



Citta di Partenope - Virtual Social Networking Meets Reality, Brilliantly

Feb 28th, 2010 by Sponge.

I just HAD to write about this.

Brilliant, BRILLIANT use of a virtual online city that truly intersects with the 'real' world in useful and productive ways. It's social networking. It's civic participation in a 'real' way. It's marketing for the 'real' businesses in the city. In short, it changes 'virtual reality' into 'reality virtual'.

Normally I'd have just done a quick Facebook link or tweet on this, but that was insufficient... and it took me HOURS of hunting to find enough information, explanation and links to pass on to you. Almost everything I found is in Italian, with the exception of the BBC radio broadcast – see the link below. (The bit about Partenope is about 20 minutes in, but the entire podcast is worth listening to anyway.)

For those of you in a hurry, links to more info: Citta di Partenope (at <http://comuneditipartenope.it>) is a virtual city of, by, and for the real people of Naples (Napoli) Italy. It was created by Claudio Agrelli of <http://www.agrelliebasta.it>. They are on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Napoli-Italy/Citta-di-Partenope/29939687062>. Look up the channel for "agrelliebasta" on YouTube. Even if you don't understand Italian, just looking at and listening to Claudio Agrelli is worth it 😊 I first heard about it on BBC (radio) and you can find a podcast at http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/science/2009/03/000000_digital_planet.shtml, look for the February 23 2010 program.

Here's how it works, why it is so different from other virtual worlds and why I think it's so brilliant.

Like any other virtual world, you can join and participate in many activities. But there's more. Lots more.

Real merchants of Naples can join too – and interact with their real live customers when they walk through their brick and mortar doorway – with discounts, personal greetings, specials, etc. In addition, the real live citizen knows that when they visit a real live merchant who is also a member of Partenope, they will be treated with respect and a code of ethics the merchant has signed on to.

Partenope also provides 'real' news, as well as many ways for citizens to discuss civic issues in the Town Square and Town Hall. Citizens can 'flag' problems they see in their 'real' city of Naples. Discussions, issues, problems, and ideas are passed on to the 'real' government and managers of Naples.

And of course, the citizens, businesses and politicians of Naples can communicate with each other in true Social Networking style.

Citta di Partenope goes a couple of steps further.

It is an E-DEMOCRACY.

The philosophy of the entire project is to create a BETTER Naples through direct participation by its citizens. With this goal in mind, when you join, you must agree to abide by a code of ethical behavior. Nothing big brother about it, just simple things like when you're in the virtual world you don't double park and you actually put money in the parking meter. You use crosswalks instead of jaywalking. You don't litter, and take care of your trash and recycling properly. You don't swear & shout at people. In short, this is an effort to build the 'real' city that everybody of Naples would LIKE to live in.

It is E-BUSINESS.

This code of ethics extends into the real business world as well. As mentioned above, participating merchants have also agreed to a code of ethics. They don't put their thumb on the scale, overcharge, or underserve. They treat their customers with fairness, friendliness and respect. So, visiting customers know they are patronizing "good" merchants. And, the business owners have an opportunity to offer specials to their fellow Partenope citizens.

The way this is accomplished is by using something similar to "discount cards" that most of us in the States are familiar with. You know, you pay \$100 for a card to get discounts and specials at various local restaurants and other types of businesses. When you join Partenope you have the option of applying for a special card that, when presented to a merchant, identifies you as a Partenope citizen. Since my Italian is elemental at best, I am not sure if there is a fee (I don't think so?) and I don't think it includes any private personal information. Even if they did do it that way in Partenope/Naples, I am sure the same concept could be adapted to not include any info the 'citizen' doesn't want it to.

THIS WOULD BE PERFECT FOR ASHEVILLE.

The Partenope world might not work in every city or town, but Asheville NC has exactly the right mix of atmosphere, citizens, businesses, technology, and hope for a better world – both local and global – that could really make this idea work here.

If you agree, please spread the word. Help me out here. Are you fired up by this idea? Do you know anybody else who might be? Anybody who could help make it happen?

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2 Comments on “Citta di Partenope - Virtual Social Networking Meets Reality, Brilliantly”



Wiertz Sebastien

on Mar 1st, 2010 at 2:05 pm

#1

I also wanted to write quickly a post on this brilliant project but I looked first if someone already made it and found your nice article.

Partenope or when the legend of a siren can give a name to project who Can help people found a new Naples.



Sponge

on Mar 2nd, 2010 at 10:19 am

#2

Dear Mr. Sebastien,
Thank you for your comment. Yes, I am now learning about the legendary siren. Ancient history, and mythology, are two of my favorite subjects!

Why not write about Città di Partenope anyway? Especially if you can do it in another language besides Italian and English 😊

Dank u, Merci, Danke,
Fiona



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