

MOVE TO NUZIZO

IT'S COMMUNITY BUILDING AT ITS BEST

Browse. Click. Connect.



photo by Soha Photography

Saïd Amin

Darren Romeo

With the success of social networking websites like MySpace, many similar sites are popping up like weeds online, each trying to capture a portion of the growing market. But while most new sites focus on a specific niche, one site, Nuzizo.com, is taking a totally different approach. And it's working...



Nuzizo isn't a site so much as it is a city. And that's what separates it from the pack. Sites like MySpace, Friendster and Orkut are flat, profile driven masses of disconnected material, like separate folders stuffed into a random file cabinet. Nuzizo, on the other hand, employs the metaphor of community in a way that organizes and connects the content, giving it meaning. What's more, Nuzizo has broad social implications in the real world.

Nuzizo is set up as an online city where "users" are really "citizens." They move into a neighborhood of choice (there are general spots like *Nuzizo Beach* and *Downtown*, as well as ethnic places like the Iranian neighborhood *Rumi* and the Greek neighborhood *Olympus*), get to know their neighbors, and participate in civic life as they would anywhere else. They benefit from a level of interactivity that other sites lack. Citizens don't simply blog, post photos and share media clips, they really get involved, as they would through participating in their own, real city.

For example, activity on the site increases both a citizen and his or her neighborhood's reputation or "Rep" (measured by a point system). Increased Rep points allow citizens to unlock advanced features of the site, in essence building their neighborhood. This makes the site fun while allowing citizens to contribute to their community at large.

Citizens also send and collect DAPs, which are animated gifts that express an emotion or just break the ice. The whole

point is to facilitate communication. It's social networking pushed up a notch.

The city metaphor isn't a cute remedy to the lack of cohesion found on other sites, it is the foundation on which every part of Nuzizo is built, and permeates all facets and features.

The big question, of course, is "can Nuzizo take on industry giants like MySpace?" Pete Cashmore of Mashable.com, a leading social networking blog, thinks Nuzizo is "a really, really thorough effort with some very unique ideas" but is "skeptical about whether any generic (ie. non-niche) social network can get traction these days." He believes "the competition is just too great, and MySpace too dominant."

But one look under the hood and all concerns fade. Not only is there a powerful engine driving this site (the interface is exponentially more stable, refined and responsive than other sites) but the drivers have a clear vision of where they want to go.

Nuzizo was conceived and created by Saïd Amin and Darren Romeo. It is Amin's second online venture; his first was World Singles, a company that runs over twelve niche matchmaking sites including IranianPersonals.com, ArabLounge.com and EligibleGreeks.com. Amin, thoroughly immersed in niche community building, says he "was anxious to work on a new project that would inspire people from all cultures and backgrounds to come together in one place." He and Romeo had frequent, spirited discussions over drinks at their favorite



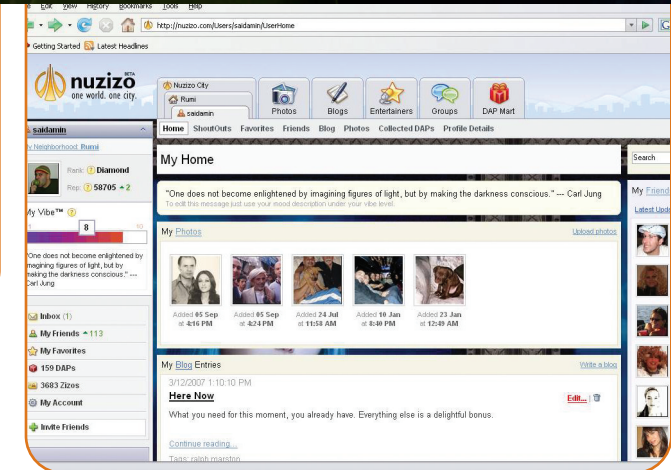
Nuzizo City Map

restaurant, often closing the place down. They had a desire to share that enthusiasm and energy with others and agreed the Internet was the perfect platform and a city was the right metaphor. So they created Nuzizo as a "celebration of culture, humanity, and unity."

Amin calls Nuzizo "the people's city" and says "Citizens, to our amazement and delight, are forming welcoming committees, political structures, elections, charities, etc. The city is alive and thrives on the energy, vision and spirit of its citizens. We are working together to build vibrant neighborhoods in a city that we can all call home." Amin anticipates that in time, "the city will serve as a frontier for how humans inevitably will govern themselves and share information," both online and off.

And that's where all the excitement stems from, that Nuzizo, a virtual city, can become the model for citizenship, governance and good old fashioned neighborly conduct, which just might help transform the real world.

Amin is most animated when he discusses this particular possibility. He is clearly committed to creating positive social change through Nuzizo. Internet experts are also excited about his vision of bringing people together without sacrificing their individual identities. Though Nuzizo is a new site, it has already created a buzz. Mark Brooks, a consultant to social networking sites and creator of the popular



Amin's own "home" in Nuzizo (profile page)

SocialNetworkingWatch.com, a blog for industry insiders says, "I really like the cultural framework... This is going to be a great human/online experiment."

Mike Jones (www.Mjones.la), CEO of UserPlane and VP at AOL, agrees. Jones is impressed by the philosophy behind Nuzizo and says, "the founders of Nuzizo picture a wonderful world of mixing cultures, and are using the platform to assist the bridging of races online. (They) have a wonderful vision. I hope that Nuzizo's principals bridge into the real world!"

Ultimately, the real test for Nuzizo is in how well it attracts and keeps citizens. So far the response has been overwhelmingly positive. The focus on community building resonates with people looking for a real home on the Internet. Nuzizo has just completed its testing phase and is open to the public. We encourage our readers to pack their bags from other sites and join Namak by moving to Nuzizo.

www.nuzizo.com

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