

Fast Track *to* **YOUR WEB PRESENCE**

.....
You And The Internet
.....

.....
Benefits Of Being Online
.....

.....
Hosting A Web Site
.....

.....
Designing A Web site
.....

.....
Blogs
.....

.....
Forums
.....

.....
Bibliography & Whitepapers
.....



Fast Track to Your Web Presence

By Team Digit

Credits

People Behind This Book

EDITORIAL

Deepak Ajwani Editor

Aditya Kuber Writer, Coordinating Editor

Robert Sovereign-Smith Writer

Ram Mohan Rao Writer, Copy Editor

Renuka Rane Copy Editor

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Vijay Padaya Layout Designer

Sivalal S Cover Design

Harsho Mohan Chatteraj Illustrator

© Jasubhai Digital Media

Published by Maulik Jasubhai on behalf of Jasubhai Digital Media. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher.

September 2005

Free with Digit. Not to be sold separately. If you have paid separately for this book, please e-mail the editor at editor@thinkdigit.com along with details of location of purchase, for appropriate action.

Staying Online

Back in the '80s the Bee Gees crooned "Stayin' Alive". In today's parlance, this would be best said as "Stayin' Online"! Corny references apart, the fact is that being online and creating a strong web presence are the two most important things for personal and professional gains.

What is web presence? Is it just acquiring an e-mail address? Is it putting up a site? Is it your online conduct? As a matter of fact, it's all of these things and much more. It's almost like creating your identity online, like in the offline world.

Like in the real world, the internet also provides you various platforms to express yourself, interact, argue and learn. Some of these places can be found easily, others need you to be part of a network that is possible only after spending substantial amount of time with members of such networks. The advantages here are enormous.

Like with personal life, your professional life could also receive a major fillip with a good web presence. Being part of networking sites that are set up for professional reasons and even getting work online are ways of making proper use of your online identity.

But how does one do this? What is proper online conduct? How do I put up my site? Isn't it costly? Questions such as these must be running through your mind. Don't worry! We have attempted here to answer almost everything you may want to know. Don't miss the special tips spread across the book that tell you more about the topic at hand.

Topics in the book range from creating your web presence to how you can use it best to becoming members of forums, why to set up your own blog and how you can benefit from it.

What is the correct way to communicate? How should you compose e-mails? Is there a wrong way to do it? Yes, there is. Netiquettes (Etiquettes to be followed online) are crucial. Additionally, topics like setting up and designing your own Web site will enable you to create a professional web presence.

But remember, like in the real world, you are only as good as your reputation. Work hard at maintaining it. And you will be welcomed with open arms into the web world.

Contents

	Introduction	05
Chapter 1	You And The Internet	08
1.1	Creating Your Online Presence	09
1.2	IMs For Contacts And Business	10
1.3	Using E-Mail	11
1.4	Netiquette	13
Chapter 2	The Benefits Of Being Online	22
2.1	Personal gains of being online	23
2.2	Online Business	26
Chapter 3	Hosting A Web Site	31
3.1	Choosing A Hosting Platform	32
3.2	Requirements	34
3.3	Hosting Your Own Site	36
3.4	Professional Hosting	42
3.5	Building A PHP-Nuke Web Site	43
Chapter 4	Designing A Web Site	51
4.1	Basic Requirements	52
4.2	Web Design Mistakes	54
4.3	Design Tools	63
Chapter 5	Blogs	70
5.1	The Benefits And Advantages Of Blogs	74
5.2	The Elements Of Success	79

5.3	Blogs And Your Business	81
5.4	Exploitation Of Blogs	82
Chapter 6	Forums	88
6.1	The Importance Of Forums	89
6.2	Forum Activity	90
6.3	Gaining Respect	95
Chapter 7	Whitepapers	97
7.1	Online Social and Business Networking Communities	98
7.2	Netiquette: Quickstudy by Brian Sullivan	122
7.3	E-mail Netiquette	101
7.4	Make Your Site More Interactive with Microsoft FrontPage 2002 Six Interactive Elements to Help Grow Business	135
7.5	Making Your Web Sites More Accessible with Microsoft FrontPage 2002	146
7.6	Beginner's Guide To Corporate Blogging	162
7.7	Weblogs: Realigning Business, Technology & Communication	172
Chapter 8	Bibliography	182

You And The Internet



Whether man can live in space or on Mars is still debatable. But life in cyberspace is already a reality. Like in the real world, though, for existence in the virtual world, it is important that you create your identity, a track record, a reputation—and maintain it. In this chapter, we try to find ways to do just this

1.1 Creating Your Online Presence

Cyberspace is a vast sea of people... real people in the virtual world. Everyone is welcome, but who to trust is something no-one can say for sure. "Sheep in wolf's clothing" holds true more often than not here. The key to creating your online presence is ensuring you do not become one of these sheep: that you manage to declare and define honestly who you are.

There are many ways you can announce your arrival in cyberspace: e-mail, Instant Messenger IDs, your own Web site or blog, or by becoming part of a community or forum that matches your interests.

The challenge in becoming a part of a forum or community is finding one that interests you, and then slowly but steadily making your presence felt. Treat it like a new college you've just taken admission into. Naturally you are apprehensive because you don't know anybody. You don't know where to go... but you walk around and familiarise yourself with your surroundings and the campus.

Tip

Here are some things to remember:

First, while writing e-mails, never ever use abusive words. Remember how they are disgusting in real life too.

Do not lower your prestige on the Net.

Get a POP3 email account and write your mails offline. This will mean that you are not in a rush while writing. Take all the precautions you take while writing a real life letter. Greet people.

Remember to sign off with your name and be polite. You won't just hang up the phone without saying bye, would you?

An online community is just that—a campus. Take your time finding out about all that exists and what activities happen here. Find out about existing members and their likes and dislikes. Know what would be offensive to other members and avoid doing that.

As you spend more time, more members would start noticing you and approaching you... much like it happened in college. There you have your first set of friends. From there on, it's how you take it further.

More on online communities and forums in some of the later chapters.

1.2 IMs For Contacts And Business

Instant Messengers (IMs) have evolved into a communications and business tool. You need to be signed up to use a particular service—for instance, you cannot use Yahoo! Messenger with a Hotmail account and vice-versa. Although there are some IM clients that allow any account to be used, those aren't the best ones.

So there are two options here—sign up for all available IMs, or decide the one you want to use and stick to it. We recommend the first since it costs nothing, and it doesn't hurt to have an ID even if you rarely use it.

IMs are a great tool for communicating with friends, whether they're sitting a few cubicles or a few continents away! Just make sure you match your time with their time zones! IMs also allow you to share files and photos as you chat and play games with the other person. It's as good as being there. To be honest, you are—just that it's virtual.

An IM can also be a good business tool, and including your ID on your business card is a good idea. Whether you are a self-employed professional or a businessman or an employee of a company, using IMs for business can save your company (or you) a lot of money for communication. But how is this better than e-mail? For one, instant messaging happens in real-time. If you have to coordinate with a client sitting in another city or country, you could save on long distance calls by using an Instant Messenger.

Some of the popular IMs are MSN Messenger and Yahoo! Messenger. To be able to use these, all you need to do is sign up. The services are free, and you also get an e-mail address upon signup. In the case of MSN, it's Hotmail that gives you a 25 MB mailbox initially (it's about 250 MB if you're in the US), and Yahoo! gives you a 1 GB mail account. Logically, you would rush to sign up for Yahoo!, but it's worthwhile checking up on which of the two is more used within your contacts.

1.3 Using E-Mail

E-mailing is a great tool for keeping in touch and widening you business. But there is a fine line between spamming and being persistent when e-mailing.

Spamming is illegal in most countries, and if your e-mail account is found to be one of those that is spamming, you could well be blocked out by the recipient's mail server, making your efforts futile. Worse still, your own e-mail provider could block you out.

Tip

No matter how rude someone may be to you, or how offended you may be by another's opinion, don't lower yourself to their level by stooping to obscenities, threats or claims of self-importance. Always state your opinion clearly and concisely, without personalising an issue or resorting to name-calling.

Fact

Spamming, the name of which derives from the Monty Python Spam sketch about SPAM brand processed meat, is economically viable because advertisers have effectively no operating costs beyond the management of their mailing lists.

A widely-accepted definition of spamming is “the use of any electronic communications medium to send unsolicited messages in bulk”. While this definition is normally limited to indiscriminate bulk mailing and not any targeted marketing, the term ‘spam’ can refer to any commercially-oriented, unsolicited bulk mailing that can be perceived as being excessive, and more importantly, undesired.

In the popular eye, the most common form of spam is the one delivered in e-mail as a form of commercial advertising. However, during the short history of electronic media, things comparable to spamming for non-commercial purposes in media other than e-mail have also been recorded.

Over the years, a variety of spamming techniques have been developed. These vary by media: e-mail spam, IM spam, Usenet newsgroup spam, Web search engine spam, weblogs spam, and mobile phone messaging spam.

It is important that you desist from all the above forms, and understand what could qualify as spamming before you decide to send out a mass mailer telling the world about your business—or even your arrival on the WWW.

Because the entry barrier for spamming is so low, the volume of unsolicited mail has produced other costs which are borne by the public (in terms of lost productivity and fraud) and by Internet service providers, which must add extra capacity to cope with the deluge.

Spamming is generally reviled, and has been the subject of legislation in a number of jurisdictions, including the United States' CAN-SPAM Act of 2003.

1.4 Netiquette

When communicating with others on the Internet, observe the following common-sense net-etiquettes. These 'netiquettes' should be observed whether you are writing an e-mail message, participating in a chat session, or posting a message on a Bulletin Board.

Below are some basics you need to be minimally familiar with in order to be taken seriously in your online communications.

1. Do not type in all caps. Typing in all caps is considered yelling or screaming online. Those who type in all caps are perceived as lazy and not being considerate of those who will have to read their e-mail. Various studies on the topic reflect that it is more difficult and takes longer to read text that is typed in all caps.
2. Do not leave the 'Subject' field blank. Fill it in with a brief and concise description of the content of your e-mail. This is very important in helping those you communicate with, helping them organise and manage their e-mail. Avoid using all caps or all small case, terms such as 'Hi', 'Help' or 'Please Respond', or the recipient's name in the subject field, as you may be misidentified as a spammer, and your e-mail automatically deleted.

Tip

Netiquette can be defined as behaving appropriately on the net. Just like good manners are appreciated in real life, good manners on the net are appreciated too. Remember they might not be really big things. To get your netiquette right though you have to do get the little things right. Every drop is responsible for the existence of an ocean.

3. Refrain from formatting your e-mail with coloured text and background colours or images in your day-to-day communications. Your colour and formatting choices can make your e-mails impossible to read. In addition, formatting could make your e-mails difficult to reply to without having to go through a procedure to convert your e-mail to plaintext first.

Often, when people click 'Reply', they have to deal with your formatting carrying over to their reply, which makes communicating with you unnecessarily more difficult. Why would you expect people to convert your e-mail just to read and respond to you? They probably will not!

Using large background graphics that take forever to download, especially if you have a dial-up connection (which is still more common than most of us may like to believe) is simply inconsiderate. If you do feel the uncontrollable need to use any type of formatting in your daily communications, do so sparingly. So, for those of you who want to e-mail *Digit*, send your e-mail in plaintext!

4. On those rare occasions where it is necessary to send a group of people the very same e-mail, as a courtesy to those you are sending the mail to, list all the recipients' e-mail addresses in the BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) field. When an e-mail address is designated in the BCC field, the recipient will get a copy of the e-mail while their e-mail address remains invisible to the other recipients of the e-mail—some or all of whom they may or may not know.

Long lists of e-mail addresses at the beginning of any e-mail is an immediate sign that the sender is either a novice/Newbie—or doesn't care to respect other's privacy. None of which, we're sure you'll agree, are complimentary perceptions! E-mail addresses are like phone numbers. Only the owner of the e-mail address or phone number should be able to authorise who they want to have it and make it public to.

Most people prefer to decide for themselves who has their e-mail address. By sending mass mails to a list, you have made that decision for them—and that is a breach of assumed privacy when communicating. Let those you correspond with determine for themselves who they will make their e-mail address known to—do not make that decision for them!

5. If you are new online, raise your right hand and repeat:

A. “I will not forward any dumb joke, ‘chain letter’ or unimportant e-mails to my friends without their permission.”

“I will not forward any dumb joke, ‘chain letter’ or unimportant e-mails to my friends without their permission.”

B. “I understand that by doing so I may fill up their inbox, use others’ resources unnecessarily, and may cause other, important e-mail to bounce.”

“I understand that by doing so I may fill up their inbox, use others’ resources unnecessarily, and may cause other, important e-mail to bounce.”

C. “I understand that most people have seen these e-mails a million times and find them annoying.”

“I understand that most people have seen these e-mails a million times and find them annoying.”

D. “I know that by forwarding these so-called humorous e-mails

Tip

Just as in the offline world, online there is also an expectation of socially acceptable behavior and common courtesy. Do not for a moment think that because you are behind a monitor that gives you the excuse to be lazy, rude, crude, obnoxious or just a plain jerk.

I may offend or tick off people who do not share my sense of humour or who are sick of having stupid e-mails forwarded to them each time a Newbie hops online.”

“I know that by forwarding these so-called humorous e-mails I may offend or tick off people who do not share my sense of humour or who are sick of having stupid e-mails forwarded to them each time a Newbie hops online.”

There! Now, that wasn't too bad, was it? Hopefully, you will no longer be tempted to forward those jokes, untruthful or frivolous e-mail that instruct you to forward them to your friends! And you'll avoid looking silly and uninformed in the process. Read them if you must, then hit 'Delete'. You don't believe those e-mails that state that certain things will happen simply by you forwarding the e-mail to 10 friends, do you?

In addition, many of these e-mails are hoaxes or downright bogus. Before you forward an e-mail that appears good-intentioned with an incredible story that instructs you to “read and share” with everyone you know, you might want to first check www.snopes.com to see if the story is legitimate in the first place. Not doing so can have you eating crow when everyone you e-mail is informed you just forwarded a hoax without knowing better. And, don't get mad at someone if they point out to you that you were uninformed by perpetuating a hoax! If you don't know for a fact that the e-mail you're forwarding is accurate and specifically apropos to the person you are forwarding to and you know they will want to receive it—all you have to do is ask first.

6. Never give out phone numbers or personal information without confirming you are communicating with a reputable party. Never give out personal contact information of others without their specific permission to do so.
7. Make a reasonable effort to search a Web site for the information you are looking for—‘Frequently Asked Questions’ or

'About Us' sections may give you the answers you seek before you waste the site owner's time by e-mailing for information that is readily available on their site.

If a Web site owner takes the time to provide information, read it. No one person's time is more important than another's, and common courtesy includes respecting this fact. If you do not find what you are looking for, search for the appropriate contact area for your question. Don't just click on the first e-mail link you come across and blurt out your question(s). If you do, don't be surprised if your e-mail goes unanswered if the information is easily found on the site.

It is important to understand the focus of each Web site as well. Each site cannot be everything to everyone, or be what you perceive it should be. Be sure to review the information provided to double-check that what you seek would even be covered by the site you are visiting.

8. Do not use Return Receipt Request (RR) for each and every personal e-mail you send because you like 'knowing' when someone opens your e-mail. Not only is this annoying to the recipient, this feature is intrusive! How would you like it if every time you heard a voice mail, answering machine message, or opened a postal letter from a friend, it was immediately reported back to them that you had heard/opened their communications? The recipient should have the privacy to determine when/if they want to open, read and reply—period. RRs should be reserved for those instances where it is critical to

Tip

Don't fall for flammers, jerks or "trolls".

"Trolling" is the practice of sending or posting obviously offensive comments, brutally untruthful statements or words and phrases that we all know to be those that would instigate a fight if stated at your local pub!

knowing whether the e-mail was opened. Such instances would include legal and important business issues. Keep in mind that opened doesn't mean read, and that the recipient can decline an RR request so you will not be notified.

9. Understand that you will be on a continual learning curve. All of us are. The online world is changing constantly. The only constant is change! If you do not have the desire to learn and do not make the effort to understand the 'culture' of the technology in which you are participating, you will not be taken seriously by your fellow Netizens. You also may get terse e-mails from other Netizens pointing such issues out to you—some may not be as nice as others. Do not fire back at them! Use such situations as an opportunity to learn what you are doing wrong so you do not anger others.
10. If you receive a nasty e-mail, do not respond immediately—if at all. People are bold and overly critical on the other side of this screen. They tend to not hesitate to point out what they think you need improvement on while not bothering to notice the good or positive points on the very same issue.

Many times, these people are simply trying to get a rise out of you (this is called trolling) or are trying to make themselves feel self-important. Many times, they're just jerks. If you do not have something nice or constructive to say, or at the very least sternly professional—just hit 'Delete'.

11. Keep in mind that all private e-mail is considered to be copyrighted by the author. If you post private e-mail to a public list or board, or forward it to an outside party in whole or in part, you must include the author's permission to post the material publicly. Not doing so can get you into trouble legally or with your friends and associates.
12. Always compress or 'zip' large files before sending. Many people who are new to the online world do not realise how large

documents, graphics or photo files are. Guess what—they are large enough to fill someone's e-mail box and cause their other mail to bounce! Get in the habit of compressing anything over 200,000 bytes. (You can view file sizes in Windows Explorer. Simply right-click on the file name and choose 'Properties'.)

There are several types of file compression software available for these purposes. Do not send unannounced, large attachments to others because you think that photo or file is cute or cool. Ask first! More importantly, when sending business files, do so only during business hours—and always compress and ask permission first!

Many onliners still have to wait up to 30 minutes or more to open overly large files due to their connection speed. Most of those online do not have cable or DSL connections, they are on dial-up—many only @ 28.8 Kbps!

