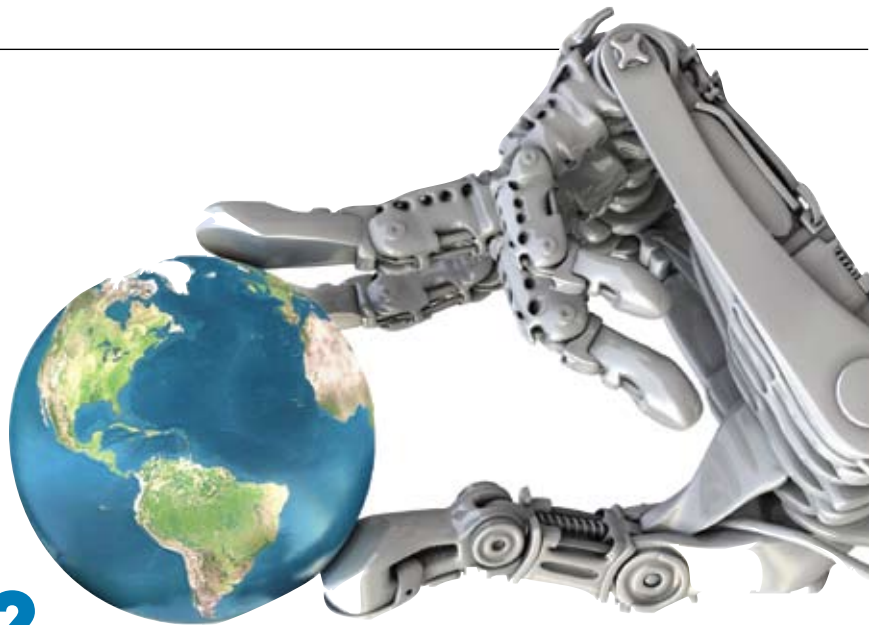# What Does It Cost to Use a Virtual World Learning Environment?

A virtual world (VW) is a computer-based simulated environment in which multiple users can interact via avatars—three-dimensional graphical representations. VWs provide an environment that can be manipulated by users, and allow a sense of co-presence among participants. Although they originated in the gaming world, VWs are fast becoming popular learning tools in the workplace. They can be used for training, e-learning, collaboration, and meetings and are especially effective for employees co-located around the globe.

Virtual World Varieties>>

Downloadable Application
This type of VW is in the form of application software that can be downloaded online. Users can custom build the VW to look like their office, or they can pick from a predesigned world, such as a tropical island or a cloud in the sky.

Public Space
Second Life is an example of a public VW. This form is extremely accessible, and users have the option of building their own custom space within the public program.

Browser-Based
This new breed of VW is accessed simply by visiting a website. Upon logging onto their company's website, users can enter the VW which can also be accessed through a link on a company's website or intranet.

Costs of Virtual Worlds>>

So how much should you budget to begin your VW experience? Users pay initial expenses (described below), and most VW programs charge an additional licensing or renting fee for ongoing technology services if the number of participants exceed a pre-established amount.

A fully customized, fully private VW with capacity for thousands of users:
up to $1 million

Rent space from a VW program's campus within a public space:
$200 to $300/day
$10 to $20/participant for event management
$1,000 to $2,000/simulation to customize space

Additional licensing/renting fee for more than 200 users/day:
$100/month

Leased space (in virtual m²) from a VW program's campus within a public space:

256 × 256:	$5,000 annually
128 × 64:	$800 annually
32 × 32:	$100 annually

Private space on a public server (e.g., Second Life) or a private, customized island, 50 users at a time:
$10,000 to $20,000

Browser-based environment housing fewer than 50 users, fully customized:
$3,000

Browser-based generic environment (not customized) housing fewer than 50 users:
$2,000

Public space on a public server:
less than $2,000 (not the best option for workplace privacy)

Information provided in large part by www.goweb3d.com