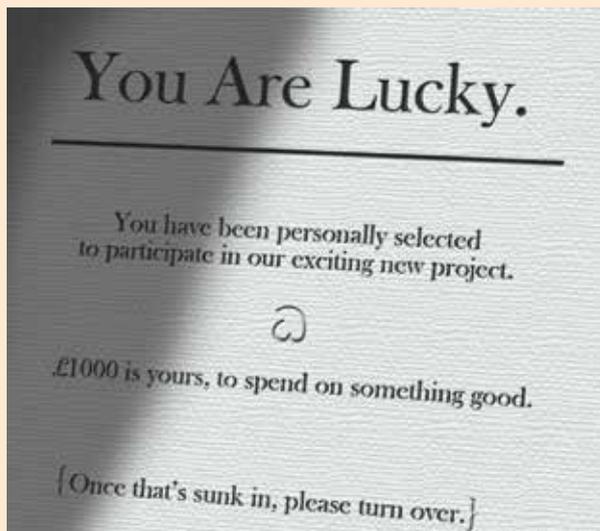


When luck comes to town

What good deed would you do with a gift of £1,000? Sonia Zhuravlyova meets the mystery man making strangers' dreams come true.



We all know the old saying 'money can't buy happiness', but one man disagrees. He thinks he has come up with a way to make his money give him pleasure – by giving it to strangers. '(1) _____', says Mr Lucky, the mystery **millionaire** behind Wearelucky, a project that has seen nearly 100 people receive £1,000 each in cash. But there is a catch. You must promise to do something 'good' with it.

Mr Lucky wishes to remain anonymous but I can reveal that he is a Londoner, and is in his forties. The name Wearelucky came to him when he was thinking about his own good fortune – he took a job abroad with an **insurance** company and **earned** so much that he **could afford to** retire in 2011 aged 37. (2) _____, whether to give it to **a charity** in a developing country, or to an individual in the UK. So he decided to get other people to decide for him. Wearelucky was born.



Lucy
**Bookshop
manager**
London, UK



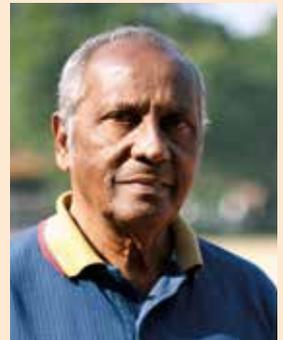
So far, the lucky people have included web designers, nurses, taxi drivers, bar owners, and photographers – anyone qualifies. (3) _____, who have responded positively to his idea for the project. If he likes you and your idea for the money, then you get an invitation. He also sometimes gives an invitation to someone he trusts, and asks them to choose someone to give it to. Since 2011, 92 people have qualified. ‘I am constantly looking out for “lucky” people,’ he explains. The invitation comes in a square black envelope and asks the person to get in touch within 48 hours, explaining in detail the good deed they will do with the money. (4) _____, and Mr Lucky, who is an amateur photographer, takes their photo.

The project’s definition of the ‘good’ deed is quite open. During a recent walk in London, Mr Lucky met Lucy, who runs a small bookshop on Charing Cross Road. (5) _____. She decided to pass on the money by giving **a bonus** to a colleague, which the bookshop couldn’t previously afford to do, and by **investing** the rest in microfinancing. Jane, a bar owner from St-Fort-sur-Gironde in France, is spending the money on promoting cultural events at her bar for the benefit of her community, and buying late Christmas presents, which she couldn’t afford at the time, for her four granddaughters. (6) _____. Rufus, an 81-year-old football coach in Kerala, India, spent the £1,000 on training – and often feeding – local children. Mr Lucky says, ‘I’m enjoying giving the money to someone and they’re enjoying the process of giving the money to someone else, so there is this chain reaction of positive feeling.’

Recently Mr Lucky gave an invitation to Paul ‘Chilli’ Churchill, a London taxi driver, and asked him to give it to someone he likes. Just think, the next time you get into a cab, it could be your lucky day!



Jane
Bar owner
St-Fort-sur-Gironde,
France



Rufus
Football coach
Kerala, India



Paul
Taxi driver
London, UK



Glossary

microfinancing

/maɪkrəʊ'fɑːnænsɪŋ/

a system of providing services such as lending money to people who are too poor to use banks

Adapted from The Times

Welcome to the new gold mines

Being paid to play games all day long sounds like a dream job – but for thousands of ‘gold farmers’, the virtual reality is hard work.



Li Hua makes a living playing computer games. Working from a cramped office, he kills dragons and robs them of virtual gold in ten-hour shifts. Next to him, rows of other young workers do the same. ‘It is just like working in a factory, the only difference is that this is the virtual world,’ says Li. ‘The working conditions are hard. We don’t get weekends off and I only have one day free a month. But compared to other jobs it is good. I have no other skills and I enjoy playing sometimes.’

Li is just one of more than 100 workers employed by WoW7gold, an internet-based company that makes more than £1m a year selling in-game advantages to World of Warcraft players. Apart from gold, customers may ask for their avatar’s skill level to be increased, or for a virtual magic sword.



For thousands of workers such as Li, 'gold farming' is a way of life. They can expect to earn between £80–£120 a month which, given the long hours and night shifts, can amount to as little as 30p an hour. After completing his shift, Li is given a basic meal of rice, meat and vegetables, and falls into a bed in a room that he shares with eight other gold farmers. His wages may be low, but food and accommodation are included.

The gold farming industry may be about playing games, but these companies take their work seriously. At WoW7gold, there are different departments, including production, sales, advertising, and research. While young, largely unskilled workers such as Li spend their days in the virtual field, highly skilled graduates, mainly female, receive better salaries working as customer service operators.

Eva Yuan is one such operator. A 26-year-old graduate who speaks three languages, she has been working for WoW7gold for more than a year. 'Most of our customers are from America, but they are people of all ages and careers,' she says. 'The biggest transaction I have seen was one person who bought 100,000 gold pieces, which costs £2,000 to £3,000.' Yuan thinks her job is worthwhile. 'Everything that appeals to some people in the world needs some people to produce it. We are allowing people to buy what they want, and we care about that.'

Thousands of miles away, I ask Jamie, a 24-year-old gamer from the UK, what makes him spend his money on these sites. 'The reason people buy gold is the same reason they pay people to wash their car – they would rather spend money on it than do it themselves,' he says. 'You could spend time getting gold, say 20 real-life hours. Or you could go to work for two hours and pay someone else for the gold. If I'm playing, I want to play, not do boring tasks.'



Most multiplayer game operators do not allow players to buy gold from gold farmers. WoW7gold is no longer active, though similar services can be found online.

Adapted from The Guardian