Another way of reducing the size of your attachments is to manipulate them using graphics software. Minimising a photo or graphic's physical size to no larger than 600 pixels in width will make them e-mailable—nothing need be larger than that size to view anyway. Or you could be really courteous and learn how to use the free Web space offered by your ISP to upload photos, and simply send the link to friends and family to view. And if you do not know how to do any of these things, all you have to do is learn!

Tip

It should go without saying that sending e-mail with extremely foul, threatening or abusive language is crude. This includes obscenities, verbal harassment, threats of slander or personal comments that would prove offensive based on race, religion, or sexual orientation. Unfortunately, we see this type of behaviour all too often.

To send large files that take a long time to download may not respect the other person's time; the files may not reflect their sense of humour or point of view, and may even max out their e-mail box. This is being inconsiderate and lazy.

E-mail Woes

Unfortunately, the advancement of technology has its negatives. It is now possible to get a virus without even opening an e-mail—that started with W32.Nimda.A@mm (or simply, Nimda) in September 2001, which merely required you click on the subject of the e-mail in your mail program (or in some mail clients, have the preview pane on).

Several of the latest viruses actually use e-mail addresses farmed out of your address book or inbox to send the virus and propagate itself to all those listed, with your name in the 'From' field. The latest viruses can send themselves out with your friend's names in the 'From' field, or any combination of e-mail addresses found on your system!

The need for a 24/7 real-time virus protection software is no longer a choice—it is your responsibility to remain virus-free. You will also need to update your virus files regularly. Check for updates every time you log on so that your computer is protected using the latest virus definitions.

The Basics Of Virus Protection

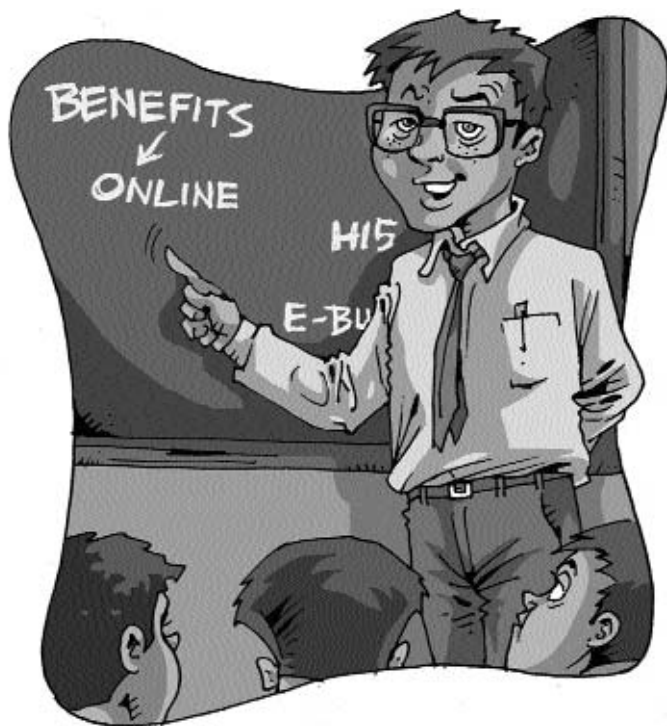
- m Get an active program that is always 'On'. This will catch any viruses as they are being downloaded, so they can immediately be quarantined and cannot infect your system.
- m Update your virus definitions daily, or every time you log on. These updates can be downloaded from the Web site of your virus software manufacturer. Most have a scheduler to tell your computer to do this automatically.

You need to ensure your system is protected from any viruses that may have just been discovered since you were last online. New viruses are identified daily!

■ Never click on any attachment or a .exe (examples: Happy99.exe, “free stuff”, “click here” or “ILOVEYOU”) file attached within an e-mail without making sure the attachment has been checked for viruses. This holds even if the mail appears to come from someone you know well! The attachment may be virus-generated, and may have plucked your friend’s e-mail address off the infected computer of someone they communicated with. Or your friend may unknowingly be infected and not aware of the virus on his or her system, which has just spawned an e-mail that has their name on it and is addressed to you. The e-mail may look like it is from your friend just to get you to open it when in fact it is generated by a virus.

You could install the free Avast Anti-Virus package provided with every *Digit* DVD and CD to protect your system from viruses.

The Benefits Of Being Online



Being online today is more of a norm than a trend. Most people including businesspeople and students alike rattle off their e-mail addresses right after their phone numbers. One of the biggest benefits of being online is the possibility of reaching out to the entire world—quite literally. It's a bit like putting up your shingle outside an office; the only difference is, the passers-by include the entire world.

2.1 Personal gains of being online

Our lives have come to revolving around our professional goals, and this starts right from high school or college. We are so swamped by work, submissions and other related stuff that we have no time for friends, and we slowly drift away—leaving ourselves with just our colleagues as friends.



But being online and being active can mean that you are no longer kept apart from your friends. What's better, you could even make new ones. You can also catch up with your friends from school and college and no longer feel isolated. Just how can you do this? Web sites that specialise in 'networking' is the answer.

2.1.1 Online Social Networking

You may have heard some of your friends or acquaintances talk about sites such as Orkut, Hi5, Friendster, or Yahoo! 360. These are what are popularly known as online social networking sites.

While they all claim to have the 'most active' or the 'widest' network in the world, you need to first check on where your friends are. Last thing you'd want is to be in one place while your friends are in another! It can also be compared with your friends being at the movies while you are waiting for them at the coffee shop.

Getting online with almost all these social networking sites is as simple as a free sign-up and registration. In the case of some



hi5 is "fun, safe and easy"



Orkut is somewhat slow, but very popular

Tip

Use emoticons and acronyms when necessary to convey your message. If you are joking, include a smiley face :-), if you are sad or upset you can use :-(. If you are unsure of someone's intent or meaning, ask them before making assumptions and accusations that you may regret. Don't assume what anyone means - take them at their word - same as you should expect to be responsible for every word that you type.

sites such as Yahoo! 360, though, you may need an invite from an existing member.

2.1.2 How Does It Work?

Most such sites work on a simple principle. You can search for people based on common interests, hobbies, location, age, and any other criterion that suits you! One of the greatest things this does is eliminate boundaries of distance. You can also make new pen-pals and keep in touch using the same forum.

Like with everything online, however, there are some pitfalls in the online friendship game. There are a lot of fraudsters out there who may win over your confidence and then try to misuse it.

Once you sign up with a social networking site, you can send invites to non-members to join and keep in touch with them using the Web site. Moreover, you can also find existing members and request them to 'connect' with you and share information and likes and dislikes.

As time passes, your network would grow, and before you know it, you would be part of a community where members share common interests and keep in touch. So not having time outside the office is no longer a reason to not have friends.

In a lot of cases, members often meet outside the online presence if there is a large enough community within a geographical area and get to know each other better.

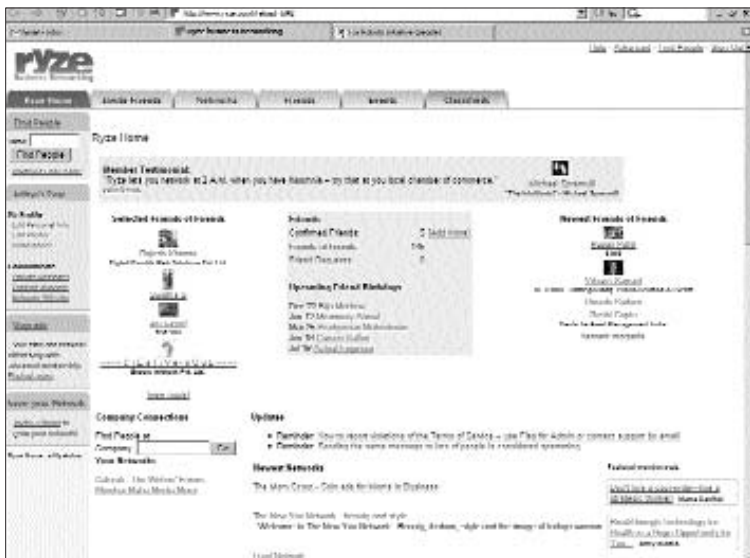
2.2 Online Business



Being active online and having a presence on a networking site can have advantages for your profession as well. Focused sites like Ryze, for example, are a recognised place to further your business interests.

Ryze, in fact, offers a professional from every possible field of life to meet with their peers and grow. Ryze is one of the older online business networking sites, and enjoys a good following across India. A search by name, location or profession usually yields plenty of results with great relevance!

Ryze, to be honest, is a glorified bio-data you put out on the Internet. There have also been instances where members on Ryze have been offered jobs because the headhunters were looking on Ryze! It can happen!



Ryze is one of the older business networking sites

Ryze members also regularly conduct what are called 'Mixers', where a sub-group comprising members with similar interests meet in person, and basically have a ball!

2.2.1 E-business for small businesses

Putting up a Web site with even a single page can have great positives on your business. Putting the URL of the page on your Ryze profile or on a profile on one of the other networking sites can attract traffic and potential business. The key here is to use the right words in the first few lines so search engines can pick them up when someone types in a keyword that matches what you have to offer.

Popularising your Web site can be done in many ways. One obvious way, apart from those mentioned above, is by e-mailing existing and potential contacts. Remember not to spam the recipients. Just a gentle reminder is what is needed.

The screenshot shows the eBay.in homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'home', 'pay', 'register', 'services', and 'site map'. Below this is a search bar with 'Start new search' and 'Search' buttons. A 'Buy Sell My eBay Community Help' menu is also present. A greeting says 'Hello! Sign in or register'. The main banner says 'Welcome to eBay' with a 'Register Now!' button and a 'Search' field. On the left, a 'Categories' list includes Apparel & Accessories, Beauty & Health, Hollywood Memorabilia, Books & Magazines, Cameras & Optics, Digital Cameras, Camcorders, more, Cars & Bikes, Coins & Stamps, Computers & Peripherals, Laptops, PDAs, Printers, more, Consumer Electronics, MP3 Players, DVD Players, more, Fitness & Sports, Home, Tools & Appliances, Jewellery & Watches, Mobiles & Accessories, Mobiles, Sony Ericsson, more, Movies & Videos, Music, VCDs, International VCDs, more, Music & Instruments, Services & Real Estate, Travel, Games & Hobbies, Travel, Tickets & Vouchers, Video & Computer Games, International Sites, All Categories, Power & King Street, Items for sale in the Gallery. The 'eBay Explained' section has links for 'Register', 'Buy', and 'Sell'. The 'Great Deals' section features a grid of product images with descriptions: Deals on Camera Mobile Phones, DVD/MP3 Players below Rs. 3500/-, Great Deals on Home Tools, Deals ending with no bids in 24 hours, Chronograph watches for less than Rs. 500/-, Diamond/Gold/Silver Pendants/Rings, Men's Shirts below Rs. 300/-, and 1 Paise Auctions.

Check out ebay.in—the new avatar of Baazee has grown in size and popularity

As a freelance artist, writer or any other freelance professional, the Web could indeed be your best friend! Sites such as Elance.com and DeviantArt.com are great places to put up your work or search for more work. Freelance professionals could also use a blog to put up their work and then popularise it like their own Web site (refer Chapter 5 for more on blogging).

2.2.2 Telecommuting

Although some may consider this to be a new way of working, telecommuting has been around for a while, and offers a great new way to work for the best companies in the world. As an aspiring professional, you need to keep an eye out for any company that may have a requirement for a telecommute job. These jobs allow you to work from home, and pay well, too. In some cases, the employer also sets up the infrastructure including the Internet connection and other necessities so that the employee is at par with the infrastructure at office.

For this, though, you need to really be aware of what is being offered and not miss out. Having your own site/blog could further aid your hunt in this as well.

2.2.3 Your Global Office

Every professional and businessman dreams of making it big. But how do you do it? As a start-up or a small, growing organisation, you won't always have the required finances or the manpower to go and meet all potential clients. Moreover, not all your potential clients would be in your city.

The Web and other online tools (e-mail, forums etc.) let your business reach new shores. Imagine yourself as a dealer of Indian handicrafts: your biggest potential market is the western world, but how many mailers can you send out? How many phone calls and samples can you send? Countless, to have any kind of impact and justify the expense of sending out the mailers in the first place.

Options like eBay that are now available allow you to list your product(s) in all English-speaking countries while sitting here in India. Isn't that a world opening up to you? Other, similar services are equally effective, and can have a greatly positive impact on your business. It's just a question of getting online and finding the right solution for you.

Summing up, having an online presence can help you eliminate costs, appeal to a wider marketplace, and further your personal and professional causes.

Hosting A Web Site



Hosting a Web site can be complicated. You need to choose a platform to host, compare prices and sift through disk space offerings. This chapter will help you to make up your mind through some tough decisions.

3.1 Choosing A Hosting Platform

Once you decide that you want to set up a Web site, the very first step you need to look at is buying a domain and checking out the hosting options available to you. Where you buy the hosting from is secondary right now, as the major decision depends on what type of hosting you need and the platform (Windows or Linux), on which you need to host.

The first step in this exercise is to decide the contents of your site, and understand the limitations of each platform and the costs involved.

The simplest, and cheapest, option is to opt for Linux hosting running a PHP/MySQL site that will give you the database driven online presence you need and also some cool options for automatically setting up a site. Using PHP-Nuke, you can set up a site for only the cost of the domain name and Web hosting. A detailed 'How To' is provided in the next chapter.

Other than a PHP/MySQL site, you can choose to set up a sim-

[illegible]

You can use PHP to build a great Web site using only Open Source tools

ple HTML site or choose the Windows-based ASP platform. With an HTML site, you will only get a lot of pages that are linked to one another. Moreover, reading data from a database or allowing users to enter data such as feedback on your site will become a problem. Simple HTML pages are generally best left to the average personal Web site.

ASP runs on a Microsoft Access Database, and is much simpler to use than MySQL, because it has that familiar Windows look and feel, and integrates beautifully with existing Microsoft programs and OSes. At the same time, making an ASP site can be a daunting task for those who have just basic familiarity with Web programming.

Another plus point for PHP-based sites is that the PHP platform is Open Source, and thus, Web site starter kits such as PHP-Nuke and PostNuke are freely available, with tons of support from a huge community of developers and Web programmers—all for free!



Microsoft's ASP platform is another option for those hosting on Windows servers

3.2 Requirements

Once you have decided on the platform (ASP or PHP, Windows or Linux), the next step is to understand the type of account you would like—space-wise. You can get cheap hosting accounts with as little as 15 MB of space (for plain-jane HTML sites), or really expensive dedicated servers located in an ISP's data centre (if you plan to run something like Microsoft.com!). Finding the right balance is what matters.

Ideally, you should design your site first and then decide on your hosting by gauging the size of the files you have and the amount of visitors you are expecting.

However, since we recommend a PHP-Nuke or PostNuke site for a simple and quick small Web site set up, you will need to buy the hosting first. This is because you need to modify PHP-Nuke or PostNuke while they are live—though you could do it on your own computer, and port the data and database entries to your actual hosting provider's server later, it defeats the whole 'quick and easy' idea of using these software in the first place.

PHP-Nuke 7.0.7 Final Release

PHP-Nuke 7.0.7 Final Release is a totally new advertising system that will make your site a more productive site. This new advertising system is very easy to use and powerful. It supports ads in your content, in the footer, in the sidebar, and in the header. It also supports a new system of advertising that lets you place ads in your content, in the footer, in the sidebar, and in the header. This new system is very easy to use and powerful. It supports ads in your content, in the footer, in the sidebar, and in the header. It also supports a new system of advertising that lets you place ads in your content, in the footer, in the sidebar, and in the header.

Categories:

- All Categories
- Home
- News
- Comments
- Questions
- Topics
- Tags

New News:

- The Next Step in the PHP-Nuke
- PHP-Nuke 7.0.7 Final Release

Advertisement:

iSaveTravel.com
Travel More. Spend Less.

PHP-Nuke gives you the option of developing a site from within your browser itself, with little or no coding knowledge

So how much space should you opt for? There's no point in investing in a dedicated server right away, so you can rule that out. Also,

depending on your site's goal—whether you plan to use your

site as a personal site or one that promotes a company or products through marketing and sales—you can safely rule out any free options or really low-end providers. See the following example:

The screenshot shows the GoDaddy.com website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'Domains', 'Hosting & Servers', 'Email', 'SSL Certificates', 'Business', 'Domain Auctions', and 'More'. Below this, a banner for 'Radio' is visible. The main content area is titled 'Your Search Results' and shows search results for 'THESITEYOUWANT.COM'. It indicates that the domain is already taken and provides a list of similar domain names. On the right side, there's a table titled 'Check out our low prices!' showing pricing for various domain extensions (.com, .net, .org, .info, .biz, .us, .uk) for different terms (1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 5 years).

	1 yr	2 yrs	3 yrs	5 yrs
com	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$7.25
net	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$7.25
org	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$7.25
info	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$7.25
biz	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$7.25
us	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$7.25
uk	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$7.25

Buy the site you want from a domain registrar, such as GoDaddy.com shown in the screenshot here

Let's say you decide on a site, say, www.thinkdigit.com, and buy the domain from GoDaddy.com. You could choose to buy the "Economy" hosting pack, which gives you 500 MB Web space, a 25 GB bandwidth limit and 100 e-mail addresses with POP3 and Web mail access. Well, not bad for a start!

Considering that the average site will not cross 100 MB, including images, brochures and a limited number of downloads, GoDaddy's Economy plan should give you a good benchmark of what you can expect. The plan costs about \$4 per month—that's Rs 175 per month, or approximately Rs 2,000 per year only. If you are more comfortable buying from an Indian company, or need .in or .co.in domains, you can buy your domains from Net4domains.com or Directi.com, though the hosting packages might not be as enticing as GoDaddy's.

