



10 Sites Worth Watching

SAMPLE

Web destinations with a track record and a bright future. Plus, five to keep an eye on
Jonathan Blum reports

With Google now part of the S&P 500, online ad dollars growing each quarter, and TV properties like “Lost” and “Desperate Housewives” leading old media online, it’s easy to forget that the Web still has plenty of growth ahead.

Everything from content distribution to gaming and search continues to evolve.

Online content distribution companies are only in the gear-up phase. Weblogs and personal video are being promoted to consumers online and syndicated to traditional outlets looking to resell that content.

The Web is also increasing the reach of existing media. Most cable, broadcast, and local media is available anywhere online with the right search tools. The Web also is becoming the virtual FedEx for established media. Everything from fart jokes for the morning drive time to storm footage for the broadcast evening news is delivered online. Video games are only just beginning to fully embrace broadband capabilities. Immersive experiences, virtual battle zones, and casual gaming sites are more addictive than ever.

Not even banks have virtual financial islands.

The Web’s current evolution is well-backed. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers’ MoneyTree venture capital survey, nearly \$1.1 billion was spent on software in the fourth quarter of 2005 alone, with most of that capital going to Silicon Valley-backed ventures working on new Internet applications.

Interestingly, many of the Web’s best up-and-coming destinations aren’t new. They are survivors of the online jungle. For now it seems, the Web offers the best of both worlds: enough of a past to assure security and enough of a future to find growth.

Here are 10 cool sites worth tracking.

