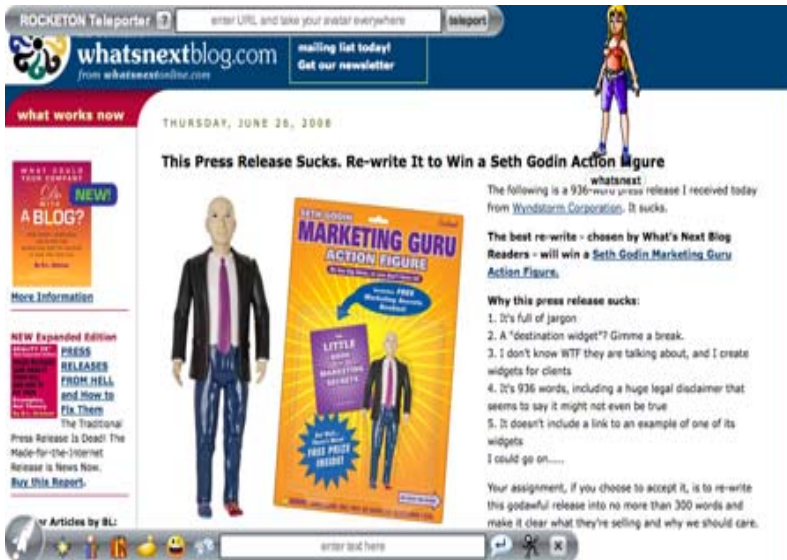


## ROCKETON: A Virtual World That Travels With You on the Web

June 26, 2008 1:54pm — by BL Ochman of whatsnextblog.com



I love ROCKETON! And I think you will too.

Instead of going to a site to play a massively multi-player game, San Francisco-based, venture-backed startup ROCKETON has actually placed a virtual world on top of the Internet. Your avatar can roam the Web with you, inviting friends to join, discuss and interact on any site.

ROCKETON was co-founded by two veterans from the gaming industry - Eric Hayashi and Steve Hoffman. They gave me a personal tour the other day, and I'm knocked out by ROCKETON.

What fascinates me is the marketing potential. It's a whole new branding system, destined to reach Google AdWord proportions. In fact, I'm already discussing ways to have two clients partner with ROCKETON.

The demographic target is 13-25 - the age group that loves to interact with friends, but my guess is that the appeal will span age groups. You can design your avatar, down to its eyebrows; have your own stuff; and your own room, which you can furnish with stuff from participating websites and from the ROCKETON store. You also can own virtual pets, go on virtual dates, place bets and go to parties.

It's fun, but more than that, it's a brilliant marketing tool. ROCKETON can build out a commercial space on any just about website; or a company can build its own virtual space. For example, MTV could have a door open into a virtual club where avatars could interact with videos or MTV reality shows.



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Your avatar could buy virtual goods that mirror the goods for sale on a given site, and you'll be able to try on clothes in a virtual dressing room. So if Ikea partnered with ROCKETON, you could buy a couch for your home, and your avatar could buy a virtual couch for his or her online room. At the GAP, you could both buy clothes, etc, etc.

"The front end is flash," says Hayashi, "so any flash developer can build spaces, environments and games without having to invest millions to create a virtual world."

### **Among ROCKETON's great features:**

**Quest** - which will give users missions to go out on the Internet to collect things. That will let companies can participate in or sponsor virtual treasure hunts.

**ROCKIN' Sites** - lets you direct friends to cool sites and bookmark them.

**Wormholes** - kind of like the ROCKETON equivalent of Google contextual advertising, where partners can create contextual virtual links to a site that has prizes, points, games or goods from that brand for avatars. In the beta, when you go through a wormhole to a Pepsi site, you see a virtual soda machine that gives you a virtual can of soda for your avatar.

### **ROCKETON's revenue models** are:

- 1) The purchase of Rocket Dollars by consumers
- 2) Branded virtual goods, like GAP outfits, Nike shoes and can of virtual Coke
- 3) Driving traffic to partner websites through games, contests and treasure hunts. "For example," says Hoffman, "if we place a valuable virtual item on a website and let our users know about it, they'll have to go to the partner site to pick it up. In other words, Google Adwords in a virtual world setting, where we drive users to sites that participate with us."

While the interface is very simple and intuitive, the features are many, and the best way to learn them is to spend some time with ROCKETON.

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Once you download the software, ROCKETON is super-imposed in the bottom corner of your screen. You can go to any site on the web and invite friends to bring their avatar there too. Then you can chat, play games, and, if the site is a partner, download virtual goods from the site for your avatar to use.

The basic service is free and you can try it before you download the software to see if you like it. I bet you will! I'm **whatsnext**, friend me and I'll friend you back so we can Rocket around the Web.