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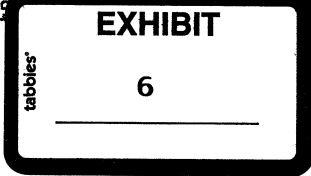
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Thursday, April 13, 2006

Interview With Philip Rosedale, Second Life



As you may have guessed, PSFK has got a little distracted by Second Life, the virtual world: the things the residents are doing inside the world, amazes us. We thought we'd ask the CEO Philip Rosedale about the world he has created.

Can you give a quick overview about how long SL has been running, what was your original plan for SL?

Second Life launched commercially in June of 2003. I wanted to create a digital online world where the environment would constantly evolve, driven by what people make and do. The goal was build a platform where anyone could build their "second life," aside from whomever they really are in the "real world."

How has that plan changed?

In the beginning of 2004, we moved from a subscription model to one that is based on land ownership. At that time, a basic account cost a one time fee of \$9.95 (it's now free) and if you were a land owner, your monthly fee was tied to the amount of land you owned. At

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Copyright

around the same time we introduced IP rights.

The decision came about for a couple of different reasons - Hernando de Soto's "The Mystery of Capital" was making the rounds of the office. What it basically says is that successful countries always start by making sure that people can freely own, resell, and mortgage the real-estate on which they live. This is a Very Big Idea because it says that "technological" innovations like stock markets and banking aren't the key to countries becoming prosperous, which is what people have traditionally thought. Rather, the key is that each individual be empowered with the ability to be entrepreneurial in their own backyard. Look at eBay or the early United States and it really makes sense.

This was one of the key things that drove our ideas around land ownership and the introduction of IP rights.

We've been hanging in the dance halls, and checking everyone's houses but what else do people do in SL?

People are doing everything in Second Life - from getting together with friends and building everyone's dream house to raising money for charities, holding conferences, teaching classes, making art, creating all manner of goods and services to sell to other residents, providing support for the needy, running newspapers and falling in love. Anything you can imagine.

There was some interesting discussion at the Lawrence Lessig lecture about SL being a new democracy where new rules could be established. A utopia, maybe? What do you think about this?

It seems very likely that the freedom people have to create local regions or islands within Second Life with different forms of governance will result in many different utopian 'experiments'. This is something that will be fascinating to watch, and may even inform decisions about the real world.

Copyright and IP is obviously a pressing issue in SL. Can you give an example of where there is a grey area?

Things are pretty clear - as a user, you own what you create in

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Second Life.

People making money in SL: where are the boom areas?

Fashion design, land ownership and rental have always been popular and successful businesses in Second Life. Residents have always been smart about figuring out what the communities needs were and then providing a solution. The Second Life economy is driven purely by supply and demand.

How can companies get involved with Second Life. What about advertising? Or brands making lands or experiences in SL?

I've always said that if a company wants to join Second Life, they should buy an island and hang out for a month and then talk with one of the in-world development companies. Basically, I feel like everyone is on a level playing field. Companies will succeed or fail in Second Life based on how well they understand and meet the needs of the community.

Thank you

Second Life

Visit PSFK in Second Life here.

Posted by Guy Brighton on April 13, 2006 at 01:30 PM
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Further Thoughts & Reader Comments

Yeah, makes sense and history tells us it's true. If everything you win, earn, create, ends up belonging to someone else there isn't a lot of reason to keep doing it.

There are more than a couple PhD dissertations waiting to be written about the things this interview touches on.

Posted by: [JT Barnhart](#) | Apr 13, 2006 2:51:35 PM

i discovered secondlife about two months ago and like you guys, am totally amazed. i can't remember if i read it here on psfk or somewhere else, but the latest thinking on this stuff is that these multiplayer games are where email was in the early 90s - the base of a new operating system that for now cannot communicate between each other but which eventually will evolve into a standard that is cross-platform. secondlife has the best chance of evolving into that standard because it is so malleable, and its growing very quickly.

i don't have the time to build and create as much as i would like, but i have to say that everytime i visit it, i have a very different experience. there is so much to see and do, it would take a lifetime already to experience the whole system.

definitely worth checking out and worth getting in early on some land. i firmly believe it won't be long before everyone is interacting virtually in formats like this as easily as they use text, IM and email today.

and if you want to join hub culture's group in SL you are welcome too... we've just started on that front as well.

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