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# The Gazette

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# TECHNOCITÉ
### by Roberto Rocha

Gazette tech reporter Roberto Rocha has always been a geek at heart. He took apart and studied the insides of his first remote control at age 5, by dropping it from a 10th storey window. He started this blog to keep Montreal's tech community in the loop with the lowdown on the latest news and events shaking up the local scene. TechnoCité was inspired by an article he wrote about the lack of interaction among the city's innovators, and how this hinders new enterprise.

## Weblo defies skeptics, logic

Whoda thunkit?

Weblo.com is one of those companies that are hard to describe in a few words without a clichéd mashup of other things. In this case, it's Monopoly meets MySpace meets eBay.

The Montreal service offers virtual properties like Monopoly, only they're based on real places and people. People pay to buy these properties then add value to them with the hope of reselling at a higher price.

And dagnabbit, the darn thing works. When they launched last September, it set off a chain reaction of scoffs and snorts. But people are paying prime paper to be virtual mayors, governors and landlords.

The "properties" in question are really just profile pages that the owner can customize. Some make travel guides to their properties. Others add pictures and videos to lure visitors. Take the owner of Virginia Tech University, for instance.

For an extra creepiness factor, there's a celebrity property of killer Cho Seung Hui with his video manifesto.

The company just announced some high-profile propert sales, like Las Vegas, which snatched $2,300. The seller had bought it for $430. Ontario resold for $16,900, a $5,350 profit.

California is the most expensive property, sold for $53,000 to a lawyer in Ottawa.

What's creating so much value on web pages that are essentially worthless?

"Good question," said Colin Trethewey, Weblo's media relations guy. Maybe people are hearing of these astounding margins and getting in the game hoping they'll score big. Maybe others see promise in Weblo's tax system: if you own a territory, you can collect taxes on the buildings, streets and cities in that area.

The owner of Toronto, for instance, can charge the CN Tower a monthly fee, while the onwer of Ontario would levy Toronto.

Trethewey said some people are using properties to promote their business. The virtual mayor of Seattle, for instance, is a land developer in that city trumpeting his expertise in real estate.

Whatever the reason, Weblo boasts 23,000 users, double what is was a month ago, so it's definitely picking up momentum. You have to wonder, though, if these values will continue to increase or if they will reach a limit. The game may be fun at first when the properties are cheap, but then it can turn into a time waster for bored millionaires.

Trethewey told me they will offer England in a few weeks, the first nation to be on sale, and the owner will be named king or queen.

Bored millionaires and inflated egos.

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## Comments

**Steve_Faguy said:**

Two words: Pyramid scheme.

April 20, 2007 6:34 PM

**Sean_Morrow-Weblo.com said:**

Hi Steve et al,

Some people have asked whether or not Weblo is a pyramid scheme. In fact, a pyramid scheme requires dependant hierarchies to be sustainable and there are usually no product or services being delivered for the exchange of money. If someone doesn't pay, the scheme falls apart.

In Weblo.com there are not dependant hierarchies but, rather, defined hierarchies. Virtual Mayors and Governors earn money from the transactions that happen in their territory, just like in the real world with taxes.

Hope that helps to clarify!

Sean Morrow, Director of Marketing, Weblo.com

April 23, 2007 11:04 AM
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