"But what if I have a 24x7 Internet connection, and want to host my site on my own computer?"

Read on...

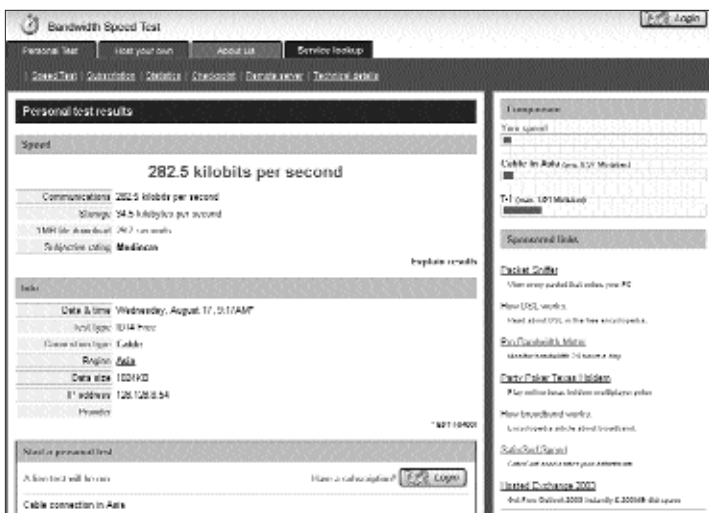
3.3 Hosting Your Own Site

Many of us Indians are fortunate enough to have 'broadband' connections. Though in actuality these connections are hardly 'broad', they are, at least, 'always-on'. This means that if you have a decent computer that can run steadily for really long periods (in excess of a month at a stretch), you could host a low requirement site on a standard 128 Kbps cable connection from your home or office.

3.3.1 Hardware Requirements

You can always choose to host your own server, especially if you have an Internet connection and hardware availability. While, it would be all too easy to suggest a neat dual-server-CPU-based solution, the purpose of cost saving by hosting your own site would be defeated.

Here, we shall consider only the basic requirements for hosting a small Web site by yourself.



You can visit www.zdnetindia.com or www.bandwidthplace.com (shown here) to find out how fast your connection is, and then decide whether you will be able to host your site on your own computer



You don't need to set up a data centre to host a Web site. Even a company Web site can be hosted on a normal desktop PC—provided you have a good Internet connection and a decent UPS

The first thing you need to look at is your Internet connection. There's no point hosting a site if your 'broadband' connection is one of those limited MB or GB connections. Web sites can consume a lot of bandwidth, especially your upload bandwidth, and since many ISPs count both the upload and download usage towards your billing, hosting your own site might not be a wise decision.

If you have an always-on connection, remember that not all ISPs provide you with a 1:1 ratio of upload to download bandwidth. So even if you have a 256 Kbps connection, it might be limited to 128 Kbps or less for upload speeds.

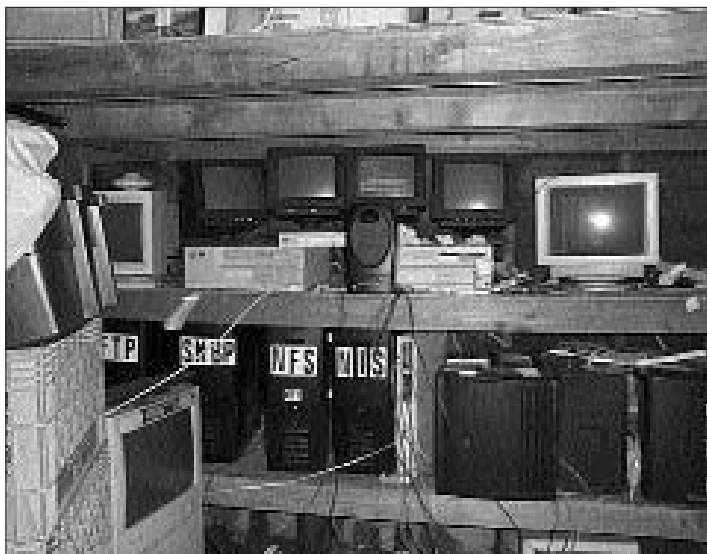
Even for a very small site, say, one that gets only a couple of visitors at a time, an upload of 128 Kbps is bare minimum. So make sure your connection meets this very basic requirement before you think of hosting your own site.

In terms of hardware, it is advisable to first see what you have lying about. In order to start a Web server, you will need a fully functional computer, with or without a monitor. Depending on the OS you select to run the server on, your requirements will vary.

For example, if you plan to run a server on Windows XP, you will need at least a 1 GHz CPU with 256 MB RAM and a 20 GB hard disk.

If you are comfortable with Linux or one of its cousins, you could always choose not to install a Window manager such as KDE or GNOME and run everything through a command line. This would bring down the requirements of the system to a 500 MHz CPU, 256 MB RAM and a 20 GB hard disk.

Of course, people still have Web servers running on 133 MHz CPUs with 128 MB RAM, running older versions of command line Linux, so there's really not much limitation in terms of hardware. Due to the popularity of the Windows platform for our readers, we will stick to a recommendation of at least a 1 GHz CPU, minimum 256 MB RAM (512 preferred) and a 20 GB hard disk.



Believe it or not, these ancient boxes are actually computers that run the Linux kernel and are used to host a few Web sites!

3.3.2 Setting Up The Server

The most preferred servers are still Linux, but only because a Web server running Windows NT or Server 2003 will burn a hole in your pocket, at least initially. Since Linux is the free option (and we'd rather not consider the 'free' Windows option that the local software pirate will hand you), we'll stick with it for now. Of course, you could always decide to purchase Windows Server 2003, or just run the Web server on your existing operating system—Linux/Unix/BSD, Windows XP/2000/Me/98.

Since Windows XP Professional comes with Microsoft's Internet Information Services (IIS), which also has an in-built Web server, you could choose this to run an alternative ASP-based Web site. Of course, you can still choose to use Open Source software such as the popular Apache Web server (www.apache.org) to host your site.

The screenshot shows the Apache Software Foundation homepage. The header includes the logo and the URL <http://www.apache.org/>. The main content area is titled 'Welcome' and contains a paragraph about the foundation's mission to support the open source software community. Below this, there are links for 'Support the Apache Software Foundation' and 'Latest News'. A sidebar on the right contains links for 'Sponsorship', 'How it Works', 'Get Involved', and 'Download'. The footer includes a copyright notice for 2005 and a link to the 'Privacy Policy'.

You need to install a Web server, such as Apache, from www.apache.org, in order to host a site

Since we're looking at the cheapest solutions to minimise the costs you have to incur when starting up a Web site, we will stick to Open Source software and freeware.

If you have decided to use Apache for a PHP/MySQL-based site, the first thing you need to do is download Apache from www.apache.org. Make sure to choose the latest Win32 Binary. You will find a list of Mirror sites to download Apache from at <http://www.apache.org/dyn/closer.cgi>.

Install Apache and configure the `httpd.conf` file located in the `install-root/conf/` folder. Here the default `install-root` is "C:\Program Files\Apache Group\Apache2\"

So, if you do a default install, the path is “C:\Program Files\Apache Group\Apache2\conf”. Also remember that when changing settings in the httpd.conf file, all backward slashes for paths should be changed to forward slashes, for example, the ServerRoot path line should read:

ServerRoot “C:/Program Files/Apache Group/Apache2”

(if the path is given as “C:\Program Files\Apache Group\Apache2” Apache will not work properly!)

If you have any problems installing Apache, please read their online help guide available at <http://httpd.apache.org/docs/2.0/>.

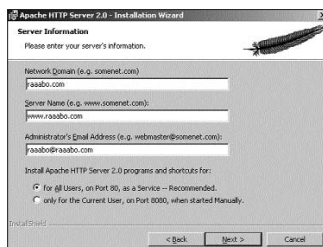
The next thing you need is PHP. You can download the latest version from <http://in.php.net/downloads.php>. If you are running Apache as the server you should download the ZIP package. If you are just installing PHP on your inbuilt Microsoft IIS server, you can just download the small installer package.

Just remember to choose the correct Web server option during the install (as shown in the screenshot alongside).

Once you have downloaded the package, unzip or install it to your hard drive and then make sure to read the INSTALL.txt file fully. If there's something you do not understand, go to <http://in.php.net/manual/en/> to read more about the installation procedure. The full installation guide is available at:

<http://in.php.net/manual/en/install.windows.manual.php>

The next thing you will need to do is get MySQL from <http://dev.mysql.com/downloads/mysql/>. Downloading from this



Make sure to put the right information in when installing Apache, and you will have a Web server up and running in no time

URL will make sure you choose the latest stable release. However, if you want to try the latest Beta, or even older installations you can go to <http://dev.mysql.com/downloads/>.

Caution: Always remember to carefully read and understand the installation and configuration instructions for all three software (Apache, PHP and MySQL). The smallest error will cause nothing to work, and blood pressures to rise!

The Easy Way Out

As always, Digit is committed to giving you the easiest solution possible. For those of you who find the headache of installing Apache, PHP and MySQL impossible, there's hope yet! Of course, this is for those who want to test their sites on their own computer first, before uploading to a Web server, and should not be considered a full fledged server!

EasyPHP is a program written for those who do not want the headache of setting up a server with PHP and MySQL support. You can get it at <http://www.easyphp.org/>.

All you have to do is download it, install it and choose a name for your database and your server is ready. If you are installing PHP-Nuke or PostNuke, put that database name and other MySQL configuration data into their configuration files and you're set to go. Just remember to put all your site files into the 'www' folder which is, by default, located at "C:\Program Files\EasyPHP1-8\www\".

3.4 Professional Hosting

The more common choice is to choose to host your site on a hosting company's servers, as this is much easier and you don't need to maintain servers. Besides, a hosting company can afford much better hardware and bandwidth than you ever could, and has trained professionals managing their servers.

If you take the time to search, you can find numerous good offers for Web hosting on the Net, with a lot of Indian hosting providers. You can also just choose to host your site with your registrar (the place you buy your domain from).

For example, as mentioned earlier, if you buy a domain from, or even host one at, GoDaddy.com, you can get 500 MB Web space with a 25 GB data transfer limit and 100 e-mail IDs with both POP3 and Web mail access for just \$3.95 (Rs 170) a month!

What hosting provider you eventually choose depends solely on your needs and budget, but you should definitely try and find user reviews. There's nothing better than getting feedback from people who actually use a company's services, and Web hosting is no exception!

Registrars such as GoDaddy.com offer great Web hosting starter kits, and even throw in 100 e-mail IDs with 5 MB space per ID, POP3 and Web mail access.

They also offer 500 MB Web space with a 25 GB data transfer limit for a mere Rs 170 a month. The only drawback is that you have to have a credit card!

Choose your hosting plan!			
FREE setup with all plans!	Economy Plan	Dollar Plan	Premium Plan
Monthly Fee:	\$3.95	\$9.95	\$19.95
Web Space:	500 MB	2,000 MB	4,000 MB
Monthly Data Transfer:	25,000 MB (25 GB)	100,000 MB (100 GB)	200,000 MB (200 GB)
Email Accounts:	100	500	1000
Email Forwarding Accounts:	50	Unlimited	Unlimited
SSL Certificate - a \$29.95 value!			Included
Databases (MySQL): Each database can include multiple tables	1 MySQL	10 MySQL	25 MySQL
Server Operating System:	Windows ASP 1 Linux PHP	Windows ASP/PHP Linux PHP/Perl/Python	Windows ASP/PHP Linux PHP/Perl/Python
Language Supported:	Windows ASP 1 Linux PHP	Windows ASP/PHP Linux PHP/Perl/Python	Windows ASP/PHP Linux PHP/Perl/Python
Domains (new):	...	Included	Included
Domains (renew):	...	Included	Included
Photo Galleries (new):	...	Included	Included
Free Software/Scripts:	...	Free Windows Scripts Free Linux Scripts	Free Windows Scripts Free Linux Scripts
NEW! Google AdSense:	...	FREE \$25 Google AdSense credit	FREE \$100 Google AdSense credit
Select a Plan:	1 Month Just \$3.95/mo 12 Months Just \$3.95/mo 24 Months Just \$3.95/mo	1 Month Just \$9.95/mo 12 Months Just \$9.95/mo 24 Months Just \$9.95/mo	1 Month Just \$19.95/mo 12 Months Just \$19.95/mo 24 Months Just \$19.95/mo

FREE setup with all plans!

Monthly Fee: \$3.95

Web Space: 500 MB

Monthly Data Transfer: 25,000 MB (25 GB)

Email Accounts: 100

Email Forwarding Accounts: 50

SSL Certificate - a \$29.95 value!

Databases (MySQL): Each database can include multiple tables

Server Operating System: Windows ASP 1 Linux PHP

Language Supported: Windows ASP 1 Linux PHP

Domains (new): ...

Domains (renew): ...

Photo Galleries (new): ...

Free Software/Scripts: ...

NEW! Google AdSense: ...

Choose your hosting plan!

Economy Plan

Monthly Fee: \$3.95

Web Space: 500 MB

Monthly Data Transfer: 25,000 MB (25 GB)

Email Accounts: 100

Email Forwarding Accounts: 50

SSL Certificate - a \$29.95 value!

Databases (MySQL): Each database can include multiple tables

Server Operating System: Windows ASP 1 Linux PHP

Language Supported: Windows ASP 1 Linux PHP

Domains (new): ...

Domains (renew): ...

Photo Galleries (new): ...

Free Software/Scripts: ...

NEW! Google AdSense: ...

Choose your hosting plan!

Dollar Plan

Monthly Fee: \$9.95

Web Space: 2,000 MB

Monthly Data Transfer: 100,000 MB (100 GB)

Email Accounts: 500

Email Forwarding Accounts: Unlimited

SSL Certificate - a \$29.95 value!

Databases (MySQL): Each database can include multiple tables

Server Operating System: Windows ASP/PHP Linux PHP/Perl/Python

Language Supported: Windows ASP/PHP Linux PHP/Perl/Python

Domains (new): ...

Domains (renew): ...

Photo Galleries (new): ...

Free Software/Scripts: ...

NEW! Google AdSense: ...

Choose your hosting plan!

Premium Plan

Monthly Fee: \$19.95

Web Space: 4,000 MB

Monthly Data Transfer: 200,000 MB (200 GB)

Email Accounts: 1000

Email Forwarding Accounts: Unlimited

SSL Certificate - a \$29.95 value!

Databases (MySQL): Each database can include multiple tables

Server Operating System: Windows ASP/PHP Linux PHP/Perl/Python

Language Supported: Windows ASP/PHP Linux PHP/Perl/Python

Domains (new): ...

Domains (renew): ...

Photo Galleries (new): ...

Free Software/Scripts: ...

NEW! Google AdSense: ...

NEW! Free Reseller*

Google AdSense

Microsoft ASP.NET

Visit the Hosting Resource Center

Each Plan Includes:

- Customized basic data backup
- 24x7 technical support
- 24x7 live chat
- Unlimited bandwidth, storage and content
- 100% uptime guarantee
- Daily backups
- 24x7 monitoring
- 24x7 email, telephone, and web-based tech support
- 24x7 physical security

You might also consider:

- Secure Web Certification
- Bring your own domain
- Dedicated and Virtual Dedicated Servers
- The ability to control bandwidth, web power
- Why you need a Secure Web Certificate

3.5 Building A PHP-Nuke Web Site

PHP, the open source alternative to Microsoft's ASP, is the obvious choice to build a Web site. Why? Because it's cross-platform-a PHP site can be hosted on any Web server, running any OS, unlike ASP, which needs a Microsoft OS-and because it's open source. The biggest advantage of open source software is the thousands of developers who dedicate time to improve or simplify such software. PHP-Nuke is one such product of dedicated developers who decided that people shouldn't need to know how to code in order to develop their own PHP-based Web sites.

There are many offshoots of PHP-Nuke, which is the beauty of open source, and these are listed in the box "Options". The installation and control panel of each does not logically differ much from PHP-Nuke, so you can feel free to experiment with some of them as well. Here, however, we will stick to PHP-Nuke, and learn how to install, configure, and finally, tweak it to give you a Web site that's unique and looks exactly like what you want it to look like.

Pre-requisites

There are some things you will need to have before you can begin setting up your site, such as a domain name and hosting space on a Web server that supports PHP and MySQL databases. Both these are relatively easy to find. On GoDaddy.com, for example, a .COM domain will cost about \$9 (Rs 390) and basic hosting with 25 GB data transfer and 500 MB Web space will cost about \$4 (Rs 175) a month. This brings your total yearly expenditure to about \$57 (Rs 2,500). But remember, this is all you will have to pay. Using this article, you will be able to set up a personal or company Web site for exactly that price and not a paisa more.

Getting PHP-Nuke

Once you've bought your domain name and Web hosting, the next step is to download the PHP-Nuke installer from www.phpnuke.org. The latest version will cost you \$10 (Rs 435) to download, but they offer the previous version for free download. So, as of the

writing of this article, if the latest version is 7.8, you can download version 7.7 for free. The latest free version is available at http://www.phpnuke.org/modules.php?name=Downloads&d_op=viewdownload&cid=1.

Installing PHP-Nuke

Once you have downloaded the file, unzip it to your hard drive. You will see three folders-'html', 'sql' and 'upgrades', along with multiple text files. Since you are freshly installing PHP-Nuke, all that concerns you is the 'html' and 'sql' folders. The 'upgrades' folder is meant for those of you upgrading PHP-Nuke to the latest version. The first thing you should do is read the 'Readme' and the 'Install' text files, as you should do before preparing to install any software.

