

Successful SMS company gets new partner

Following the success of FSMS, (a free SMS service that launched in June 2010) technology investment company World of Avatar (WoA) headed up by Alan Knott-Craig Jr, has purchased 50% of the company. Buying into the company is a perfect match for WoA, which develops applications to help Africans make money via their mobile phones and the Internet.

FSMS is led by 21-year-old chemical engineering student Daniel Schwartzkopff and his business partner, software engineer and architect Jörg Wunderlich. The project was initially funded by partner Johnny Graaff. Schwartzkopff and Graaff are part of the Silicon Cape initiative, a non-profit, community-owned and driven movement supported by tech entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, marketers and other IT professionals. It serves to attract and bring together foreign and local investors, to promote the growth of world-class IP start-up companies in South Africa.

The free SMS service has over 35 000 users who send and receive text messages at no cost from their PCs and cellphones. Over 1 million SMSs have been sent since inception with an average of 25 000 SMS daily. The service is in the process of rolling out mobile applications, starting with the iPhone, Android and BlackBerry platforms.

The service is sponsored by advertising, both on the website and short demographically targeted ads on the bottom of the SMS. "It's our way of redistributing the advertising wealth to provide a free service to the public," says Schwartzkopff.

The company's vision is to expand beyond South Africa's borders and to provide its free service to the rest of the African continent, which is often overlooked.

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