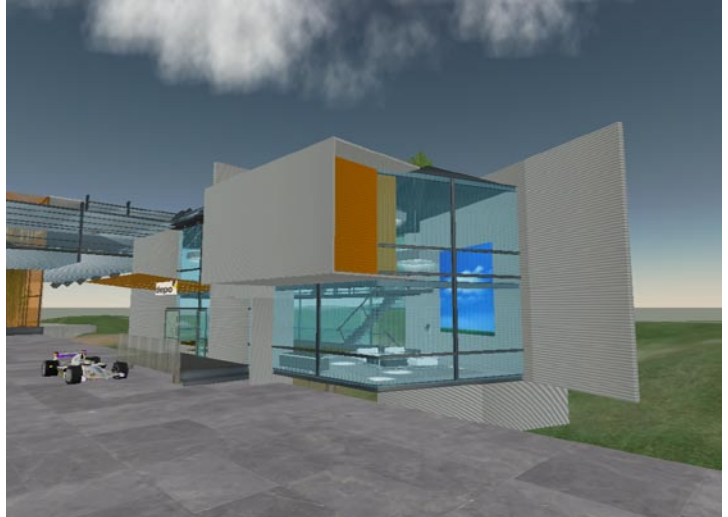
- Intolerance
- Harassment
- Assault
- Disclosure
- Indecency
- Disturbing the Peace

There are two specific tips for business newbies. The first is to avoid pushing other avatars. It's easy to do this when you first land – particularly if you start moving around

before all the scenery has come into focus. The second is that you should bear in mind that some longer-term residents are concerned about RL businesses on Second Life – so don't make a nuisance of yourself!

One thing that is rather rude - and would be in real life - is ignorance. If you teleport into an area with other people around only polite to say hello. Remember that there is a human being behind that avatar.

Also bear in mind that you can't necessarily see the full picture in Second Life - that avatar in an empty office may well be someone giving a tour of the environment to a boardroom full of people. If you want to chat to them start with "excuse me - are you busy?"



'Just be nice' is as good a general rule as any, much as in real life.

discretion and the risk of embarrassment ::

This section is aimed more at those that have been exploring some of the social aspects of Second Life before looking at the business potential. This is often the case with visitors to the depo business park, where it appears that someone who is an existing 'resident' has been asked by their boss to explore the options for their company.

Each avatar has a publicly visible profile. This is discussed in more detail later, but it is worth remembering that any group that you join is recorded on your profile. Whilst we are the souls of discretion, it is probably best not to have any information on your public profile that you wouldn't be happy to share with your boss and colleagues.

If in any doubt it is best to opt for two avatars – one for business and one to pursue any hobbies and extra-curricula activities.

basic functionality ::

Looking at some of the other buttons at the bottom of the screen:

COMMUNICATE – contains your contacts, both friends and groups, and allows you to open Instant Messaging (IM) sessions or to call using the new voice facility. IM allows you to send messages for people not online as they are forwarded to their email accounts.

CHAT – allows an open typed conversation with everyone within range

FLY - flying is quicker than walking! You can also use the page up button to fly and the page down to stop flying.

SNAPSHOT – provides a camera function.

There is a useful option under the View menu for Camera Controls. This not only enables you to set up camera shots, but also is a far more effective way of positioning your viewpoint than moving your avatar in many instances. Particularly useful when you are in a presentation, for example, and you want a close up of the screen.



SEARCH – a reasonable if unsophisticated search facility. Searching for ‘depo’ under Places will provide information on the business park and a teleport link to the reception area.

BUILD – if you’ve opted for a premium account and have bought land, this button provides the tools to build on it

MINI-MAP – displays a map of your local environment. From this you can see where people are and navigate. It’s worth keeping this open all the time.

MAP – provides a full screen map display with more detail. Take a few seconds to learn what all the symbols are – it will be time well spent.

