

# Virtually whole world to go on sale

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Published: Thursday, September 21, 2006

MONTREAL -- A group of young Montrealers wants to bring e-commerce to the masses, and they're putting the world on sale, potentially down to every city, every block, every building and all its inhabitants.

Or rather, a virtual copy of these assets, which anyone can buy, promote and sell for more than she or he bought them for.

This is Weblo.com, a web service going live on Tuesday that combines the social networking of MySpace with the do-it-yourself marketplace of EBay.

It works like this: a user buys a virtual deed from Weblo to a real-world asset, be it a building, a country, an Internet domain or the managing rights to a celebrity. That user then creates a profile page for that asset and tries to attract other users to it with interesting content.

The more visits the asset receives, the more its value increases. The user can then get a cut of the advertising money Weblo receives, or resell the asset to other people.

"People will get paid for what they already do on the Internet, like making pages, using webmail, chatting, and posting photos," said Sean Morrow, the 25-year-old director of marketing at the firm's Montreal office.

While social networking and user-generated content has been around for years -- a trend going by the buzzword Web 2.0 -- no service has paid users for their popularity. The most-viewed profiles on MySpace and the video-sharing site YouTube can amass only Internet fame.

Non-users may be left wondering why someone would pay real money to buy a fictional title to a territory.

"Think taxes," Morrow responded.

If someone owns Victoria, he gets a cut of every property sold in the city. The owner of B.C. benefits from each sale in the whole province.

Morrow said he has people in line to buy California for \$50,000. Montreal will go for \$211. The initial prices are set by Weblo, based on factors like the population of a domain.

But in the case of a celebrity or a domain name, it's a more arbitrarily set figure, based on perceived popularity or potential earning power.

Weblo already has a massive database of all countries, their states or provinces, cities and landmarks therein. Famous people and known domain names -- like google.com -- are also on sale.

If it's not in the Weblo database, users can create and buy deeds for anything else, as long as it has a real-world presence. Think of homes and family members.

"We wanted to make it a very open idea where everyone can contribute," Morrow said. The service will ask users to suggest logos and slogans to build the Weblo brand. Prize money will be given to the chosen entries.

Weblo is the brainchild of Rocky Mirza, a Montrealer who made his fortunes in Internet marketplace sites like UniqueAuction.com and Swapedo.com. He said he wanted his next project to be much bigger and accessible.

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