Now all you have to do is follow the step-by-step instructions below to install PHP-Nuke.

Step 1: Creating A New MySQL Database

A MySQL database is what a PHP Web site uses to store data. It reads the MySQL database and displays content, and the settings that you select. When you sign up for Web hosting, you will be told how to control your databases. Most hosting companies



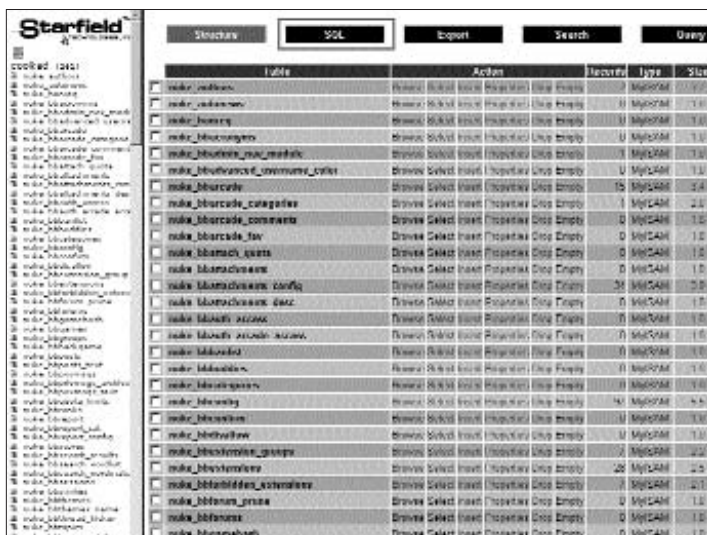
You can create a new SQL database from GoDaddy.com's control panel

offer a simple phpMyAdmin or mysqladmin front-end for managing your databases. In our example, using GoDaddy.com's hosting package, we got an allocation of one database, which we created from our account at GoDaddy itself.

You will have to create a database here and call it anything you want. Now you will have to use the phpMyAdmin or mysqladmin front-end to create the hundreds of tables and thousands of fields in MySQL that PHP-Nuke needs. Fortunately, all you need to do is find a link called SQL, as shown in the accompanying screenshots.

Step 2: Adding PHP-Nuke tables To The Database

Once you click on the SQL link, you will see something similar to what's shown in the screenshots. There will be an option to upload a file to the server and run the SQL commands in it. Basically, you need to upload the file called 'nuke.sql' which is in the 'sql' folder you came across after unzipping the PHP-Nuke installer.



Click on the SQL link to upload the nuke.sql file and create your tables

There will be a button titled 'Choose', which will ask you to select a file from your hard disk. Select the file 'nuke.sql' and click 'Go'. This will execute all the required SQL commands, and you can now begin uploading your Web content.

Step 3: Editing The config.php File

In the 'html' folder, you will find a file called config.php. Open this with a text editor such as Notepad or Wordpad. You will see the following lines:

```
$dbhost = "localhost";  
$dbuname = "root";  
$dbpass = "";  
$dbname = "nuke";  
$prefix = "nuke";  
$user_prefix = "nuke";  
$dbtype = "MySQL";  
$sitekey = "S-kQSd5%W@Y62-dm29-.-39.3a8sUf+W9";  
$gfx_chk = 0;  
$subscription_url = "";  
$admin_file = "admin";  
$advanced_editor = 0;
```

These are the default settings, and you will need to change these. An explanation for each field is given within the config.php file itself. The important ones you should take special care when changing are:

```
"$dbhost = "<URL>";
```

Set this to wherever your MySQL database is hosted. With GoDaddy hosting, this is generally something like "mysqladmin99.secureserver.net". If you are sure that the database is hosted on the same machine as the Web server, then leaving this to "localhost" should be fine.

```
"$dbusername = "<name>";
```

Here, <name> is the username you set with your hosting provider for database management.

```
“$dbname = “<dbname>”;
```

Here you should enter the name you set in Step 1 for your database.

```
“$admin_file = “admin”;
```

If you want to change the name of the admin.php file to something else, say “da-big-boss.php”, for obvious security reasons, then you should change this setting to reflect that (\$admin_file = “da-big-boss”;). Make sure that this setting and whatever you rename the admin.php file to always match, or you'll end up with a non functional site.

Step 4: Uploading The Site

Now you're finally through with all the actual editing and changing. All you have to do is upload all the files, as they are, to your Web server's root directory. This will take a while, and may fail frequently on slower connections. It would be best to find an FTP utility that supports resume and allows you to upload folders and keep folder structures. If you have a decent connection, Internet Explorer will do just fine.

Once everything is uploaded, just type in your domain in a browser and you will see a message on the main page that tells you to create an admin account and set a password. Once this is done, you will be logged into the Administration Control Panel (ACP). This is where you will be able to tweak your site and its content-all from within your browser.

Step 5: Understanding The PHP-Nuke Layout

Once you've gotten all the above steps right, you will have reached the Administrative Control Panel (ACP) for your PHP-Nuke Web site. Now, before you can start building your site, you need to know what each little icon in your ACP means, and how you can leverage them within your site.

Since we cannot list all of them in detail, we will cover the most important ones here. You should be able to decipher the rest easily enough by clicking on them.

Preferences

This is where you set all the important settings of your site, such as the name of the site, the logo it uses, the theme or colour of the entire site, and all administrative information and settings. Make sure to set all the correct information here first. You should also check out the different theme options that come bundled with PHP-Nuke and decide on one that suits your site best. You can always tweak the design later, or even download a PHP-Nuke theme from the thousands available online.

Blocks

Blocks are just that—blocks! The different boxes you see around the default site that you already have are its blocks. We have marked



The Administrator Control Panel will let you control everything you see on your site, including which blocks go where...

out different blocks in boxes in the screenshot (on previous page) to better illustrate this.

From the ACP, you can control which blocks are shown on your site, and more importantly, where on the site they appear.

You will see the following details mentioned: Title, Position, Weight, Type, Status, Visible To, and Functions with Edit, Activate/Deactivate, Delete and Show options. So, for example, let's say you want to move the Login block to the left of the Web site and disable the Languages block:

First, you click on the Edit icon in line with 'Languages'. In the new page that loads, you will see that you can change the option for Activate to 'No'. This will deactivate the Languages module, and you should also set the 'Visible to Subscribers' option to 'No', to hide the Languages block.

Now, just edit the Login block the same way, and just set the value of "Position" to "Left".

Now you can go ahead and play about with the blocks to see what you want where and what you want to remove. You can also create new blocks, with links to new pages that you construct. It's really very easy once you do it yourself.

Modules

Modules are like functions of your Web site, and can be controlled easily using the ACP. Clicking on the Modules link takes you to a page with a long list of modules. Here you have to choose what's important for your site to have and what isn't. Remember, there has to be at least one module linked to your home page. By default, this is set to the News module, as PHP-Nuke was primarily built for community boards. You can change this to anything else, and you can also download and install more modules from the Net.

By default, the following modules are active after you install PHP-Nuke:

AvantGo, Downloads, Feedback, Journal, Private Messages, Recommend Us, Search, Statistics, Stories Archive, Submit News, Surveys, Top 10, Topics, Web Links, Your Account.

The easiest way to learn what each one is, is to click on the link and see where you go. It's all pretty straightforward.

Messages

The default message you see in your home page is listed here. Messages are sort of like posts that get priority over everything else in the home page. They can be set to be permanent, such as an introduction to your site, or temporary, such as informing site visitors that the downloads section will be down for a week. You can also have messages only for registered users, or other administrators, etc.

Step 6: Investing The Time

Though this will only get you started with your Web site, PHP-Nuke is built to be easy to understand. Even if you do come across problems, or cannot understand something, there are hundreds of forums that discuss and solve any questions or problems that people face.

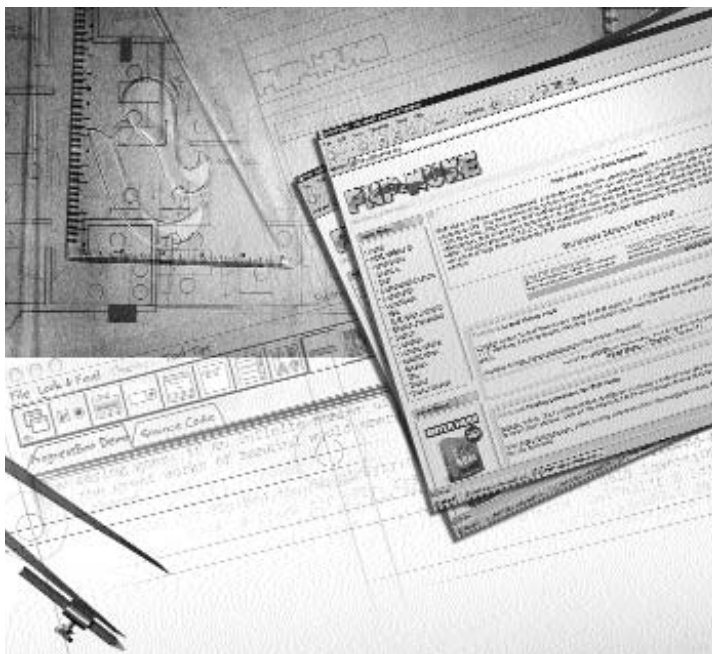
In the end, how well designed and snazzy your site looks depends solely on the amount of time you can dedicate to it. You can also add a shopping cart and a payment gateway, and sell your goods online. The options are unlimited, especially with PHP-Nuke modules, which seem to be made for each and every function you could ever imagine. Building your dream site is a lot easier now—all it takes is some time, the right keywords in Google, and a little bit of bandwidth!

Designing A Web Site



What affects your online presence most, either as an individual or as a company, is, perhaps, your Web site. Your home page is the one thing that defines you most, for the millions of strangers online. Today, with so many free options for Web hosting, it's almost a crime not to have a functional and regularly updated site. In this chapter, we walk you through the basics of designing a simple site.

4.1 Basic Requirements



Web design is easy to get started with—but you'll need to hone your skills

You need to decide where and how your site will be hosted. The next chapter—*Hosting A Web Site*—will walk you through the options you have. All the millions of options you have can be categorised into either free or paid solutions. Once you've decided on the type you want (or will settle for), you can go ahead and start planning the look of your site.

First up, if you're planning on designing your company's Web site, you need to ensure that you have the very basic things such as a logo, company colours, and so on. If you only have a company logo on your letterheads and visiting cards, and no copy of it in digital format on your computer, you need to scan the logo from a card or letterhead, and clean it up a bit using software such as Photoshop.

The beauty of the Web is that you never need high-resolution images for content. A resolution of 72 or 100 dots per inch (dpi) is more than sufficient. Not only does this simplify your work when cleaning up images in image editing software, it also means the file sizes will be much smaller, and thus easier to upload or e-mail.

If the site you are designing is for a company, you need to match the site and design with your company's colours. For example, since the *Digit* logo is red, and the Jasubhai logo is blue, the logical colours for our Web site are red and blue. However, you need to be careful to match the exact colours of your logo with your corporate identity and the products you sell. By and large, a white background with black text is universally considered the most readable—and you shouldn't mess with tradition!

Even if you decide to go with a coloured background, make sure the site uses dark text on light backgrounds. Of course, there are exceptions, such as www.skoar.com! Here, since *SKOAR!* is a gaming magazine, light text on dark backgrounds fits better, since most games have a dark setting in order to make characters stand out or contrast more.

Once you've decided upon a very general idea for your design theme, you can move on to the more complex design aspects. Unfortunately, many designers make simple, yet very noticeable, mistakes when designing their sites. We figured that the best way to make our point was to start off with what *not* to do...



You can either choose to have light text on a dark background, or vice versa, depending on the corporate colours of your site

4.2 Web Design Mistakes

Sometimes, designers get carried away by technology and the options at hand. Just because an option exists doesn't mean it has to be used.

Frames

The simplest example we can give here are frames. Five years ago, frames were the in thing—they let one or two parts of your site remain constant, while only one frame changed. This idea caught on like wildfire, and every second designer, at one point, was designing sites with frames. However, when content on the Web started to grow, search engines became more popular, and the concept of bookmarking caught on. Frames didn't gel well with bookmarks.

In the context of search, the concept of frames is itself flawed: it uses one HTML page that gets content from two or more other pages and places the content in pre-defined parts of the page. Though this sounds like a good idea, search robots will visit the index page and catalogue it as the content of your site—ignoring all the HTML code that refers to other pages. This led to sites with frames dropping rapidly in search engine rankings. This was perhaps the major reason why frames are no longer popular—after all, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is a full-time business now, and is also a major aspect of Web design.

A second flaw, but perhaps less influential towards the discontinuance of using frames, is that frames make it virtually impossible for a visitor to bookmark a particular page in your site. Since the current page is always the home page, and only specific frames within the page change, when a visitor chooses to bookmark the page, the browser always bookmarks the home page. Now, if visitors navigate a considerable amount within your Web site to get to where they are, and bookmark the current page only to return later and find that they have to navigate from your home page all the way back to where they were the first time, they are not going to be pleased!

No Frames, Please!

To further illustrate why frames should not be used, let's do an exercise. Go to www.google.com and search for the text "your browser does not support frames". The results you get are sites that are still designed with frames. You will notice that all of them have the same text because that is the message they are programmed to give browsers that do not support frames. Unfortunately, the Google bots read only text, and are thus classified as such browsers!

You will also notice that there are over 37 lakh such pages on the Internet. This means over 37 lakh pages on the Net that are not classified properly by Google, merely because of their design style; that's 37 lakh pages that may or may not contain useful information. What a waste!

The same holds true when users try and send the URL of the current page to their friends or colleagues. When the other person clicks on the link, he or she sees your home page, which perhaps has nothing to do with the reason the first visitor recommended a page on your site. This causes confusion. Of course, in modern browsers, people could just right-click on the frame that they want to re-visit and select 'Copy Address', and then either bookmark or e-mail that, but this requires too much work, and chances are the majority of your visitors will not even know that such an option exists.

Despite the obvious disadvantages of frames, some sites still use them. You would do well to avoid them like the plague!

Misleading Or Useless Page Titles

This is the text that is supposed to describe the current page, or at least your site as a whole. This text appears between the '<title>' and '</title>' code tags in an HTML page. Sadly, most amateur designers fail to notice the importance of titles, and leave it as "Welcome to xyz.com".

Again, this is very wrong when you take into account the way search engines display results: almost all search engines make the

link to the results the page title. Even if a search throws up your page as a result, all a potential visitor sees is the text “Welcome to xyz.com”, and a few lines from the site. The page title is what will draw a visitor to your site, and as the latest generation of Net surfers are quite at home with search engines, they have learnt to ignore sites with such title tags.

Let’s say you’re in the business of selling computer hardware, and your site is called ‘xyz.com’. Another company also sells IT products, and has a site called ‘abc.com’. Let’s assume a potential visitor or customer searches for “computer hardware vendor India” in a search engine and gets the following results:

Welcome to xyz.com

We believe in finding the right solutions for your pocket. Whatever your budget for computer hardware, we have a configuration that will fit your needs. Vendors of...”

www.xyz.com/52K-8 Aug 05..... Cached - Similar pages

Something.com

Your source for in-depth computer hardware info.

www.something.com/524K-10 Aug 05..... Cached - Similar pages

Abc.com

The best computer systems in India at unbeatable prices

“ABC is the leading computer hardware information resource on the ‘Net. We have all the information you need about computer hardware, including vendors...”

Abc is a renowned computer hardware vendor based in Mumbai. We deliver anywhere in India within 48 hours, and have over 1,000 service centres located at...”

www.abc.com/24K-10 Aug 03..... Cached - Similar pages

Even though your site, xyz.com, may show up first, chances are potential visitors will click on the link to Abc.com, only because the title tag matched what was searched for. In an age where Web

users estimate relevance based on a quick scan of content on search engines and Web sites, the wrong title tag could kill your chances of getting hits.

Huge Pages

Considering that India is still to achieve the mass adoption of broadband, sites with large file sizes for pages are frowned upon. When you get data transferred to you at around 5 KBps, the average 100 KB page takes 20 seconds to load. This is already too long in terms of visitors' patience, and the only reason most sites get away with is because here in India we're used to waiting for pages to load. However, if you have a site that has a 500 KB start page, this translates to a minimum of 100 seconds of waiting for the page to load-unacceptable!

On an average, try to keep pages as small as possible—less than 100 KB. This will ensure that users have a better experience at your site. One site that overwhelms you with huge page sizes is www.bengalboy.com, where the average page is over 4 MB. This PG13-rated site has ridiculous quantities of images, and ends up taking over 15 minutes to load on dial-up connections—preposterous.

Flash Designs

Although the use of Macromedia Flash has revolutionised the way content can be stored on your site and displayed to visitors, it is another bandwidth hog. Since Flash is generally used to compress videos or animations to display on Web pages, the file sizes are always large. Even simple button animations can add a few KBs here and there, which can total up to a lot.

You also need to remember that text almost always loads before graphics, and most users will scan through whatever appears on your site first and decide whether the content is what they are looking for. Even though you may have relevant content neatly displayed using a fancy Flash links menu, many users may not stick around long enough to see this.

Most importantly, however, you need to remember that in India, the majority are on dial-up, and will not be patient enough to wait for your menus to load, or for a Flash intro to complete.

Even if you feel that your site is not complete without a Flash intro, make sure to prominently display a 'Skip Intro' option, for visitors who do not want to wait for the intro to finish loading. Also, if you just have to use Flash menus, make sure the same menu instance is used throughout your site, so that browsers will be able to cache the item and not reload it for every page.

