

## Virtualis Convention And Learning Center Opens In Second Life

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Today Corporate Planners Unlimited, Inc. announces the opening of its new Mega Convention Center, VIRTUALIS, the largest virtual tradeshow, meeting, conference and community gathering and special event and innovative conference and community gathering space in Second Life.

These new facilities give industry professionals and clients a virtual solution created, managed and operated by hospitality and meeting industry professionals. Virtualis will provide an optimum venue to host events of all types offering global reach while addressing growing needs of fiscal stewardship, reduction of carbon imprinting and a method where face-to-face meetings can be augmented.

Corporate Planners Unlimited, Inc. will soon be opening their doors to the Virtualis Convention Center in Second Life with launch scheduled for January 2008. Virtualis is the largest public convention center in Second Life and boasts state-of-the art virtual facilities with educational breakout rooms, a grand ballroom, exhibition hall and the Eisenstodt Learning and Community Matters Center.

The concept of Virtualis Convention Center was developed by Dan Parks, CPU President/Creative Director after first testing the waters with a virtual industry educational and networking 'Mansion'. Shares Parks, 'This is the logical next step in our exploration of Second Life. If we have learned anything from the evolution of the computer industry and its expanding implementation into the social networking and educational atmosphere, it is these new technologies have shown increased attendance, great interest and affirmative results. Attendees of all ages consistently respond positively to new surroundings with knowledge and presentations imparted in unique and interesting vehicles, providing a profound and lasting impact'.

Acquisition of the Second Life land provides not only CPU's clients their professional expertise, but they will also open the space to others who are looking for additional solutions in reaching their mixed media event targets. In addition, the Virtualis Convention Center will be made available to educational institutions to use for training and educating students in the meetings, events and hospitality fields at no charge.



### *Dan Parks & Joan Eisenstodt Breaking Ground*

The Virtualis Convention Center offers:

**The Convention Center:** Set with furnishing found in state-of-the-art bricks and mortar convention centers, this is a virtual hub where registrants from around the world can meet.

**Four Breakout Rooms:** Constructed in a manner where concurrent sessions can run simultaneously with live voice chat capabilities and streaming audio, programs can also integrate taped or real-time video, PowerPoint and .pdf and .jpg formatted materials as well.

**Exhibition Hall:** The expansive virtual trade show area will accommodate booths of all sizes while specializing in 20m x 20m and 40m x 40m space. There is the ability to stream media into booth designs. Booth rentals are already inventoried, custom booths can be recreated to look just like a client's real life tradeshow booth further extending brand awareness.

**Grand Ballroom:** Space has also been incorporated to provide a backdrop for dynamic general sessions or gathering virtual attendees together for special events complete with real-time live entertainment, full scale staging and lighting production and décor elements driven by client needs.

**The Eisenstodt Learning and Community Matters Center:** Separate from the Convention Center (LCM), this Center provides ample space for creating learning and community in, or outside, a meeting setting. Adult learning in a myriad of ways will be created, those using the space will be encouraged to create the best use of the Center (LCM).

**Media Relations:** Cameras to record virtual sessions as well as broadcasting interviews through Second Life Television and other external media such as YouTube or downloading to an external drive is all in place to meet client needs.

**Virtual Experiences:** Every look, scene or feel can be virtually reproduced to compliment every meeting or event.

**Advantages:** Not only are costs and carbon imprint reduced in applications, but global reach is 24/7. Attendees can participate from anywhere they have access to a computer in time zones best suited to them.

Second Life has provided a unique world of new opportunities. Education presented in stimulating 3D settings has enhanced learning and social interaction. The more than 150 colleges and universities present in Second Life helped spur CPU forward with the creation of Virtualis. On the corporate side of the equation, companies such as IBM, Cisco, Crayola, Toyota/Scion and Nike have found new opportunities in Second Life.

Joan Eisenstodt, Chief Strategist with Eisenstodt Associates, LLC, an industry expert in facilitating and creating meaningful meeting content and delivery, sees the LCM Center as a method by, and place in which, '...helping people first, to learn and create community while learning. Using tools like improvisation and Q-Storming (TM) to explore different learning models, discussions of how space can be used in many ways - in virtual time - and how to take that learning and examples into the real world', are all components of how the LCM Center is designed.

Industry technology expert Corbin Ball CSP, CMP, MS of Corbin Ball Associates states, 'There are exciting opportunities in this virtual environment. The Second Life presentation I gave six weeks ago was far more like a face-to-face presentation than any of the web conferences I have participated in. Dan and his crew gave lots of energy and creativity and I think there is a good opportunity for development here'.

Patti Shock, CPCE, Professor at University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Director of Distance Learning at the Harrah College of Hotel Administration says, 'This is so exciting. It is perfect for the tradeshow environment and show management should be looking at this as a way to extend their annual physical presence'.

Addressing the speaker component, a keynote address can be delivered by a notable presenter from the comfort of their office without ever having to board a plane. Andrea Gold, President of Gold Stars Speakers Bureau shares, 'I see speakers thriving in and loving this virtual platform in the big picture'! When queried about how this may differ from booking speakers at a live program, Gold answered, 'I don't see any real difference in working with planners in the virtual reality vs. the physical, tangible reality'.

Planning virtual events also parallels real-life work strategies. All elements of meetings and events are orchestrated from the same strategic position including special event management and general session production. Gloria Nelson, CSEP, Chief Experience Officer of Gloria Nelson Event Design, LLC states, 'The flexibility offered in Virtualis is a wonderful new platform allowing blue sky creativity without the inherent physical risks or impediments'. As professionals develop strategic partnerships with suppliers in their real life business operations, Second Life parallels the same paradigm as professionals have already created the same networking strategies in developing a database of suppliers, speakers and entertainment options. 'Inventory is in place to create dynamic corporate theater and staging for general sessions and special events all at the click of a mouse button from your personal inventory. Imagine hosting an event where you didn't have to worry about weather, union contract negotiations or strikes and countless other factors going into a GAP analysis'.

Virtualis is scheduled to open in January 2008. What makes Virtualis so unique is it's the only facility of its type in Second Life where industry professionals vs. gamers or meetings and events industry nonprofessionals are postured to take the planning and implementation lead.

In closing, Parks shares, 'When our society is full of security and cost issues in the world of travel, this is the optimum time to expand into the safe and exciting new world of Virtualis. Virtual technology is not new to our younger generation and the transition of learning modules into the Second Life setting will be natural and expected.'

For further information about Virtualis, contact Dan Parks at (800)493-2545 or email Dan Parks at [cpu@corporateplanners.com](mailto:cpu@corporateplanners.com).

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