

RocketOn Conquers the 2D Web

By Jim Rothfork of metaverseblogger.com - November 14, 2008



RocketOn is a virtual environment application that was recently opened for beta testing (about a month ago) and can be described as “co-browsing”. That’s to say that users, through the application, can browse [the Internet](#) like normal and bump into one another, strike up conversations, play games, share cool websites, and a host of other things. The application plugs

directly into your Internet browser, Firefox or [Internet Explorer](#), on Windows or Mac OSX. Once the application is installed, the gates are open and you’re free to browse the Internet with anyone you choose. Essentially, RocketOn allows you to browse pages as you normally would, but the web-page you’re browsing becomes in essence a backdrop for your own avatar, and any avatar you may meet along the way. As you change web-pages, your avatar follows along, giving you the [opportunity](#) to chat with any people you meet along the way. The program is currently free to use, although if you are as obsessive about your avatars’ accessories as I am, you may find yourself taking advantage of their system that allows you to purchase money in their virtual currency.

I had the opportunity to explore some of the potential behind RocketOn earlier this afternoon, and had an incredible time. In the words of a friend of mine, “It’s addictive!” There is something so organic about being able to browse the web (while browsing a news site, for instance), stumble onto a random person on the same site you’re on, and strike up a conversation about the national news. For a little fun I began seeing where all I could find people, and to my excitement there were people scattered all over the Internet - Google and YouTube being the primary sites I experienced with activity. I also



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had the opportunity to catch one of the Co-Creators, Eric Hayashi, while hanging out on the Google main page..

In addition to [chatting with friends](#) and random people you meet while surfing the web, you can also invite those people to other pages to continue your exploration and conversation. This is done by allowing users to drop “doors” to their desired websites. “As a safety measure, we always display the [site] URL so you can make a decision as to whether or not you want to go through the door” said Eric. RocketOn also gives you the ability to minimize the plugin, if the web-page your own begins to get a bit too crowded with other avatars. Additionally, RocketOn has a system of managing crowded spaces, which in some ways is similar to game server instancing. If for instance too many avatars begin to visit Google’s main page, additional “rooms” will spawn off for the Google page, placing the avatars in the various Google “rooms” to keep occupancy at manageable (and readable) levels.



Perhaps the best description about the program comes from RocketOn’s website: “RocketOn is a venture-funded startup that is pioneering parallel virtual worlds. We’re creating a new type of massively multi-player game combined with a virtual world that is spread across the entire web.

Instead of going to a single website, the game is wherever you go on the Internet. You can now play with friends, socialize and interact with virtual spaces and objects on every web-page you visit.” Users are also given the opportunity to interact with the virtual world in different ways, such as customizing the appearance of your avatar, owning virtual pets, leaving notes for friends on different websites, and purchasing unique items for your character (amongst other things).

Not only does RocketOn provide an exciting experience for the every day user, they offer unique opportunities for any company that might sponsor [the program](#). During our conversation, Eric mentioned the ability of site owners to “brand” their site with unique content and games only found on their website, using

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RocketOn's plugin. "We are all out of the games industry, so we immediately started to think about this and we knew that there were some very interesting things we could do." For instance, a clothing store could sponsor RocketOn, and create a virtual clothing store on their own homepage allowing users to buy virtual clothing, and wear it all over the Internet, thus creating a mobilized branding campaign.

While other 3D Chat and virtual world applications seem to be struggling with choices of how to connect the 2D and 3D web, RocketOn has hit the nail on the head. Not only have they unleashed an exciting product, they've seamlessly created a virtual environment that takes place directly on top of the 2D web as we know it. From what Eric said about their future development, potential for moving into a more 3D feel for the parallel virtual world is a possibility, although for initial release they decided to keep things more simplified with a 2D approach.

For a brief tour of RocketOn and some of the stuff you can find within it, take a look at this promo video:



And here is another video which shows a few avatars interacting with one another on a news site:

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As can be expected with any new program, especially one that is currently in Beta testing, I did experience a few issues while browsing. For instance, I wasn't able to highlight text on my web browser, although once I minimized the plugin, I was able to without any trouble. There also seems to be some issues to work out with tabbed browsing, and how the plugin decides which page you're actually on. But for the most part, for being a month old, RocketOn provides an incredible glimpse into a program that has a great deal of potential.

For more information about RocketOn, or to download the plugin and start exploring the environment, visit their website at <http://www.rocketon.com>