Gaudy Colours

Some Web sites give you the idea that the people who designed them are colour-blind! You will come across many sites that are likely to drive you mad, or make you blind, if you spend too much time on them. This is mainly due to a very bad sense of colour matching. There isn't much to explain here—with millions of colour combinations available, it's purely up to you to decide what combinations are just not right.

Browser Support

Most designers don't seem to care about whether their sites work on browsers other than Internet Explorer (IE). In fact, it's not just site design you should worry about, you should also choose a hosting solution that is compatible with most browsers. For example, Microsoft's ASP technology is largely targeted at IE, and browsers such as Opera and Mozilla Firefox often run into trouble with some ASP pages.

The best way to check the functionality of your site is to check it using the most popular browsers. We suggest you start with Lynx, the popular text-based browser in Linux, to see what your site will most probably look like to a search engine bot, and then work your way through IE, Mozilla Firefox, Opera, and others.

Balanced Content

Sites with only text, or even those with only graphics, can be very

irritating to view. Even if your site has only text, try and make the text layout look good. Can you imagine yourself reading this book if it didn't have a picture or paragraph breaks to lend visual relief? The same holds true for your site.

You should never substitute text with graphics, such as making an animated GIF image with changing text. Doing this only increases the size of a page, and also takes away people's ability to resize the text on the page according to their needs. It also almost always results in a low-resolution image that shows very poor quality text.

A good rule of thumb is the ratio of 80:20—80 per cent text to 20 per cent images. This means that when you look at the pages you design, no more than 20 per cent of the screen area should be images.

You also need to remember that Web sites have depth, and there's no reason to try and cram everything you offer into your home page. Divide up your content into little piles, study your existing as well as target audiences, and then tag your content in decreasing order of importance or interest to this audience. The top 50 per cent of your content should be easily accessible from your home page, and the rest can either be distributed lower down on your home page or stored in lower levels (different pages) of your site.

Navigation

Very often, you come across sites that lead you to a page best described as a virtual dead-end. Somehow, visitors might get stuck at a place, and have no clue as to how they got there. This usually results in a visitor clicking on the little [X] on the top right corner, banishing your site from their screen forever! The entire reason for taking pains to design sites is to avoid this from ever happening... yet it does!

So what causes this problem? Simple. Bad design!

All the pages your site contains should at least have links to your home page and major sections. The easiest way to do this would be to have a constant navigation bar that has a fixed position on every page of your site. A good rule to follow is the three-click rule: no page in your site should be more than three clicks away from any other page.

Being Over-Creative

Sometimes, designers have delusions of grandeur, and think they would make good copy writers or visualisers in advertising agencies. This leads to sites that are cryptic to the common man. Such sites might be acceptable if the business or individual is attempting to show off their creative prowess—as might be the case with an actual copy writer or advertising agency, or perhaps an artist's home page. However, most often, such sites are a big no-no for the majority.

The problem lies in the fact that as the creative juices flow, the results often become more cryptic than creative. Take the site www.1amp.com. A visit to the site will have you waiting for a few minutes for everything to load at first—it's Flash-based. Once that's done, you see tiny links at the bottom of the Flash animation. Each link takes you to a cryptic Flash page, which will confuse you with its unorthodox link placement. To make matters worse, at the end of everything, you will have gone through the whole site and, at best, only be able to guess what AMP as a company does. Having to guess is bad! The only time people like guessing is in games—every other instance of guessing makes people uncomfortable and irritated.

Our guess is that AMP is an advertising agency, but the fact that we're still not sure is proof enough that their site is a failure. Now, such a site for a company not dealing with creativity as a product would be sheer madness. [1amp.com](http://www.1amp.com) won the dubious distinction of being used as an example for "The biggest Web design mistakes of 2004" at the popular site www.web-pagethatsuck.com.

Outdated Pages

Nothing is worse than having a site that has outdated content. Sites that contain content on the home page that was last updated over a couple of months ago are often considered ‘neglected’, and are ignored by visitors.

This holds true especially if you add a News section to your site and start updating it regularly, and then somewhere along the line, falter and stop updating it.

No Resizing

Web pages that cannot be resized are a big no-no. Often, people browse Web sites without maximising their windows. If half your content is not visible because your site does not allow for resizing windows, you have a problem on your hands. This also holds true for text resizing: nothing is more irritating than text on a page that visitors cannot increase or decrease the size of by using their browser’s text resize option.

Moving Text And Images

Let’s face it—scrolling text marquees are ugly! They are not considered good design any more, and you should avoid putting in scrolling text as far as possible. The only form in which scrolling text is acceptable is as a ticker on your site, such as a stock quote ticker, news ticker, or Shout box, where visitors can leave a message for other visitors. Basically, only if you need to dedicate a very limited space to content that changes rapidly, or is input by visitors, should you consider scrolling text.

Animated GIF images, too, are now considered amateurish. Most often, only jokes and ads contain GIF animation. Web users are accustomed to seeing GIF animations as advertisements, and have learnt to ignore them at sight. This means that all the effort you put into animating an image will be wasted on the majority of visitors. If you have to include moving pictures, make sure the animation is done well and flows smoothly, otherwise it’s likely that you’ll make your site look unprofessional.

Examples Of What Not To Do

Here are a few sites you might want to look at to see why we advise against certain things:

▫ <http://www.angelfire.com/super/badwebs/main.htm>

A site that shows you a few examples of what is bad.

▫ <http://www.hud-son.com>

Terrible layout, too flashy, with horrible graphics and scrolling text.

▫ <http://www.rsanford.com/sanfordWeb.html>

Interesting Flash intro, but useless navigation structure.

▫ <http://www.1amp.com>

Try figuring what AMP does...

▫ <http://www.indianrail.gov.in>

Terrible colour scheme

▫ www.crumplerbags.com

A weird site that is all Flash and takes long to load.

▫ <http://www.archis.org/interface.php>

Text in graphics form that is too small.

▫ <http://arngren.net>

This site is not in English, but one look at it and you know that bad design transcends language barriers!

Design Tips

Now that you know what not to do, it should be pretty simple to understand what is acceptable. Just avoid making any of the mistakes mentioned here and you should be fine.

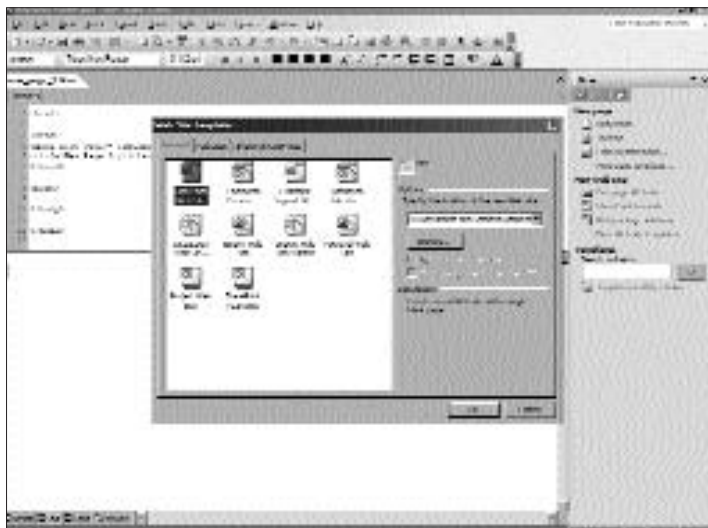
4.3 Design Tools

A common misconception is that sites can only be designed by coders who know HTML and other Web design languages. In this age of software empowerment, anyone to do anything: Web design has not been spared. Design programs such as Microsoft FrontPage and Macromedia Dreamweaver make sure that good design is simple to achieve.

This section will walk you through the basics of using these two programs.

Microsoft FrontPage

The latest version is Microsoft FrontPage 2003, and a lot of improvements have been made in this version. FrontPage has always had the distinction of being really easy to use, but has generally been less respected as a Web design tool by hard-core designers. However, for those just starting out with Web design, there is no simpler tool. As with most Microsoft products, you'll take almost no time to get to grips with the interface.



You can choose a template for your site

Let's take a look at MS FrontPage:

1. When you run FrontPage, it starts off with a blank page.

2. You can choose to build a site from a template. There are several templates available—choose one that matches your needs.

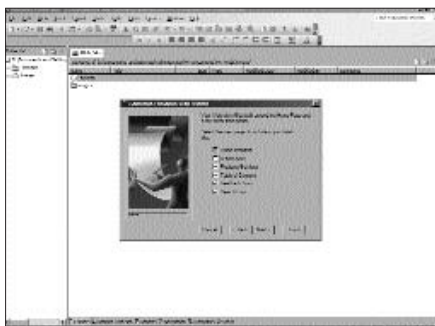
3. We chose to build a 'Corporate Presence' site.

4. Change the logos and add suitable text where clearly marked, and save each page.

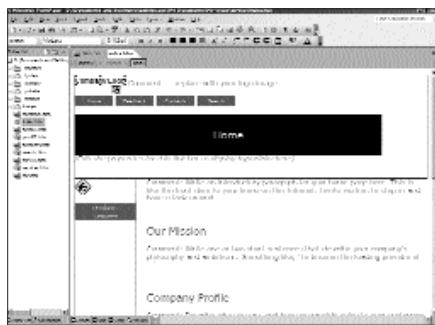
5. Check the pages you've designed in different browsers by going to File > Preview In Browser.

6. Once all the pages have been edited, upload the entire Web folder to your hosting server.

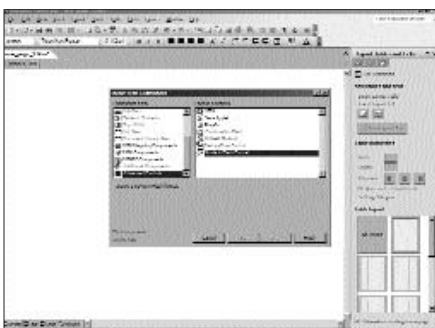
7. Check all the pages again, and your site is done.



Choose what pages you want to include



Just click on each box to edit its contents



Choose to insert Web components when you want to include Flash movies, Java applets or ActiveX Controls



Choose different themes for new pages by going to **Format > Theme...**

Though this sounds a little too simple, the fact is FrontPage is designed that way, so the easiest way to experience its simplicity is to install it and try it yourself.

Web Components

Web components in FrontPage are very important. FrontPage calls

Flash movies, hit counters, buttons, etc. Web components. The simplest way to see what each does is to open a blank page and insert one of each component one by one and then preview in your favourite browser.

Pictures

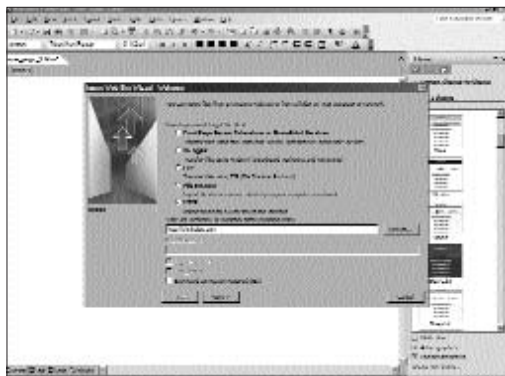
Inserting a picture in FrontPage is very easy: just go to **Insert > Picture** and choose the appropriate option.

Themes

Use a theme to get a predefined colour scheme—and save your time trying to think up one.

Import

If you already have a site, and are looking to modify the existing site rather than building a new one from scratch, you can choose to import your site by



You can also choose to import an existing Web site from the Internet

going to
File > Import.

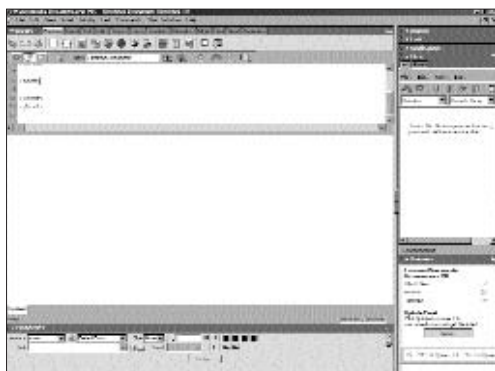
Macromedia Dreamweaver

Macromedia
Dreamweaver is
the preferred pro-
fessional Web
design tool.
Though it is not
as easy to use as
FrontPage, it is

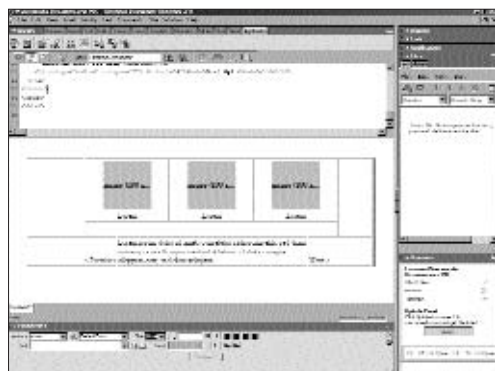
considered to be much more powerful. Of course, this does not mean it is impossible to use, and it is actually quite simple to accomplish basic tasks, just like in Microsoft FrontPage.

When you run Dreamweaver, you are presented with a blank page. You can just close that page and go to File > New, and in the 'New Document' dialog that pops up, choose 'Page Designs' from the 'Category' pane on the left. You will see a long list of options in the 'Page Designs' pane in the middle, and clicking on one will show you a preview of what that design looks like in the 'Preview' pane on the right. Choose one that suits your needs for the page you're designing, and click 'Create'.

Just like in
FrontPage, you
are shown a page
with blank
images and
dummy text. All
you have to do is



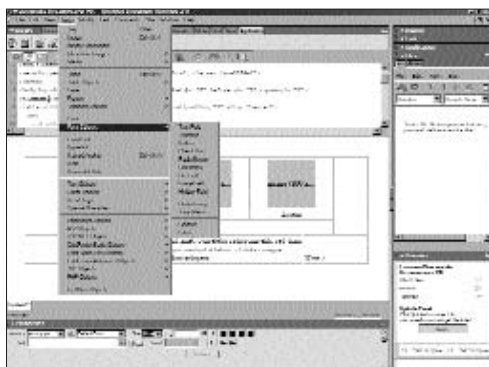
Edit HTML code easily in Dreamweaver



Just like in Frontpage, Dreamweaver also let's you just click on boxes to edit them

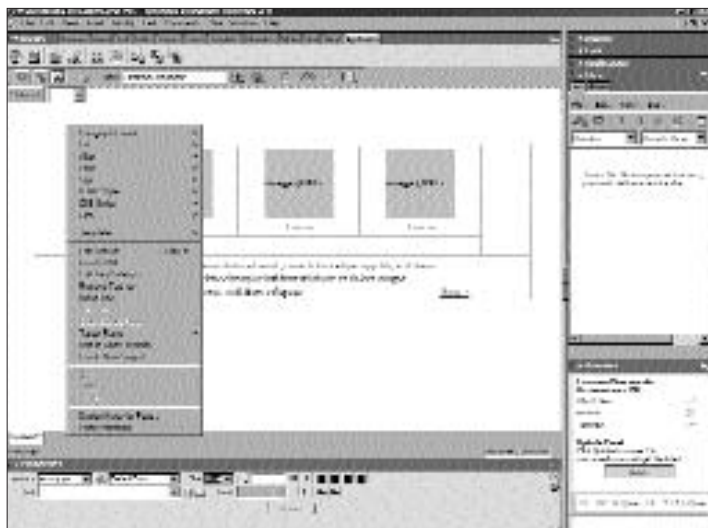
edit the text and images by double-clicking on them. Once you are satisfied with your final page, press [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [S] and choose where to save the Web page. Create all the pages you want for your site and save all pages in the same folder

relative to the index.html page. If you need to make new folders, do so, and make sure to keep all images in a separate 'images' folder. This will help you sort your data more efficiently.



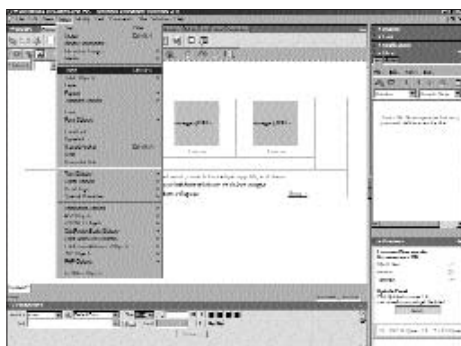
Use the Insert menu to easily insert various forms and buttons in to your Web page

Once you are done creating all the desired pages, make sure to



Right-click to see the many options easily available to you

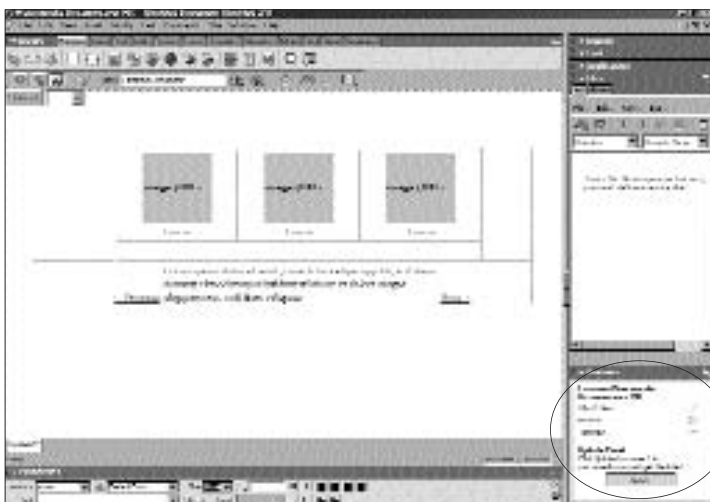
preview all of them in a browser—you can do this by pressing [F12]. The last step is to upload all the pages and images to your Web server. Remember to keep all relative paths exactly the same as they are in your root folder (where ‘index.html’ is saved) on your hard disk.



