

## THE VANCOUVER SUN

**Vancouver realtor sets up shop in Second Life  
Global Condo Center's launch attracts 50 client log-ons**

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Users of the 3-D Internet world Second Life are virtually engaging in an increasing number of real-world activities -- from holding business meetings to buying toys.

Now the Vancouver company Global Condo Center hopes some of Second Life's more than 10 million citizens will be willing to shop for the real-life real estate of its clients at the so-called "island" it has commissioned within the environment.

Global Condo Center's Second Life presence, launched by the company Tuesday, is not going to be for everyone, president Cliff Bowman admitted in an interview.

Baby boomers prefer tactile experiences, where they can "look at and touch" materials, Bowman said.

Younger potential buyers, however, in the "MySpace" generation, are "more used to adapting to this type of [virtual] shared experience, or sense of discovery."

"If you're a developer trying to reach a younger demographic, and also if you're marketing on a global basis, [Second Life] is one more avenue or platform for a developer to utilize in reaching a variety of demographics," Bowman added.

Global Condo Center developed the presence with the firms Clear Ink and Code 4 Software.

At its launch, 50 of Global Condo Center's real-world clients signed onto the company's Second Life centre, which allows people -- through their Second-Life personae known as avatars -- to look at project pictures in the virtual presentation centre. The island is divided into sections that display urban and resort-type properties.

If a visitor sees something they like, they can link out of Second Life to visit Global Condo Center's website for detailed information, or to the project developer's website.

However, what Bowman believes to be the Second Life centre's unique feature is a section where visitors, through their avatars, can be transported into virtual representations of the suites, to get a sense of the scale, the floor plans and finishes.

Commerce is a growing aspect of Second Life. Canada Post recently launched a Second Life "city" called Maple Grove with virtual stores promoting real-world retailers ranging from Toys 'R' Us to the Shopping Channel.

In the United States, realtor Coldwell Banker set up a Second Life presence to sell virtual real estate, which is quite common, as a way of making contact with real potential clients.

Global Condo Center vice-president Scott Keller believes no one has made as many links to as many different real-life real estate projects as his company, and given clients the ability to "walk" through suites.

However, the idea of rendering virtual representations of real-life real estate in Second Life has been around for some time, according to Michael Ryan, chief financial officer of a local Second Life design firm Magrathean Technologies.

Magrathean was approached earlier this year by an U.S. company that wanted to sell its project in Stamford, Conn., but that initiative didn't get off the ground.

Bowman added that he has other plans for his company's Second Life presence, such as conducting virtual focus groups, or seminars with lifestyle gurus.

Keller said critics might latch onto the appearance of Second Life and claim that it looks too much like a cartoon or video game to be taken seriously.

However, he added that Second Life's developers are working on creating a more polished appearance.

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