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WeeWorld expands as the WeeMan heads for Boston

Sunday Herald, The, Aug 28, 2005 by [Julia Fields](#)

WEEWORLD, the company that creates digitised animated characters for social networking, has opened an office in Boston, Massachusetts, after recruiting a high-flying executive to lead its North American operations.

Anthony Cirurgiao is expected to orchestrate a major push by the Scottish company to sell its "WeeMee" concept to US mobile operators and real-time messaging companies.

An MIT Sloan School of Management graduate, Cirurgiao has founded two companies and worked for a number of venture capitalists focusing on wireless technologies.

Glasgow-based WeeWorld, which was previously known as Saw-You, offers a service that allows consumers to create a customised visual image or alter ego of themselves - their WeeMee - which can be used to represent them online or on their mobile phone.

The WeeMee reflects everything from the owner's physical appearance including features, hairstyles, clothes and accessories, through to their interests, enthusiasms and passions and even their favourite places.

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Founded in 2000 by Irishborn entrepreneur Mike Kinsella, the company racked up a string of early successes including deals with Friends Reunited, Vodafone, and Microsoft.

More than five million WeeMees have been created worldwide.

Most recently, WeeWorld concluded a deal with Microsoft to have its WeeMees embedded into MSN Messenger 7.5 in the UK, Spain, Holland and Belgium. The service allows chat users to create emotionally intelligent WeeMees that will cry when they are sad or vent their frustration when angry.

WeeWorld chief executive, Celia Francis, said this would add significantly to the bottom line but declined to give current turnover figures. She is now keen to replicate this success in the US. The company raised \$4.5 million (GBP2.34m) from US investor Benchmark Capital in March to fuel its expansion in North America and Asia.

And the hiring of Cirurgiao as general manager for North America marks a significant step forward.

Francis, previously vice-president of business marketing for T-Mobile's international division, said that Cirurgiao would ensure the concept was tailored for the American market and use his strong relationships within the wireless industry to build the business.

She hinted that their first major deal across the Atlantic was imminent.

She said: "We will definitely be working with one of the instant messaging providers in the US. It could be Microsoft but there are a number of interested companies."

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