

## **Dot-Com Monopoly, the 2000 Edition**

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I have a confession to make. While this will come as no surprise to my coworkers who know me as an obsessive personality, I must admit to my readers and publishers that I have become an addict. To be more accurate, I have rediscovered a compulsion that I thought had left me when I was in my early 20's, Monopoly.

I am sick for it. I love the game, much to the dismay of my predominantly socialist friends (who tend to forgive me for being an unabashed capitalist). Like the game of real life, success in Monopoly depends on an equal measure of luck, wits and skill. Some players perform better than others, as my mid-to-low ranking at Games.com under the name jimboot will attest. That I would even visit a site like Games.com, knowing full well the security and adware risks involved shows the powerful hold this game has over me.

Created back in the Depression Days and modeled on the streets of Atlantic City, New Jersey, the original version is familiar to most people. Due to its universal popularity, the game has been reworked to feature property names that appeal to hobbyists, sports and movie fans, residents of different world cities, and the world of business. Addict that I am; I was thrilled to find a request for information on the Dot-Com version of Monopoly in one of the forums I frequent.

A dot-com version of Monopoly would make an amazing gift for one of my nephews, both of whom have birthdays coming in the next month. A copy at home would add kitsch value to my own dot-com themed lifestyle, providing an inanimate counter-point to my overly animated cat, Hypertext. Aside from practical reasons for finding this game, I was curious which companies were assigned to which properties.

So I went searching for the Dot-Com version of Monopoly. Believe it or not, aside from Froogle and eBay, it's surprisingly difficult to find a place where one can buy a Dot-Com version of Monopoly. I visited most of the Top10 references found at Google, Yahoo, Ask, and MSN. I even went to the Hasbro website where I found out they no longer produce the Dot-Com version of the game. As it turns out, shortly after the game was printed and sent to market in late 1999 and early 2000, the bottom fell out of the Dot-Com market and several of the firms that were named on the properties were driven out of business.

Even so, a look at the game board is an interesting look at the early history of the dot-com world. A quarter of the named properties no longer exist and many of those who remain wouldn't make the board if it was published today.

The railroads are renamed after the major telecommunication companies Nokia, MCI Worldcom, Sprint, and AT&T. Linux represents the Electric Company and Sun Microsystems is the new operator of the Water Works. That still works I guess though Microsoft is nowhere to be found. Back then; Microsoft wasn't spending as much time worrying about the Internet.

Instead of landing on Community Chest, one lands on Download and the phrase "E-Mail Just In" replaces the Chance space. Besides property names, there is one important alteration to the rules. Things cost more. Lots more. The basic values are the same but they represent hundreds of millions of dollars. In

other words the cheapest purple square costs \$60million and the most expensive, Boardwalk costs a cool \$400million.

Even back in those halcyon days before the mega-crash of 2000, it was obvious search was going to be the most important facet of the web. Each of the property groups on the expensive fourth row (Pacific Ave to Boardwalk) is named for a search engine. Boardwalk and Park Place, the two most coveted spaces on the board are represented by Yahoo and Excite @ home. Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Pacific are renamed Lycos, Alta Vista and Ask Jeeves. Of the five, only two are still operating as independent search engines. Alta Vista was absorbed by Yahoo and Lycos is fed organic results by Ask Jeeves.

Of all the search engines mentioned on fourth row, Excite @ home was the most ambitious in their plans and in the size of their operation. If you are one of the tens of millions of North Americans accessing the Internet through a local cable company, chances are you are using the backbone built by the @home conglomerate. The @home business model was built on the buzz word "convergence", the concept of merging digital television with cable, and was written with an eye on the long-haul. They correctly predicted the period we are entering today but, unfortunately, figured it would happen a lot earlier. Diving stock values and massive legal battles with the Telcos rapidly spliced the @home cable initiative though most of their local cable partners were able to quickly bridge the gap and kept the system running for their subscribers. The list is also interesting for the absence of Google which five years ago didn't even rate the renaming of Mediterranean Ave. Six months after the game went into production, Google became the subject of a massive spontaneous word-of-mouth campaign that propelled it to the prominence it enjoys today.

The stock market, job boards and major media took the third row, the medium to highly expensive properties that are normally bordered by Marvin Gardens to the high end and Kentucky Ave. to the low. The yellow spaces, Marvin Gardens, Ventnor Ave. and Atlantic Ave. were renamed Marketwatch.com, Monster.com and Etrade.com. The red properties, (which are statistically the most likely to be landed on), were renamed, CNet, About and Weather.com.

Each of the companies with named properties on the third row is still operating in one way or another, mostly profitably. CNet has become one of the most credible voices in the tech-media and the New York Times recently purchased About.com. As for Weather.com, its performance has been mostly up and down with a few rainy days here and there but above all, average.

The lower-cost but still profitable second row was renamed for the sales and entertainment businesses with New York being renamed eBay, Tennessee being renamed Expedia, and St. James being renamed Priceline. Down in the purple section, Virginia was renamed Eonline, States Ave became Games.com (home of a rocking Monopoly server), and St. Charles became Shockwave. Most of these firms are still in business with eBay being the most successful auction house in human history.

Moving into the low rent district, the humble first row, we see a few remarkable failures such as iVillage and oxygen.com along with Geocities in the light-blue squares. Fox Sports and Sportsline make up the cheapest properties, Baltic and Mediterranean.

The 2000 version of Dot-Com Monopoly looks like a lot of archaic fun. While researching this article however, I am not so sure it would make a very good present for my nephews. There are a bazillion different types of the Monopoly game, any one of which would be more interesting to them. I however want to find a copy mostly because in its not-so-humble way, the Dot-Com edition of Monopoly is more than a collector's piece; it is sort of a historic document.