Use the Insert menu to insert tables in to your Web pages easily

Inserting Objects

In Dreamweaver, you can insert a large variety of objects into the current page. Just click on the ‘Insert’ menu to see the list of available objects. Once done, don’t forget to save your page.



Learn more about Dreamweaver by reading the Help files and tutorials

Right-click

Dreamweaver's right-click menu is quite exhaustive. Right-click anywhere on the page to see the long list of options available.

Tables

Drawing tables is easy in both Dreamweaver and FrontPage. All you need to do is look for the 'Insert Table' option in the 'Insert' dropdown menu.

Task Panes

In order to use Dreamweaver more efficiently, you'll need to learn to use the various task panes provided on the top, bottom and right-hand side. The best way to learn is to use each task pane and get the hang of the software!

Covering Macromedia Dreamweaver in detail would require another entire book. Visit www.macromedia.com for news, tips and tutorials, and basic information about Macromedia Dreamweaver.

Blogs



It's the chic new thing so far, but blogs—short for Web log—are *the* thing to have today. And sure enough, just about everyone has one (or more!). But what is blogging and what are its advantages? How is it different from a Web site? Fret no more... we will answer all this and more.

What Are Blogs?

Simply put, a blog is a compilation of thoughts, ideas, facts, news or whatever you will that someone has decided to put online! Called posts, each article on a blog can be connected with the previous or not. That's the thing. There are no rules and there are no restrictions. It's your playground to experiment.



A typical blog looks something like this. This one is hosted on MSN Spaces

Blogs are usually structured, organised by category and are updated often; in most cases, daily. The owner (and in some cases, moderators) of the blog has the rights to control the content.

The term 'blog' was coined back in 1999, and ever since, blogs

have caught the fancy of online dwellers. At last count, there were roughly about 10 million blogs on the Internet!

Creating A Blog

It's not necessary for you to know HTML inside out if you want to create a blog. You just need to be able to find your way across cyberspace and know the basics of Internet browsing (as explained in *Fast Track to The Internet* in August 2005).

Available for free, there are numerous tools you could use to create a blog. You can use an HTML editor like Dreamweaver or FrontPage Express to create your blog's look and feel and to create posts. You could then send the content via FTP to a Web server.

However, if you're unfamiliar with HTML editors and using FTP programs, there are a lot of services that offer free blogging tools. Some of the more popular ones are Blogger (www.blogger.com),



Typepad-for free and paid services



Blogger, one of the most popular free blogging tools

Blogsome (www.blogsome.com), and Typepad (www.typepad.com), to name a few.

When you set up a blog, you create a login name and password (similar to creating an e-mail account), select a template that will house your information and also create a nickname (optional) to sign all your posts. Once you have the blog set up, you can post whatever information you like, whenever you want and as often as you want to.

5.1 The Benefits And Advantages Of Blogs

Easy to maintain and easy to start

If you don't know HTML, using a template from one of the many tools available makes it easy to start off. You just post your info into the template and your account is created.

In most cases, the options within the template as offered by the service are extensive and allow you to categorise your posts. You can also link your blog to other blogs or sites to announce your arrival and popularise your space.

Post as often as you like

Post as much and as often as you like. None of the free blogging tools restrict the number of entries you can put up or the length of an entry. Heck, they are also offering free photo upload facilities now to brighten up your blog!

Blogs are highly interactive

Interactivity and quick! Most posts, depending on the number of regular visitors to your blog, would have a comment or two hundred soon after the post has been uploaded.

Blogs may also use a 'TrackBack' system that allows a visitor to see who has written the original post and any other entry concerning it. Some blogs can also alert you when new or updated content is added.

Info

Blogging gives a writer all the freedom he/she could ever hope for. While there is no censorship on the Internet, remember to be responsible with your writing. Also, take responsibility for what you write since your readers will comment on your writing and expect clarifications or explanations. This is the very thread that defines blogging and if you do not want it to be interactive, disable the comments on your blog.

The TrackBack option typically appears below a blog entry, and shows a summary of what has been written on the target blog, together with a URL and the blog name.

No lists or spam filters to maintain

E-mail spam filters do not block blogs because they are not an e-mail communication. With the advent of spam filters and the increasing refinement in the way they filter e-mails, delivery of newsletters and e-zines has become difficult.

Blogs are not delivered to any inbox and therefore, no methods of defeating filters are needed. Bottomline is that no one can shut you out simply because they are now searching you out!

The number of blogs you can create is limitless

You can create as many blogs as you like, on as many subjects as you'd like.

So if your fancy has suddenly shifted to Indian Classical Music, go on, write about it. You could even upload samples of the music. Who knows how many people might be interested in what you have to say or sing!

The screenshot shows the Technorati website interface. At the top, it says "Signed in as Aditya" and "View your: Account, Watchlist, Profile, Sign Out". Below this is a navigation bar with "Search", "Tags", "Popular", "About", and "Help". The main content area features a search bar with the text "Search 14.7 million blogs for the latest on:" and a "SEARCH" button. Below the search bar, there are sections for "Top Searches This Hour" and "Also discussed". The "Top Searches This Hour" section lists: 1. "Cindy Sheehan", 2. "Tripp", 3. "Google", 4. "Peshawar", 5. "Haral". The "Also discussed" section lists: 6. "Air America", 7. "Ally Danger", 8. "Iran", 9. "Katherine Harris", 10. "Mark Grace". Below these sections, there are four boxes: "Technorati Weblog", "Get Indexed", "Technorati Mobile", and "Developer Center". The footer of the page says "Technorati, the dedicated blog search engine".

They're search engine friendly

Search engines are constantly searching for new content and blogs match this requirement perfectly thanks to the constantly-changing content daily.

There are numerous Web sites that act as 'blog search engines' as well. Do not forget to submit your blogs to these sites, so as to increase your exposure. This will also help with your page rank on general search engines.

Here are some of the places to list your blog:

- **Technorati:** www.technorati.com
- **Blog search engines:** www.blogstreet.com
- **Globe of Blogs:** www.globeofblogs.com
- **Blog Universe:** www.bloguniverse.com
- **Blog Search Engine:** www.blogsearchengine.com

They're economical

Actually you could get them for free! Since no lists are to be maintained, there are no list server costs. Blogging software and services are also very reasonably priced.

In most cases, they are free, but then you need to let them maintain a link back to them on your page. If you don't want that, you could opt for a paid service and do what you will with the page and yet continue to use their content management module.

Some blogging services charge people to read, while others charge writers to write, but overall, the monthly charges are rather minimal either way.

They're educational

Yes, there are some that are focussed and can be very educational. There's such a variety of informative and educational blogs avail-

Fact

The average person reads 200 words per minute - The speed reading record is 1347 wpm. In 96 seconds they will read 320 words. So keep things short and to the point. This may sound crazy but these stats show that longer posts are often largely ignored.

able now that a search for any subject usually turns up hundreds of offerings.

For a view into popular blogs in many categories, just visit www.blogit.com or do a search at www.technorati.com.

You can get syndication

Syndication (RSS) is a great way to ensure that your writing and your views are exposed to as much of the general public as possible.

In most cases, Syndication is now included in blogging services and this has drawn a great number of writers to this new medium.

For an example of a blog service that features syndication, visit www.typepad.com or www.blogger.com



Everyone can contribute to your blog

Reading A Blog

- m No special tools are needed to visit a blog or to read a post or leave a comment. You can use your existing Web browser like Firefox, Opera, Mozilla, Netscape or Internet Explorer. Blogs normally have addresses like `http://blogname.blogservice.com` where `blogname` is the name of the blog as defined by the owner of the blog and `blogservice` is the host or the tool being used to maintain that blog. So a blog on Blogger would have an address like `http://digit.blogspot.com`.
- m Use a RSS (Really Simple Syndication) reader. You can subscribe to whichever blogs you want and they become immediately available in the reader. Using an RSS reader allows you to have all the blogs that interest you in one place—you don't have to surf all over the Internet to read them.

What's better is that everytime a new post is made, you would be notified within the reader and a link to the complete post would also be available. How convenient, isn't it?

5.2 The Elements Of Success

To be successful, blogs need to contain the following elements:

m **Compelling, well-written content**

No one, whether online or offline, wants to read material that is poorly written, difficult or boring to read. Why would anyone want to read an article on why your thumb is sore? If written well, there are enough who may just be interested!

For example, there's this guy who maintains a blog about what all he's eating. On an average, he gets 3,000 hits per day and a regular mention in newspapers worldwide! Fifteen minutes of fame at its best!



A business-oriented blog

m **Updated material**

As is the case with newsletters and e-zines, if material on your blog is not updated regularly, the audience eventually dies out. And why not? What's the point of people coming to your blog and finding the same old stuff day in and day out? They wouldn't be wrong in assuming that the blog has died out!

Fact

The average person only comprehends 60 per cent of what they read. To ensure your reader gets what you're saying you need to make it clear by using some of the following techniques.

- m Use simple language. Avoid technical jargon.
- m Don't introduce too many ideas in one post. You can always add another post later.

m Rousing topics

Topics of interest to a wide range of readers succeed more than topics that appeal to a certain few, or those that are relatively dull. However, if you are incisive in your writing and know what you are saying, having a specialised subject for your blog can earn you a loyal following. Again, it boils down to the quality of writing.

m Visually pleasing

A blog is akin to a Web site for written materials, and just like the design of a Web site, care should be taken to make the blog visually appealing and friendly for visitors. Some easy pointers here are to avoid jarring colours and links that go nowhere or photographs that take too long to load. Make the entire visit an unforgettable experience and your repeat visitors shall soar.

With a blog, you direct the content, but let your readers guide you. You should also be regular and disciplined with new posts. Let your readers know what to expect and when to expect it.

5.3 Blogs And Your Business

If blogs are all about expressing and making a point, how could they fit into a business? Here's how:

Blogs provide great supplemental content and direct attention to areas of your business that you want to feature or highlight. More than that, blogs lend themselves to many other uses such as:

- Communicate with colleagues, partners, suppliers, and existing or potential customers
- Showcase industry/company news, introduce new products, services or marketing promotions, and provide tips
- Establish a company's or individual's reputation or brand
- Improve operations (e.g., project management or tech support knowledge-sharing)
- Demonstrate expertise
- Establish competitive differentiation
- Simplify and accelerate the publishing process!

The Marketing Potential

Tip

Write about what you love. A weblog is the place for strong opinions, whether about politics, music, social issues, gardening, or your profession. The more engaged you are with your subject, the more interesting your writing will be.

Link to your sources. The Web allows a transparency that no other medium can duplicate. When you link to a news story, an essay, a government document, a speech, or another blogger's entry, you allow your readers access to your primary material, empowering them to make informed judgements.

Blogs can be used as highly strategic desktop tools that are here for the long term. In addition to putting down your thoughts and creating a corporate presence, think of the potential for your e-newsletter strategies:

- Articles within newsletters can be linked to a blog, extending life and creating a massive conversation giving you a clearer idea of what your customer is really thinking
- You can offer a bi-directional forum to customers to get true, personal opinions on your products and services; something no survey with just numbers can guarantee
- Company experts can start a blog and become industry experts, helping your company edge out the competition. This, however, will need a great deal of work to go in the background.
- You can layer your blog with editorial controls and ensure nothing you wouldn't want ever goes up there!

5.4 Exploitation Of Blogs

Since its birth and over the last few years when it has grown in stature and reach, the Internet has become all-encompassing to the extent that we are more likely to say "Google it" than "let's check out the library" if we are looking for information.

Despite this, though, we still haven't dreamed of all the ways we'll use it five years from now. But there are certainly indications that we're going to have to be vigilant in recognising the difference between honest business practice and the misuse of the net.

With blogs, since everyone has opinions, and we all now get a chance to offer our opinions up to worldwide scrutiny, we've recognised that it offers us an easy way to achieve our 15 minutes of fame! Guaranteed? Not quite.

Most people are using their newfound recognition to offer up their best: their interesting opinions, their hidden theories, their

creative thoughts. The passionate and opinionated now have an avenue to vent.

We find these people through mutual areas of interest—we can do a search and find them, or go to the standard blog-directing sites and choose our favourite obsession to either read about or add some material to.

In either case, we feel like we're part of a community of like-minded souls. On a movie-goers' blog, we can rant and rave about the merits of why *Sarkar* is better than *Black* or whether Saif Ali Khan really deserved the National Award for a routine role in *Hum Tum*. It's your playground. Say what you will!

But we belong to this community because of our substantial knowledge in the field, our love of the ideas or genre, and our beliefs of ourselves as amateur experts.

In any case, we're in good—albeit possibly annoying—company. It's become fun to find people and thoughts we would never have met otherwise but can immediately bond with.

Unfortunately, there is a downside to this also. There are people who are using the blogging world for fame and gain—and we have no way of knowing the difference between opinions and sleaze.

Tip

Link to other weblogs. Your readers may enjoy being introduced to the weblogs you most enjoy reading. The Web is a democratic medium and bloggers amplify each other's voices when they link to each other. Generously linking to other weblogs enlarges the grassroots network of information sharing and social alliances we create together on the Web.

Sleaze Marketing

Sleaze in the blogging sense doesn't mean sleaze as on the overall Internet front. It's not necessarily porn.

It's more intellectual and how your trust is being undermined and you are cheated.

Take a telemarketer for example. He simply calls and tells you that he has something to sell. If you are not interested, you end the conversation. On a blog, though, you may never know that something is being sold to you. Call it subliminal if you will, but most prefer the term underhanded!

There are companies that are making a fortune off this. Either by peddling their own products or by getting others to do it for them. They hire people who have expertise in a specific area—say, gadgets—and turn them into Net-based stealth marketers.

Here's what they do: they insinuate themselves into a blogging or chat community. They hang out in the community until they become trusted contributors and likeable personalities with some expertise. And then they mention a product they've just 'tried'. They don't pitch it—that would be too obvious—they just mention it kindly with a bit of excitement. Just a bit.

A job well done! Thanks to the affirmative information from a trusted friend, there's now a whole community that will go out and buy or try the new product. Easy as that. Viral marketing at its best. Get lots of people in a group to become your tipping point, and you've just got a whole lot of cheap marketing.

But isn't there something wrong with this picture? If every aspect of the Web is a chance for manipulation and abuse, whom do we trust? How do honest people compete in this environment and scrupulously manage their marketing or web or competition challenges?

We Told You So...

There are people who expect nothing less of the Net, though. Their belief is that no one on the Net is to be trusted, that every comment or idea or opinion is self-serving—and therefore untrustworthy. These people just shrug at the mention of the ‘sleaze marketing’. Of course, they say. The entire Internet is sleaze marketing.

Is this true? Like in the offline world, though, there are some unscrupulous elements that hurt the usability and the credibility of the Internet. Unfortunately, these are spoken about more and are always in the limelight even if for the wrong reasons giving rise to the negative image of the Internet.

But not all of us believe that. For some of us, the Internet is a global arena that encompasses the group brain, where we can find answers to questions we haven’t asked, ideas that we haven’t thought yet, feedback in areas we had never challenged. It is our friend, foe, conscience, teacher and ability to touch base with people we could never meet or know of otherwise.

Of course, not all available data is accurate or conscionable or wise. But like in the offline world where you steer clear of shady characters and associate with the good ones, the Web is a place to practise your discretion.

Blogs are allegedly the revolutionary new media, and are fast becoming increasingly difficult to ignore for those who spend time online. They are increasingly being recognised by businesses as a powerful communication tool. In fact, the medium has become so important that Bill Gates has a Web site of his own!

Tip

Be patient. Most weblog audiences are small, but with time and regular updates your audience will grow. You may never have more than a few hundred readers, but the people who return to your site regularly will come because they are interested in what you have to say.

Researching information, finding answers and making contacts are the main reasons people in business log onto the Internet. A blog can aid in this process, resulting in online networking opportunities. Having a business blog can be a good way for your customers to communicate with you, as well as between themselves, and in the process, form new relationships. While this may sound too esoteric, it's happening right now on the WWW.

Blogging is fast, low-cost and offers a highly effective publishing, marketing and content management tool. However, before adding 'blogging' to your marketing mix, you should be sure you're clear why you're blogging and what you want to get out of it. Do you want your customer's views about certain matters? Do you want to encourage communication between customers and your business?

Once these issues have been addressed, you need to find someone to host your blog. This is a straightforward process, and is virtually free.

If you just search for 'blogging' in Google, you could have a tough time choosing!

Although new, the success of blogging has given rise to a new industry; entrepreneurial media companies have introduced 'blog monitoring', where they scour the net to advise brands on how their name is being talked about online, away from the traditional print and broadcast media

(Refer bibliography for some of the top blogs from around the world).

The idea behind this emerging service industry is simple. While there were only 130,000 blogs four years ago, today, there are about 10 million. These Web pages can make or break a company's reputation because they provide links to each other and allow people to comment on postings—in other words, the blog is a huge image-making network that cannot be ignored. Even if you, as a company are ignoring it, others that may be using your products or services

are blogging about it. Wouldn't you want to know?

However, it is not only large companies that can benefit from blogs. Blogs are a useful tool for companies of all sizes. Especially for the smaller ones.

Why not start with a private, in-house blog, which is password-protected, so that it can only be seen by certain users, for example a project team or company division? Staff can use inhouse or intranet-based blogs for diary management, project tracking, arranging meetings, collecting comments and publishing documents.

The key to success is to pick the areas in your business where blogs can solve communication problems, then train the blog owners to anticipate and deal with issues in advance. With many blogs reaching thousands of people daily, many of whom also blog, it is time for blogging to be taken seriously in the marketing mix.

So what's your URL?

Forums



The usefulness of online communities is best represented by looking at various forums. It's the simplest way for like-minded people, or people with a common interest, to come together and share their thoughts and opinions—in true online style, without having to take the trouble to actually meet anyone. This chapter will look at forums to see what benefits they can bring to you as an individual, and we'll use our own forum (www.thinkdigit.com/forum) as an example.

