Business simulator in the Second Life virtual world

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Extended Abstract

Understanding how a real business operates is fundamental for the effectiveness of the training process in information systems and technologies. This is particularly noticeable in courses requiring high-level abstraction skills (for instance, courses involving systems modeling).

In order for students to achieve an encompassing understanding of how a company operates, they need both a solid theoretical background and to contact practical realities.

However, frequently students do not have access to any practical realities, and are faced with the need to develop modeling assignments for entities about which they don’t have a real notion of the issues at stake.

Since it’s not always easy (or at all possible) to provide students with the opportunity to have close contact with businesses during their education, the three-dimensional Second Life® (SL) virtual world sprung to mind as a possible solution for this problem, since it allows the simulation of several aspects of the real, social life of human beings.

With the goal of supporting students enrolled in information systems courses, so that they can achieve a broad understanding of how a business and its operations develop, a project is ongoing within the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, whose aim is to create a business simulator. The figures present several screenshots of the current prototype.

This simulator, being developed in the multi-user virtual world of SL, aims to present, step by step, the global operation of a business, in order to allow students a direct contact with the operation of a business, even if simulated. It is thus expected that this system can be used in the teaching of information systems courses, and in this way contributing to improve the results of the learning process. In the future, this simulator may also be used to create application scenarios for hands-on assignments.