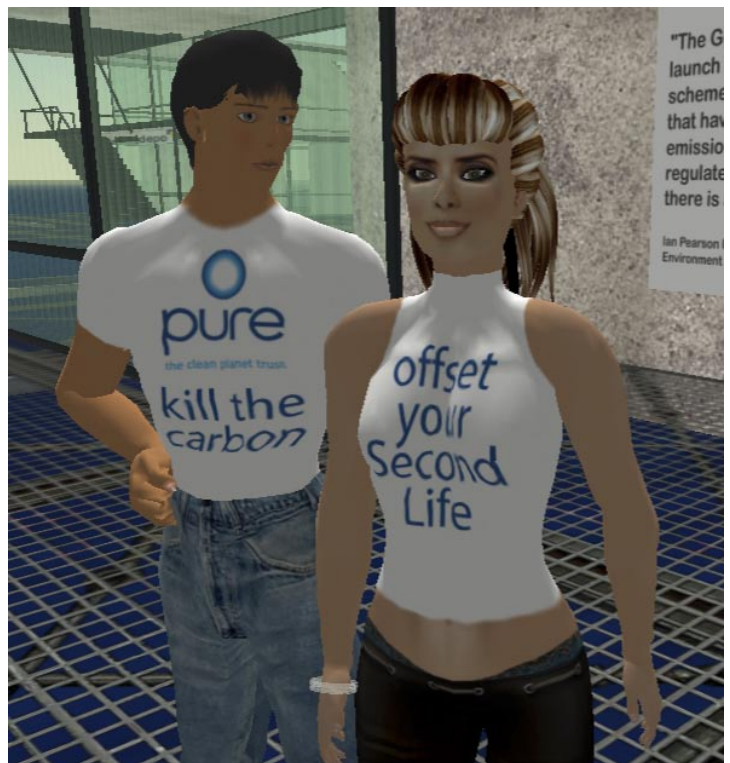
INVENTORY – provides a list of all of your second-worldly possessions. Here you will find lots of free items of clothing, etc. that you can experiment with. As you move through Second Life you will pick up all sorts of objects, landmarks and notecards.

voice ::

There are three voice options. Two are similar to using a VOIP tool such as Skype, as you can have a private or group call wherever people are in Second Life. The third option is proximity based, and works much as in real life – move further away and the sound gets quieter.

On the bottom right of the screen is a ‘Talk’ button, which you can have as ‘press to talk’ or lock it so that your voice channel is always open. Remember you’ve done that, of course, to avoid any potential for embarrassment!

One practical point to bear in mind is that you really need a headset to use voice. If you use the microphone and speakers on your computer you will produce feedback and make yourself rather unpopular with friends and passers-by alike.



changing your appearance ::

If you want to change the appearance of your avatar, it shows good manners to go somewhere quiet where you can disrobe in private. This is easy to do. Open the map and look for areas with no green dots or crosses. Fly to get there. Or, as someone we know does, just go underwater if you’re by the sea or a river. Remember – normal rules don’t apply, so you won’t drown and your new outfit will be none the worse for the soaking!

Right click on yourself and choose ‘appearance’. You can now change your body shape, hair etc. as well as selecting clothing to give your SL self more individuality. This is not a feature of SL that works too well if you don’t have a lot of processing power. Patience is a virtue...

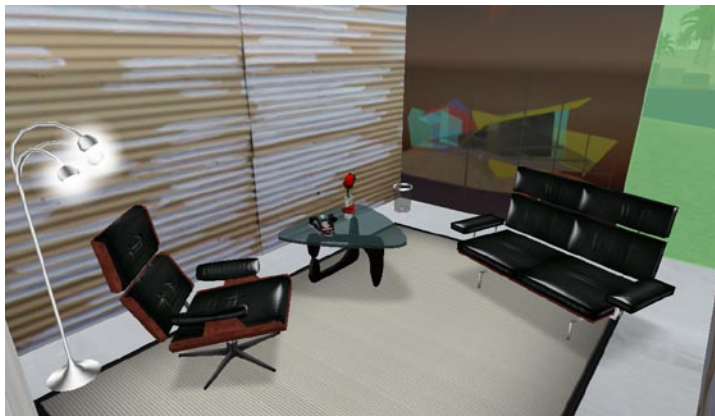
You can go and buy yourself new clothes, and even a new body or hair, later if you want to.

