

The Pixel Trade

November 20, 2006

Weblo to turn life into a game



We're accustomed to digitized versions of traditional games (poker, football, Monopoly, Risk, bridge, soccer, etc), but rarely do companies reverse this process. The closest contender is Perplex City, a card game that sends players on scavenger hunts and puzzle-solving quests in the physical world.

But social networking start-up Weblo wants to transfer internet games to the streets.

The site is a jack-of-all verticals, allowing users pose as experts, market products, squat on virtual domain names and buy and sell virtual property. The idea is to turn it into a travel guide of sorts. Eventually virtual real-estate owners will be able to pimp sites with video and Q&A comments that would attract visitors to your digital holdings. As Rocky Mizra, CEO of Weblo, explained to me last week, you might create a video tour, interview the chefs and create a question and answer thread about your digital local diner. Weblo sells ads on the French Laundry page and you collect 10 to 15 percent of the revenues from the traffic you generate (platinum members keep 50 percent). If you do a good enough job, you might the diner's real-life counterpart looking to buy the real estate.

Beyond "Monopoly on steroids," Mizra says, Weblo will also host a series of role-playing systems. On a basic level, owners of municipalities (essentially mayors) will be able to tax businesses within each district. But Weblo has grander political scheme in the works. Members will eventually be able to campaign for elected offices, and even become the virtual president of the United States.

Where things get interesting is Mizra suggestion that Weblo will eventually host world leader summits -- complete with presidential motorcades. For example the

elected leader of the United States and North Korea might both be flown to an agreed upon location for a five-day summit where the two must come up with various solutions to conflicts. As he pointed out, an 18-year-old leader would certainly propose some interesting approaches to foreign relations.

Backed by Richard Rosenblatt, former CEO of Intermix and a \$2.6 million investment from its investors, Weblo is certainly an interesting project. The first day the site went live, it beat its monthly sales projection of \$144,000. And the site hasn't officially launched.