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Weblo Grabs \$3.2M For Virtual World

By VentureWire Staff Reporters

Montreal – Weblo.com Inc. has raised \$3.2 million for its real-world virtual world that allows users to purchase digital versions of true entities - like the country of England, which sold this week for \$60,001.

"It's like playing Monopoly, but taking away the board and replacing it with a virtual world," Chief Executive Rocky Mirza said. "When you grab a city, you're the only one who owns that city. There is sentimental reason for people to buy these things."

VantagePoint Venture Partners led the Series A round and is betting that people across the world will be willing to spend real money to own a virtual version of things they encounter in the real world. With Weblo, people can bid to own cities, states, countries, properties and celebrities, among other things.

So far, the company has been surprised at just how willing people are to pay for virtual items. But, the Web-based platform, which has 39,000 users, has been a proven money-maker for the company and its users. Model Vida Guerra, was acquired for free and sold to another user for \$2,000; Disney World was bought for \$1 and sold for \$500; the Empire State Building was bought for \$1 and sold for \$250; the Louvre Museum was bought for \$1; and sold for \$250; and Heinz Field in Pittsburgh was bought for \$1.50 and resold for \$150.

California was bought for \$53,000 and Texas was bought for \$23,328, two of the priciest purchases in the virtual world.

Prices paid to Weblo for the items range from \$1 for a location and up to thousands of dollars for large cities. Prices are generated from a formula that considers factors like how many registered Weblo users are in a particular location and a city's real population.

Members own and develop Weblo asset sites by adding pictures and videos, attracting visitor traffic and creating value through ad revenue and asset sales. Weblo receives the proceeds from the original sale of the item and 5% of resells.

Founded in 2006, the Montreal-based company previously raised \$2 million from angel investors. Mirza said he expects the company to be profitable by the end of the year.

"We're giving people a chance to grab things they missed before," Mirza said. "Virtual assets are just as good as real assets."

Virtual worlds quickly gained international attention in the past year, thanks mostly to the success of three-dimensional computer world Second Life, which is owned by closely held San Francisco company Linden Lab. The world has its own currency, Linden dollars, which can be exchanged for U.S. dollars, and are used to purchase items within the game. Several players have been able to sell real estate properties within the game for hundreds of real dollars.

<http://www.weblo.com>