Once you've got your avatar looking respectable you might like to setup your profile so that others can find out more about you. Right click on your avatar and select Profile. Here you can put some details about who you are and what you're doing. When Chester joined he wrote that he was a management consultant exploring and met a surprising number of really interesting characters. You can also say who you are in RL – though if you do, you need to think before hanging around any of the vast number of dodgy places in SL, as it really doesn't create the best impression!

your profile ::

You can view any profile by right-clicking on the avatar you're interested in and selecting 'profile'. If you do this on your avatar you can add some detail about who you are and what you're up to.

You can also now add a web page, so if you open Chester Orbit's profile you'll be able to look at the depo consulting web page about Second Life. If you're interested (and why wouldn't you be?) you can then open the page into a browser.



This functionality is new – but is clearly very powerful for businesses as a promotional tool and for networking.

buying stuff ::

If you prefer business suits to T-shirts then you'll probably need to buy – although it's worth checking out the freebies first. Our intention is to have some basic chinos, shirts and ladies attire at the depo office for newbies, so that we can provide a basic wardrobe – feel free to teleport over to us during office hours (9am to 6pm UK time), or any other time by arrangement.

If you click on the search button you can type men's or women's clothes and then teleport to the shops that catch your eye.

Take your time to let the new location come into focus and click on the images for details. Generally, if something is for sale (or free) you use the 'buy' button on the right click menu. Just follow the instructions. If you don't have enough cash the system will ask you whether you wish to top up – it's very easy – assuming you have payment details online.

If not there are various in-world jobs you could try to earn a few Linden Dollars. Although it's worth doing this just to meet new people, we're assuming that you're on the board of Microsoft and don't actually need to dance for your Linden Dollars...

down to business ::

The easiest way to find what's out there is to use the search facility

There are a number of tabs under SEARCH that allow you to narrow down to classified ads, event, places, people and groups etc. Simply type in what you want under the appropriate tab and ENTER. Cursor down the list to anything that interests you and from there you can have a look at the PROFILE to find out more, select MAP to see

where it is – you might like to fly there if it's nearby - or teleport to its location for a closer look.

If you type in depo consulting in 'places' it will return our address – or you could search by typing in generic words such as 'advertising' or 'consulting'.

If you look at them on the map you will be able to see if anyone is actually there before teleporting over.

The Mini-Map provides a view but no functionality. From here you can see the properties in your immediate vicinity and fly to them. People are identified as green dots on the map, should you want to go visit.

This basic functionality will allow you to explore the business community on SL.

groups and friends ::

Some companies will invite you to join groups – PA Consulting, for example, has an active guest group that are invited to presentations and social functions. It's easy to leave a group later if it turns out to be of no use.

You can also invite (or be invited) people to be your friends. This allows you to know when each other are on line and to keep in touch.

Both of these functions are very useful in developing a virtual network.



business models ::

Some real money is being made on Second Life. The FT reported a while ago that Anshe Chung had accumulated 36 square kilometres of virtual real estate which she has developed, earning her first million in the process - and all from an initial \$10 membership sign-up.

Some of the design and build companies that are supporting the big RL companies such as Adidas and Leo Burnett are making good money – in real terms.

Many of the RL giants are just experimenting at this stage. The advertising, design and media boys and girls are testing out the potential of the new media; banks are starting to examine virtual branches.

We'd advise you to take it all in and get an understanding before buying an island and building an office. Come and have a chat with us, or we have other guides available on the website, including one on the virtual business park.

further information ::

Further information can be obtained through the contact details below. The depo office is currently always manned on weekdays from 10am to 6pm UK time, but meetings can be arranged at anytime.

The existing depo office complex is available for organisations to use free of charge, to allow for an evaluation of the facilities and the benefits of the virtual office.



contact ::

To contact us through Instant Messaging search for Chester Orbit, Jennie Werribee or Marissa Meltzer. If you'd like to visit the office search for 'depo' under Places.

There is a SLURL link to our reception area on the depo website.

depo consulting ltd

100 High Street

Potterspurty

Northants

NN12 7PQ

UK

Telephone :: +44 (0) 845 003 1351

Email :: enquiries@depoconsulting.com