6.1 The Importance Of Forums

Forums are simple to understand, and are, in certain respects, very close to communities in real life. The fact that they are very easy to use also increases their popularity—anyone who can manage to connect to the Internet, open a browser and type in a URL will find it easy to click on a link to a forum, and then register and post their thoughts.

Forums, unlike blogs, exist because of a group of people, and tend to reflect the sentiments of the community as a whole. Though a lot of people think a person loses his individuality on a forum, the fact is that forums breed better individuals. Take the case of a school, where students are further segregated into groups based on the class they are in. To an outsider, all the students of the school are alike—they wear the same uniform, and are generally all seen in the same place. There are no individuals visible to the outsider. Once the outsider joins the school, he finds there are various groups that interest him, and within those groups, there are people who are intelligent, people who are funny, and even some who seem just plain silly! That's exactly how forums work.

Take the example of the *Digit* forum (www.thinkdigit.com/forum): this is a place where members are as diverse as it can get. People from all parts of the world—all over India, the US and the UK—come together with one common bond: they all read, or used to read, *Digit*! Everyone on the forum loves technology, and most members love *Digit* magazine. Yes, just as in life, there is the dissenting minority here, but they are as welcome as the others, merely because it is a community, an online society, where acceptance is a must.

Some would go so far as to say that only forums and online communities can mimic real life in the otherwise fantasyland that is the Web. In fact, some might opine that it is even better than real life, as everyone expresses themselves openly, merely because they need not fear ridicule, as in, “So a few people online hate my guts... big deal!”

Whether forums build better people is something that is beyond the scope of this book, and perhaps a conclusion best left to psychiatrists and forum members to thrash about. However, there's no denying that the right forum can help you develop your skill sets.

6.2 Forum Activity

Forums are not just places where people who love to argue get together and play one-upmanship games. Yes, this does happen often, and quite a few members on each forum are there specifically to build their egos by winning arguments, or showing off their superior knowledge, but they still aren't the majority.

Again, taking the example of the *Digit* forum, members here can be broadly classified into the following groups:

1. One-time Visitors
2. Occasional Browsers
3. Regular Contributors
4. Forum Addicts
5. Troublemakers
6. Moderators/Administrators

Read on to find out which group you probably belong to, and which you 'should' belong to.

One-time Visitors

This group is simple to comprehend: they find your site via Google or from a friend. They decide to pay it a visit when they're bored, or when they need quick answers, visit the forum a couple of times, and then forget all about its existence.

On the *Digit* forum, these members comprise about 15 per cent of the registered members. They register only because they stumbled across the site and it sparked interest, but that spark was fleeting. Other users who make up this group are those with PC or

technology problems: they're stuck and need a solution quickly. They visit well-known technology forums, register, post their question and then wait a while. Once they have their answer, they're gone before you can say *Digit!*

There's nothing really wrong with being a one-time visitor, and one can't blame people for trying to find solutions to their problems. However, netiquette demands that users check back on their questions a few days later and see if there are any replies. Even if you didn't find the answer to your question at a forum, and found it elsewhere instead, return to all the places you posted the question at and give those people the answer. This at least enriches other forums with the right answers.

Occasional Browsers

These are generally users who are not particularly interested in a forum, but like to come back to see if there's anything interesting happening. The reason for their infrequent visits might be lack of time. However, there are two very distinct personalities of people who fit into this category—those who come to learn a few tips now and then, and those who come to impart knowledge when they're bored.

At the *Digit* forum, this group comprises less than five per cent of the overall member population. The reason is simple: because we are a monthly, almost all the members have something new to talk about each month. This breathes fresh life into every regular contributor's typing fingers—whether it's to criticise or praise is not important.

At *Digit's* forum, most members fall into one of the other categories: they either don't care and are one-timers, or are hooked and come back at least a few times a month.

Regular Contributors

These members are the mainstay of any successful forum, and visit and contribute at least a few times a week. They have a genuine interest in the topics discussed on the forum, and enjoy the company of their peers.

On the *Digit* forum, the majority of members (about 60 per cent) fall into this category. Most members of this category look towards developing their technology skills, and also help those in need of answers. It is these members that contribute most towards the growth in popularity of a forum, and word generally spreads through them.

Needless to say, it is vital that the majority of forum members fall into this category for a forum to become successful or popular. A shift in balance towards any other category will spell certain doom for any forum.

Addicts

It's hard to start anything online today without getting a few thousand people addicted, and forums are no exception. There are always a group of people who can derive enough fun out of absolutely anything to get permanently hooked.

Of the *Digit* forum population, roughly 10 per cent fall in this category. These are people who post several times a day-as many as a thousand posts by a single member in two weeks on our forum! Such folks look forward to getting home and on the forum as much as some people need coffee or tea every morning.

It may seem that these members contribute the most to a forum, and thus are perhaps significantly responsible for its growth, but in truth, it is the other way round. Forum addicts so badly need to post their views that they sometimes do not care whether their views will be appreciated.

On our forum, for example, forum addicts are not necessarily the most technologically sound members, and often end up making frivolous posts about inane topics that only make other members cry out in disbelief. Often, such posts lead to heated discussions and name-calling.

Addicts generally get called names such as ‘spammer’, ‘lamer’ and ‘n00b’ (short for newbie). Other very colourful names and variants of those names are also thrown about at random by the majority. This happens because members see the same people butting in everywhere with comments or questions, very often in threads or topics that they know nothing about, when in fact they would be better off waiting and reading posts by members who do have the knowledge to reply.

Just as we hate chatterboxes in real life, who never let you finish a sentence and interrupt you all the time, addicts tend to be disliked by the majority.

Troublemakers

The terrorists of the online world, troublemakers have only one agenda—to disrupt everyday life on a forum. These people will do absolutely anything to shock and repulse members, and even enjoy the abuses hurled at them.

Unlike in real life, where such people can be caught and punished, anonymity in the online world is not hard to come by. Forums are not made to be fortresses, and whatever security measures are taken are hardly a deterrent to a troublemaker.

Sometime in late 2004, the *Digit* forum was attacked by a few such troublemakers: some were intent on spreading hate, others were trying to hack the forum, and one even went as far as posting filthy abuse and pornography. Thankfully, our members were mature enough to ignore it all, and recognised the immaturity and pointlessness of the troublemakers.

No matter how many IPs were banned, and how many e-mail addresses blocked, the troublemakers returned. In the end it was the members of the forum that got rid of these unwanted few. How? Just by ignoring everything they did. Nothing hurt more than the lack of confrontation and the sheer indifference they were shown.

Forums all over the world have stumbled across the same brilliant solution. Online life, at least, proves that if you ignore it long enough, it will go away!

Moderators/Administrators

This is a group that everyone else wants to join—until they actually do! The post of “Forum Moderator” or “Forum Administrator” is often much coveted, especially since they carry an aura of power. However, to shamelessly quote a popular comic strip, “with great power comes great responsibility”, and these positions of power can be thankless.

No, we don’t mean to compare forum staff to superheroes, but as is well known, when a hobby becomes a job, it ceases to be fun!

The *Digit* forum has a handful of members who were elevated to the coveted post of Moderator, and were initially thrilled with the opportunity. However, they soon learnt that what at one time was fun, was now the cause of exasperation.

Perhaps the best thing any member of a forum can do is to recognise the amount of work that complete strangers put in just to develop the community. They reply to every little query, resolve disputes, ensure that the forum’s rules are adhered to, and, overall, improve the quality of the forum.

Even members who aspire to become moderators, or people who want to start their own forum, should remember that they need to lead by example. If you can earn respect when you have no power, then you are fit to wield that power. If you just want to go on a power trip, you will end up being ostracised by your online community, and voted out like an unpopular politician!

6.3 Gaining Respect

Who should I be? There is no fixed answer to this question: who you are largely dictates who you will be in an online community. Depending on which of the previously mentioned categories best describes you, or interests you the most, you could be anyone. Perhaps the best way to contribute to a community is to join a forum that interests you. Not only should you be able to garner knowledge from a forum, you should also be qualified and willing to impart some.

In order to enhance your skill and knowledge, you need to gain respect and be polite. Treat a forum and its members like you would if all this was happening in the “real world”. Just as you would be polite in a meeting, and not interrupt a speech, you should read and understand first and ask questions later. Perhaps the role of a Regular Contributor is ideal, and that’s where you should aim to stay!

If you’re planning on starting a forum, or have recently been given moderator powers, remember how it felt to be a new member. Exercise patience and understanding, and most importantly, lead by example.

Rules are important, and though the Internet has thrived because of the fact that it has no rules, your forum will not. Once you join or start a forum that caters to a segment of human interest, stick to it. Changing focus often leads to something that is neither here nor there, and as a result, isn’t too popular. Setting rules is the first step towards keeping your focus, and enforcing those rules is an even bigger step.

If you start a forum, remember to award power only to the deserving. Remember that you may have a hundred friends, but not all of them will be suitable as moderators for your forum.

Before you start a forum, or, for that matter, join one, ask yourself the following questions:

- What are my interests?
- Do I want other opinions and thoughts on these interests?
- Will I benefit from meeting people with the same interests?
- What about those who disagree with my point of view?
- Can I handle criticism?
- Will I be able to make time to visit a forum regularly?
- Will/does this forum help people gain any knowledge?

Your answers should lead you to the right decision.

See the chapter *Bibliography/Recommended Sites* for a list of forums that cater to various interests. Depending on your interests, one or more of those sites will help you embark on your quest for knowledge... or fun!

Whitepapers



Next to books, whitepapers are the best source of in-depth information on any subject you can think of. Here, we present a few engaging and useful whitepapers on a variety of topics—business networking, blogging, general Netiquette, e-mail Netiquette, and more. We strongly recommend you browse through these, whatever your level of interest in these topics may be!

7.1 Online Social and Business Networking Communities

By Ina O'Murchu, John G. Breslin, Stefan Decker

Introduction

In recent years, the Internet and especially the Web has enabled a communication revolution: the ability to send and retrieve information everywhere has changed the way we work and live. Internet based access to information and internet communication means have become ubiquitous. Web portals, as content aggregators, provide efficient access to information and services online: they are electronic gateways or entrances that provide numerous links to other sites and information that is needed. They provide a central concentrated focal point and an information source that can be personalized. They also allow people to gather detailed information and data as they need it and simplify access to information. They are playing increasingly important roles amongst online communities as audiences seek out more specific information, providing valuable opportunities for both profit and non-profit communities by helping to eliminate time consuming tasks such as administrative tasks and information dissemination. Social networking portals are a recent trend. A social networking site (SNS) connects and presents people based on information gathered about them, as stored in their user profiles. These user profiles determine the way in which users are able to present themselves to others. The most important distinguishing factor between the various sites is the range of profile information that they store and can perform operations on.

This paper will present a review of the various classifications of social networking portals: whether they are registration or connection based; whether user profiles are social or professionally oriented and if explicit relationships can be defined; whether sites are non-profit or profit-based. An evaluation will be carried out under the headings of searching capabilities; communication and collaboration features; perception of users; privacy measures; and

other issues. We will begin with a review of portal sites in general, an overview of some popular social networking sites, and an examination of the motivation for the development of social networking portals in particular.

1.1 Portals

Web portals provide an important way for collaborating online. The number of portals has steadily increased over the last number of years. And have been very successful as in the case of the Yahoo portal or amazon.com. This section of the paper categorizes and provides an overview of the many different types of portals that have now emerged in various areas business, social and community related areas online.

Enterprise Portals

Enterprise portals enable companies to make the most of their day to day use of company data by managing a company's information online. They help to increase the overall efficiency and business needs of businesses with an online presence. They enable the unlocking of information within and outside of an organization. They maintain, organize, analyze, and dissipate information and also provide a means of integrating many separate and distinct systems that are used within an enterprising organization. They help to manage business knowledge content. They increase the availability of organized and vital content and information presented in a personalized manner to the user online whilst providing a common user interface. Enterprise portals have evolved from Internet portals bearing strong similarities and features to the Yahoo portal. Some examples are IBM and SAP's enterprise portals.

Government Portals

Government portals are built and aimed at citizens to provide them with public information and services online from renewing their car tax to enquiring about their personal taxes. Such jobs that once took up valuable time in queues now take mere minutes online. They make the government and government services more accessible to citizens from one centralized place, helping to inform citizens by

documenting valuable public information online, and improving public access and awareness to a government of information, making for an informed citizenship. Government portals help to provide a faster, more detailed and efficient service to the general public, and provide a government gateway for citizens seeking information regarding government services.

Community Portals

Community portals provide improved communication and contact with a community online providing local or community based information. They are the most widespread platform used by communities to inform electronically. Members can find information and contribute relevant shared information to others within the portal. Community portals provide an awareness and interaction amongst a community whether for profit or non-profit. They provide an online collaboration space for a community of certain interest. Community portals replace the traditional means of keeping a community informed via libraries and publishing. They help to provide an online global community and communication agora and to strengthen the communities by informing them and providing an open place for communication, interaction, and the exchange of information and ideas.

Semantic Community Portals

Semantic web technologies are used to enrich community portals. Most modern web portals process and share information amongst their members through a personalized central point. Most queries in searching for information are keyword based. The current web technologies are a serious limitation in making information accessible for users in an efficient manner [1]. The use of ontologies and semantic web technologies will enable web portals to become more efficient at the task of sharing information. A semantic web portal makes information accessible to both humans and software agents from a semantic viewpoint. Most web portals today do not provide machine processable information. Semantic community portals can provide high quality searching features by providing semantic based browsing, querying and searching by making

semantic information available to machines. Examples of semantic web community-type portals at present are the academic community portals Esperanto and OntoWeb. Commercial-type community portals include Empolis K42 and Mondeca ITM. The potential of using Semantic Web technologies amongst these communities could improve information processing and sharing amongst the members [1].

1.2 Social and Business Social networking sites

This section of the paper will discuss 10 popular business and social networking sites that have appeared recently on the Internet. The list provides an overview of the sites that have a steadily increasing and growing number of members creating virtual communities online. Members join the various communities and create a user profile in the site and can connect to one another within the community.

Ecademy (www.ecademy.com)

Ecademy is a business networking site built up of a network of trusted business connections for people to share contacts and business opportunities. It is free to join, however membership can be upgraded to power networker for 14 a month. It has a list of Ecademy clubs that its members can join, as well as listings of meetings and when they will be taking place. It also contains a list of networking regions globally for arranging meetings and events offline.

Friendster (www.friendster.com)

Friendster, established in March 2003, has already attracted millions of members following many articles in popular computing magazines and newspapers and online “buzz”. Friendster is primarily a site for social connections: for dating through one’s own friends and their friends; for making new friends; and for helping friends to meet other new people. A member’s photo and profile are only shown to people in their personal network, and messages can only be sent and received from those with a mutual network of friends. Friendster is currently in its beta phase, during which membership is free, but after the trial some subscription features are to be added.

Friendzy (www.friendzy.com)

Friendzy is a free social networking site used mainly for making connections based on relationships of a sociable nature. It makes use of polls and a “friendzine” for people online, and aims to bring those people with different views and opinions together. This is a good way of introducing people to one another, and so too, is the use of a number of icons called “friendzicons” that members can send to one another. Friendzy has led to a growth of online social network communities that are built up through online trusted connections. The site also lists a classifieds section that can be posted to by members of the Friendzy community. Friendzy helps to maintain connections and to build new ones socially between its members.

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)

LinkedIn, founded in May 2003, focuses on professional users creating networks of co-workers and other business associates. LinkedIn allows members to look for jobs, seeking out experts in a particular area, or to make contact with other professionals through a chain of trusted connections. LinkedIn has a very clean and professional design, and is probably the site with the least (if any) potential for social purposes.

Meetup (www.meetup.com)

Meetup, set up in 2002, is a networking site almost entirely devoted to the arranging of meetings for communities with like-minded interests. Unlike most other SNSs, where the focus is towards user profiles and their networks of personal friends or associates, Meetup organizes local interest groups that meet monthly at local cafes and establishments. Meetup earns money from establishments that pay to be listed as possible venues for these meetings, and also from services such as text advertising and its advanced MeetupPlus functionality.

orkut (www.orkut.com)

orkut, a newcomer to the social networking scene, has attracted a lot of attention because of its links with Google, for whom the site developer works for. Primarily a social site, orkut has a relatively

low user base as it requires an invitation to join. Communities are created under thirty or so general category headings (similar to those found at the top level of the Open Directory Project) and contain usual message forums and events listings. orkut has been criticized for its poor privacy policy, which has recently been revised.

Ryze (www.ryze.com)

Ryze was originally an online business networking site, but members have also been using the site to communicate with other members for dating and other social networking purposes through the use of photos in each member's profile. It is a free service where people can join and become members of various different networks. However, members can also subscribe to gold membership at \$9.95 a month which is a paid service that enables members to perform advanced searches. The Ryze site also organizes events for people offline. Ryze profiles contain guest books for other members to leave messages or e-mails for other users. It also lists a section for classifieds which members can post to.

Spoke (www.spoke.com)

Spoke is a professional networking site that helps people to build their business network connections online. It is a modern day approach to the traditional networking process in business. It helps to build a private and secure business network. The value of the network increases as more professional members are added. Spoke uses e-mail details and other information provided by its members in their user profiles to strengthen their relationships. Spoke helps its members to increase their prospects for opportunities, and in helping to find a job it also enables members to obtain referrals through people they already know.

