



Intel Saves Budget and Goes Green with a Virtual World Conference:

Rivers Run Red's Immersive Workspaces™ in Second Life



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— Elaine Cook, Intel Events Manager



Executive Summary:

When Intel’s bi-annual Embedded Channel Conference (ECC) was canceled as a cost-savings measure, the conference organizers sought a less expensive means to deliver the same content and level of interaction to 150 employees and business partners. Encouraged by the work other groups at Intel were already conducting in Second Life, ECC organizers unanimously decided to execute their conference in the virtual world. The virtual ECC conference (vECC) saved Intel \$265,000 of the \$300,000 budget for the real world event that they cancelled – not including saved travel expenses. The vECC was executed using The Immersive Workspaces™ solution, a virtual world meeting and collaboration product developed by Rivers Run Red to operate exclusively in Second Life. Chosen by Intel as the most innovative, cost-effective option to execute their conference, Immersive Workspaces accommodated up to 150 people participating in the vECC with numerous keynote presentations, live product demos, and social networking.

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— Justin Bovington, CEO,
Rivers Run Red



Conference on a Budget: The Decision to Go Virtual

Elaine Cook is the Intel Events Manager responsible for orchestrating the live Embedded Channel Conference (ECC) where twice a year Intel employees and members of the Embedded Communications Alliance meet



Immersive Workspaces Provided Intel:

- Secure meeting space for employees and guests
- Secure registration system
- Seamless media streaming
- Central training services
- Reporting and real time analysis
- Real time voice and text

to network and access the latest information from Intel leadership. When cost saving measures slashed their \$300,000 budget and required the cancellation of the 2009 ECC conference planned for Monte Carlo, France, Cook and her colleagues had to get creative.

Intel's internal platform used for online meetings would have excluded non-employee participants. Other methods for online communication were considered, but Cook's group ultimately made the unanimous decision about which technology to use after walking through the Intel campus inworld. "My manager wanted something forward-thinking, innovative, and fun," said Cook. "We explored Intel's Second Life campus and we liked it."

"We wanted a face-to-face conference," Cook said. "Second Life gave us the

ability to 'meet' our customers, face-to-computer. Our virtual conference cost was \$35,000 USD, the budget for our face-to-face event was around \$300,000 USD. Unfortunately, due to cancellation terms, we didn't save the full \$300,000 USD this time round. But, the obvious cost savings are immense. And, these numbers don't even include the additional savings gained from not traveling."

Extending Conference Reach While Reducing Carbon Footprint

Despite the fact that meeting in Second Life was new to ECC participants, registration increased from 120 registered participants to 147 when the virtual conference was offered. The vECC was free and easy to access from one's own desk. Without the time commitment of travel, and productivity lost from days away from the office, 35 Intel employees and 122 distributors and members of Intel's Embedded Communications Alliance from 20 different companies attended the vECC.

Justin Bovington is the CEO of Rivers Run Red - a strategic partner who developed Immersive Workspaces exclusively for Linden Lab. Bovington explains that, "Immersive Workspaces is not a replacement for conferences but an evolutionary enhancement. Communities can build momentum prior to the event, add value to the proceedings and continue the dialogue after the actual conference." He said,



“Building a tangible ROI model is of ut-most importance. Our web based system, not only bridges the gap with seamless control and media sharing, it enables the enterprise to produce feedback and detailed reports on activity: time, duration, cost analysis and travel savings, and to build CO2 emission models. Most of these features are available in real time.”

Additionally, the environmental benefits of meeting virtually were immediately apparent. “Our virtual conference was very green,” said Cook. “With no flights, our carbon footprint was much reduced.”

The ability to reach a wider audience and host a greener conference were excellent benefits of virtual events, but Intel wondered if the vECC would



pack the same punch as the real live ECC for a fraction of the cost. Would it really engage attendees like a real world conference?

Having Fun and Creating Shared Memories

Of course, the conference had all of the traditional things that conferences do—presentations and product demonstrations. But, it’s really social interaction and anecdotal experiences help to build and strengthen working relationships that are the key to

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— Samuel Jones, Intel Marketing Intern





successful conferences. vECC organizers found that the Second Life environment offered the flexibility to create just about any activity that they could imagine to fostering social interaction.

The strong participant engagement was accomplished through walkabout training, game activities, and interactive information stations. Intel product experts were on hand to answer questions and chat with the participants. “We did gain the ‘wow’ and ‘fun’ factor for delegates,” said Intel Marketing Intern Samuel Jones, who contributed to the conference event team.

Many vECC participants recounted having fun at the event. Cook shared a conference anecdote about “a

conference calls and ‘sharing’ programs do not,” said Cook.

