

Missouri Hires First Employee from Second Life



Sep 25, 2008, By Steve Towns, Editor

Last year, Missouri launched one of the state government's most innovative employee-recruiting efforts by creating a recruiting site and holding job fairs within Second Life, an Internet-based virtual world. Now those efforts have paid off: In September, the state hired its first IT employee recruited directly from Second Life.

Missouri CIO Dan Ross said the new employee -- who joined the Department of Natural Resources as a developer -- first contacted the state as a computer-generated avatar during a Second Life job fair.

"He came to our job fair as a tiny cat with a red bow tie on and expressed interest. That was followed by an in-person interview," said Ross. "He is a computer engineering graduate from a Missouri college who wanted to stay in the area, so it just seemed to be perfect match for us."

Ross, who says more than half of Missouri's current IT work force is eligible for retirement over the next 10 years, has aggressively searched for ways to attract young IT workers to state government. He said Second Life alone won't solve the looming work force crunch, but it might be a useful and low-risk employee recruitment tool.

"My advice to others is to try it," said Ross. "It doesn't cost much. Last year I was reporting about \$100 spent. This year we've doubled that to \$214. So the ROI is pretty quick. And if it turns out not to have any value, you just disappear and that's the end of it."

Ross added that other Missouri state agencies are now interested in using Second Life for virtual training courses and to interact with younger citizens. "For me, as state CIO, the challenge has been to get out in front of that and create some ground rules and a process for establishing an avatar and conducting business as the state of Missouri in Second Life," he said.