Challenges Revealed Best Practices for Virtual Conference Planning

As is true with any emerging technology, there are usually a few glitches to work through. Intel encountered a few complications at their first inworld conference and came away with important takeaway lessons for future Intel meetings and conferences in Second Life. vECC organizers and a post-conference participant survey expressed challenges including network connectivity and firewall issues due to the corporate environment, attendee confusion about how to navigate within Second Life, and not enough time for participants to

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salesperson who had tried to change his avatar’s shoes, and was running around barefoot in a suit. I saw him in-world during the conference and said, ‘I see you managed to change your shoes.’ To which he responded, ‘No, I just coloured my feet black.’” “These kind of fun stories give a real feeling of being together and having been at an event, which traditional

participate in pre-conference training and orientation for both Second Life and Immersive Workspaces to trouble-shoot technical details and get comfortable in the virtual space.

Working directly with the corporate IT department early in the early planning stages is essential for assessing desktop system requirements, firewall



portals, and software compatibilities. Ensuring that all participants are set up to run Second Life smoothly from their computer—and the location that they will be using during the event—is critical. The more prepared participants are for in-world events, the greater the focus will be on content instead of accidentally bumping other avatars or learning how to communicate. A tight timeline was to blame for many of the difficulties. The Intel team had just three short weeks working with Rivers Run Red to pull together the entire vECC. “We learned so much from this first virtual conference – our next one will be much better!” said Cook, adding that in the future more time will be spent in pre-production.

A Mixed-Reality for Future Intel Events

Overall, Intel doesn’t see virtual world events as a full replacement for real world activities as much as an additional tool for communication, collaboration, and community building. They believe that mixing and matching real world meetings and conferences with virtual world events can keep Intel employees, partners, and vendors connected at a fraction of the cost and give them a chance to learn and work together.

“We provided a cutting edge conference while keeping costs down,” said Samuel Jones. “The forward-thinking mentality was appreciated across the board.”

“We anticipate one conference a year will be virtual moving forward.”

— Elaine Cook, Intel Events Manger

“We anticipate one conference a year will be virtual moving forward. We will continue to evaluate Second Life and virtual trade shows and other technologies to deliver the best user experience,” said Elaine Cook.

“Despite the keynotes being very patchy/jumpy and network connectivity issues, many people commented on how they would like to see more conferences happening this way in future, that it was a brave attempt, good fun, and that we should keep trying to get this better in the future.”



About Rivers Run Red and Immersive Workspaces™

Immersive Workspaces™ is a premium collaboration solution, enabling enterprises to communicate and collaborate in a rich, 3D environment. Developed exclusively for the Second Life Grid™ platform and private networks. The Immersive Workspaces solution harnesses the potential of virtual worlds and seamlessly incorporates a 2D web ‘nerve centre’ of tools and functionality designed to create accountability, ease of use, reporting and feedback. Rivers Run Red was founded in direct response to the ever-changing ways content is consumed and distributed both by consumers and enterprises alike.

In addition, it is the goal of our company to address the significant impact of travel, from monetary costs all the way to global ecological costs. Our business creates solutions harnessing virtual world technology that most closely replicate the experience of “being there.” Using our solutions, enterprises significantly reduce their corporate carbon footprint, encouraging employees to use 3D immersive spaces for meetings and group work as an extension of their ‘real’ office space. Furthermore, in a world where work/life balance matters more than ever, our solutions allow tele-workers, particularly working parents, to reduce and/or eliminate commutes while still being counted as essential members of their corporate teams.

In October 2008, Rivers Run Red and Linden Lab signed an exclusive marketing agreement to develop the Immersive Workspaces solution for the Linden Lab products and services. Rivers Run Red have in the last 12 months, won 3 Webby Awards and been named BT Entrepreneur of the Year for their work in virtual collaboration environments.

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For More Information

visit the ImmersiveWorkspaces website:

<http://www.immersiveworkspaces.com>

visit Linden Lab's enterprise website:

<http://work.secondlife.com>

visit our land store:

<http://secondlife.com/land/>

visit our blog:

<https://blogs.secondlife.com/>

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About Second Life and Linden Lab

Developed and launched by Linden Lab in 2003, Second Life is the world's leading 3D virtual world environment. It enables its users – known as Residents – to create content, interact with others, launch businesses, collaborate and educate. With a thriving inworld economy that saw over US\$360 million in user-to-user transactions in 2008, and a broad user base that includes everyone from consumers and educators to medical researchers and large enterprises, Second Life has become one of the largest hubs of user-generated content (UGC) in the world.

Linden Lab, founded in 1999 by Chairman of the Board Philip Rosedale and headquartered in San Francisco, develops revolutionary, immersive technologies that change the way people communicate, interact, learn and create. Privately held and profitable, Linden Lab is led by CEO Mark Kingdon, and has more than 300 employees across the U.S., Europe, and Asia.

Linden Lab

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