Tickle (www.tickle.com)

Tickle is a social networking site used for social activities such as dating and socializing. It makes use of a number of personality tests for matchmaking online. Tickle states that they apply science to help their members to build relationships online, providing a psychological analysis of each member's personalities and other insights

through a number of tests. Tickle also charges \$14.95 a month for a premium test subscription which gives unlimited access to every personalized report on the Tickle site. The site also contains a number of ice-breaking type e-mails that members can send to one another, as well as a number of fun tests. It also allows people to communicate directly to one another via a Tickle instant messenger.

Tribe (www.tribe.net)

Tribe, which began in January 2003, is another SNS in beta testing that aims to keep its services to members free of charge by deriving revenue from job postings and featured listings. While Tribe is primarily used for social purposes, for example if someone moves to a new area and they are looking for information on accommodation or restaurants or concerts, the site does include professional elements such as job postings. As well as each user having a defined set of friends, Tribe contains many categories of communities where each community is termed a tribe, and a message forum and events listing is associated with that tribe. Messages from forums are also made available in RSS format for use in desktop news aggregating applications.

1.3 SNS Motivations

People are making full use of these social networking sites for personal and professional use, communications, new business developments and contacts, dating and meeting offline without the three dimensional interpersonal communication. They make use of an easy and efficient way to build and manage their offline social networks online. Communities can be better informed more quickly through online social networking, and become more engaged and involved with one another in an era when social capital is on the decline. The development of this new social and business infrastructure has motivated more people to join up with a specific aim in mind. Some sites like Friendster, orkut and Ryze use the photos for browsing (Friendster uses the term “gallery” for viewing individuals). People are curious and voyeuristic, they tend to browse through these photos searching for people they find

attractive. orkut actively encourages this by its hot list or crush list section where members can also send a teaser to the member they find attractive. Another motivating factor for these social networks is that they are a new means of socializing and building a new community of people on moving to a new city; social networking sites make it easier to join and connect to new people or communities within a similar geographical area, and to share common interests and join various urban tribes.

Members of sites are eager to sign up and increase their visibility within a network, and to get as many people to join their network making themselves look popular and important. The more connections a person has, the bigger their network is even if the connections are weak ties. orkut presents its members with large networks as connectors, celebrities and stars depending on the number of profile views, average paths and fan counts each member has. However the presence or over exposure on these sites can also at times equate to a popularity contest based on status of how many friends or friends of friends one has. Not surprisingly the term “friendster whore” [a]has surfaced -meaning people who collect as many people as possible for no other reason as to increase the size of their network. People are also motivated to search for interesting members on the site and to add these people as their friends. There is also actually a tribe on Tribe.net called Friendster Whores.

2 Classification

2.1 Registration-Based vs. Connection Based

The majority of social networking sites have no restrictions as to who can join or when. These sites are registration based, where a person simply fills out a form of required details such as name, location, e-mail address and desired password. Registration for most sites is not subject to approval or moderation by another user, but usually does require some confirmation of details by clicking an activation link sent to the e-mail address entered. Once an account is activated, a user can begin adding friends to their

network. While the registration process is usually quite short for most sites, some registration forms can be quite complex with optional questions ranging from previous employers to favorite meals. Unfortunately it is not always clear what information is required or optional when registering with a site.

There are some sites where an existing connection to a user on a site is required before membership to that site can be obtained. For example, to become a member of orkut, a non-member would have to contact a friend or acquaintance who is already a member of the site and ask for an invite, or alternatively an existing member would send an invitation to a non-member to join the site. This seems to keep down the number of inactive accounts. eBay auctioneers were quick to cash in on the rush to become a member of the Internet's hottest community site, selling invitations to join orkut in the same way that low ICQ numbers or short domain names previously changed hands in auctions.

To establish a link with another user on a social networking site usually requires the agreement of that user. For example, on Spoke, an e-mail invitation message is sent to another user with whom a connection is to be created. There are a few sites where this is not the case. Word of Mouth is an example of a site which does not require both users to register with the site to establish a link: the link is established by simply entering the e-mail address of the person with whom to create a link.

2.2 User Profiles

Social vs. Professional.

User profiles are a means of providing an identity for users online. The type of information entered determines the type of profile that users of social and business networking sites will share and use. Business profiles allow professionals to interact with one another through business orientated information, endorsements, testimonials and reputations. This allows business professionals, owners and entrepreneurs to connect together and search for contacts by location or expertise. Social networking profiles are built

on the personal information of members who participate and contribute in the online network. These personal profiles contain information from relationship status to member's religion and sexual orientation, and are shared with their friends and the extended community online. Some sites like Friendster allow viewing of a reduced profile by anyone.

Explicit Relationships.

The main purpose of social networking sites is the explicit representation of relationships. Different social networking sites have different approaches with respect to representing social relationships and what a user of the site can do with this representation. Social networks are essentially about people and their relationships. Three types of social networking relationships are observed, and can be evaluated through the different kinds of intended audience for these types of sites.

Several sites like Friendster, Tribe and orkut are aiming at leisure and social activities. Other sites such as LinkedIn, Spoke and Ryze are aiming at the professional business user. A third type of site that organizes members for social events offline has been termed a real world events site. Meetup are catering for a niche in the different types of communities that are appearing online, by facilitating the way people can arrange and self organize one another and their groups to meet offline. The purpose and aim of the specific social networking site influences the way in which the site is designed and what information gathered through the user profiles will be displayed to which particular users.

In general, a social network is a set of people connected by a set of socially meaningful relationships. Online relationships are based more on shared interests and less on social characteristics. The recent crop of social networking sites that have appeared are based on the concept of six degrees of separation. Once members have contributed their information to the networks, there appears to be several depths to their online relationships that they can share with other members.

The main relationships are listed as friends, friends of friends, and friends of friends of friends (in essence, strangers). There is also the exposure to the entire network or community of persons. These ratings of friends are also given the term “degrees”, and can be thought of as a type of weighting. People are unlikely to want people five degrees away to contact them or their own friends, so the viewing needs to be controlled. Viewing can be controlled on these sites by the individual members as to who can reach them and who their information will be available to through controls and settings within the sites themselves. Users are allowed to see profiles that can be set to the maximum or minimum number of degrees away. A friend is defined as someone whose company and attitudes one finds sympathetic and to whom one is closely related. The orkut site has a friendship barometer that lets members rate their relationship to another member based on their actual relationship with that person: haven’t met, acquaintance, friend, good friend, and best friend. orkut has a linear scale of friendships, but it is not detailed enough as there is not enough meta-data as to what exactly it is that quantifies a friend.

LinkedIn masks a member’s contacts, and they need to request the contact or in some cases to have outside contact with the other party. Networks from Ryze and Tribe to Friendster and orkut are explicit in that both interests and people are easily connected to others both through their photos and browsable links. However, there are limits, for example Friendster relationships are defined by referrals, so that a member can only browse four degrees away and not the entire network.

2.3 Business Models and Potential Profitability

Social networking sites have low overheads and aggregate large quantities of valuable information through user profiles, ranging from their favorite books to movies, and such information can be targeted for very specific advertising. A number of these sites have classifieds and even advertise openings for job opportunities. Some business networking sites like LinkedIn will perhaps prove to be more profitable. LinkedIn offers many valuable features to

maintain and build up your business network and contacts. Making it easier to maintain and make new business contacts and making it a very effective way to maintain valuable business contacts. The value of the network increases as the number of members increases. The business networking sites provide more opportunities for people with membership subscriptions to look for jobs, contracts and other prospects creating viable options to make a profit on. Social networking at present is still looking for a solid business model. The business Model for social networks is unclear as how to make profits from these sites and the question remains if there is a potential revenue model. Venture capitalists continue to fund social and business networking sites however, giving rise to the speculation that there is a bubble within this niche in the market.

People on the Internet are already paying for subscriptions to various sites, especially the dating related ones. Following on from those who are willing to pay for online dating and matchmaking services, the CEOs of companies such as LinkedIn and Tribe are interested in how business people will connect for business, social or even matchmaking purposes online.

As these networking sites continue to attract and register new users every day in some cases millions of people, the race is on to find a competitive and working business model that will utilize the strength of numbers and valuable information collected. These sites can also be used to publicize a brand by targeting a company's publishing and advertising capabilities towards the large numbers of members that have signed up to a site. Social networking technology enables people to connect in a way that closely mirrors natural social behavior. These structures are fundamental to the way people organize themselves and communicate, and yet personal communication products take no account of them fully as of yet.

3 Evaluation

Some of the most popular social network sites will now be evaluated in terms of the features they offer: communication and collabo-

ration, searching and browsing, user ratings and trust. Privacy and other issues such as false identities and addiction will be examined, and finally some statistics on the various sites will be presented.

3.1 Communication and Collaboration Features

As well as the basic social networking features of user searching and profile browsing, many sites like orkut and Tribes offer a range of community building primitives. These include features allowing the building of communities, based on memberships with read and/or write privileges, and special communication features like message boards and event lists. Current technological developments point to future social networking collaboration and communication techniques by means of mobile phones or network connected portable devices.

User to All

Weblogs or “blogs” have become a popular tool for users to make their opinions known online, and with at least 5 million weblogs in existence (Blogger has 1.5 million, LiveJournal 700,000 and Xanga 2.5 million), social networking sites such as Ecademy and Friendzy have begun to incorporate blogging or “story” features. Blogs are often exported to RSS or Atom XML formats for use by news aggregator software such as Radio User Land. User profiles allow a user to communicate their personal and professional details to all other users on a social networking site, for example, their age, their employer’s industry type or even their favorite TV show. Another method of user to all communication is by means of a user’s Friend of a Friend file [8], which is a standardized method of expressing the information usually found in a user profile, but can incorporate new fields as needed. Ecademy provides user profile information in FOAF format.

User to User

Most user to user communication on social networking sites is carried out by means of private messaging (PM) functions (e.g. using the “Personal Messages” module on Friendster), similar to sending

an e-mail message except that the target username is specified rather than an e-mail address. Like e-mail, private messages can be sent to a number of users at once; however most social networking sites place some restrictions on the total number of people to whom a single private message can be sent. Unlike e-mail, no attachments can normally be sent with a private message. E-mail messages can also be sent, but many sites keep their users' e-mail details secret, and messages are then sent via a web based form where the e-mail address is not displayed. On some sites, users can choose whether to make their e-mail address publicly viewable or not. There may also be restrictions on contacting members (by PM or e-mail) who are greater than a certain number of degrees away. This can be a site-wide setting or a degree number specified by a user in their profile.

Some sites store profile information on user's instant messaging (IM) or short message service (SMS) accounts, but do not normally provide any inbuilt functionality to send messages using these services, rather linking to external sites or resources that can provide this functionality. Another method of user to user communication is the virtual card or vCard. vCards allow the automatic exchange of information typically found on a traditional business card. vCards are not limited to text however, and can include photos, company logos, hyperlinks, etc.

Community Discussion

The community discussion forum has been a popular feature of Internet-based communication since the early days of mailing lists and USENET newsgroups. It has evolved beyond a static admin-maintained bulletin board into the realm of social networking, where communities can be created by any user (as on orkut and Tribe) and will live or die depending on whether they reach a certain critical momentum. The creator of a forum usually acts as the moderator, pruning undesirable threads and banning unwanted users from the forum. Community forums are classified in categories according to major social or professional topics, depending on the type of parent site. They may also integrate event meeting

calendars, as on orkut and Meetup. On some sites, the creation of a commercial community forum is forbidden and can result in a user ban.

Most community forums on social networking sites (e.g. orkut and Tribe) employ some threaded display methods, where topics are initialized by a certain user and replied to by others. One of the important things to note regarding communities is that they can be used to enhance the software that they are running on. An administration discussion forum can raise useful suggestions or bug reports that can increase the usability of the underlying software.

Internet Relay Chat (IRC) has long been used by communities to host real-time discussion of various topics. With the advent of metadata storage and searching of chat conversation logs, and the use of Java-based applets to offer IRC functionality on the Web, chat collaboration features are being incorporated into social networking sites.

The wiki is another method for community collaboration that has yet to feature on most social networking sites. Wiki, derived from the Hawaiian word for quick, allows a community open read and write access to a database of pages, even if a user is not the originator of the material being edited. This flexibility can either be highly successful in a healthy busy community or disastrous in an indifferent community where anonymous users can make unwanted changes to a wiki set. However, wikis normally employ a version control system so that rollback to a previous version can be employed, and in a busy community any deleted pages will normally reappear if they are important.

Real World Events

Event listings are a major feature of social networking sites. These are usually either linked to an entire site as a general meeting for all members, or to a particular community with events listed beside a particular discussion forum. Some sites such as Meetup focus almost exclusively on arranging meetings for particular

communities, being either localized or distributed with meetings for that community topic occurring worldwide at the same time.

3.2 Searching and Browsing Capabilities

Social networking sites must provide some mechanism for users to search and browse for information, ranging from matching other individual users or communities who have shared interests to looking for a new job in a particular industry or location. While most sites are targeted towards either professional or social pursuits, there are a few like Tribe and Tickle that allow comprehensive searching and browsing in both areas.

Social sites devoted to user relationships and dating tend to focus their searching functionality on personal information such as age, gender, current relationships. For equality reasons, most professional networking sites ignore age and gender (except Ryze) and instead focus on searching through users' current jobs and employers. Both social and professional sites allow searching of interests, locations and communities since these are common matching requirements.

Communities, consisting of discussion forums and real world event details, can be searched in terms of keywords in their name or description (e.g. Tribe, Meetup and Ecademy). However, when a keyword is not apparently obvious for a search, browsing the categories of communities is often unwieldy due to the creation of top level categories and no subcategories on many sites, leading to hundreds of communities (tens of pages) being listed within a single category that must be browsed through manually.

Some sites offer unique searching and browsing functionality not found on other sites. For example, LinkedIn, with their partner DirectEmployers, are aiding users in their search for new employment. Ecademy also allows searching of content posted by users in their weblogs. Friendzy allows users to browse classified ads, grouped by type or location. Other sites like Meetup do not focus on searching for users or content at all, but rather on brows-

ing possible topics for real world community meetings. Searching for a particular user can be restricted by what settings the user has specified in their control panel, or by an initial default setting for a site. For example, on Friendster, the default setting is that users who are over three degrees away from a particular person cannot see how they are connected to that person and cannot view their full profile (instead they can only see a reduced version of that person's profile). This can make searching for some users difficult, and some people must arrange outside the social network to make a connection manually within it.

3.3 Perceiving Other Users

Karma

A user's reputation can not only be affected by how they relate to other people in the real world, but also by how they conduct themselves in an online social network. Social networks often employ a variety of methods to allow users to add positively or negatively to another user's personal reputation or rating, thereby affecting how that user is perceived by the rest of the network. Rating another user can be carried out in a private or public manner. orkut is unique insofar that it offers people the chance to express how they feel about fellow friends and members through a rating system known as karma points. They are rated through a system of karma points whether people are thought of as sexy, cool or how trustworthy they are considered and by how much.

This is a good way for people to get feedback on other members creating an interest in members and in their social network and a curiosity as to who is rated amongst their friends so highly and the reasons why. Members can rate each friend individually based on how they perceive them making their profile more interesting with hearts, ice cubes and stars rating people and being a fan of individual members.

An endorsement or testimonial is another feature of social networking sites, where a fan or friend will declare exactly what it is that they find positive about another user. Most sites like Friendster or Tribe require that the user must approve the testi-

monial written about them. A similar feature is provided by orkut, whereby a user can publicly declare them as being a 'fan' of another user without an explanatory message.

Trust Mechanisms

Having a positive reputation or testimonial is a type of trust mechanism, similar to the ratings system employed by eBay where auction transactions completed successfully or unsuccessfully are linked to a person's profile and will often determine whether another user will deal with them or not. In professional sites, this is particularly important if for example five matches are returned while looking for a venture capitalist with two degrees of one's personal network, and no other determination can be made apart from user ratings as to whom to contact.

While an endorsement is also a useful way of determining whether to trust another user or not, some emphasis should be placed on the number of degrees between the endorser and the endorsee to ensure that a person's friends are not the only people extolling their virtues. This does not seem to be a feature of most social networking sites at the moment. "All are equal, but some are more equal than others". The users of a social network can have an elevated perceived status if they are identified in some desirable way, for example as an entertainment celebrity or the founder of a popular community. Some sites such as orkut place emphasis on their users being stars, and use this as an attraction for new members. The success of a community forum can lead to their creators or moderators having a desirable status within that community, since they usually have the power to remove members, edit or delete discussion topics, or even erase the community completely.

A user can also be perceived as a minor celebrity if their network of friends extends into the hundreds. By presenting certain members of the network on special pages and publicizing data on the number of views their profile has received, these persons can have an elevated status. It becomes desirable to know that popular person, and hence to become a member of their network or inner circle.

3.4 Privacy

As defined, privacy is “the freedom from undesirable intrusions and the avoidance of publicity”. The arena of social networking sites that has recently developed actively encourages people to contribute information about themselves to these sites freely. People are providing this information consensually without giving much thought or concern to the issue of privacy. In some cases, members provide information about their friends through testimonials. Personal information is much more open to abuse at present from the malicious elements in society, that is, persons who can potentially abuse the information in user profiles depending on how much information a member is willing to reveal to everyone in their network, or the exposure depth that the member sets their profile viewing to. The aggregation of information gathered in the user profiles makes them extremely valuable and collectable.

One approach to privacy is given in Friendzy’s privacy policy, which says that they may provide personal information directly to a third party in order to facilitate or outsource aspects of their services such as search technology or e-mail support. It is possible that these social networking sites will use user profile information to mine data for targeting specific advertisements. Sites like Friendzy and orkut inquire as to what a person’s favorite books, TV shows and movies are. It is quite possible that these social networking sites will be able to target their intended audience, and even make recommendations and personalization advertising to their members. At present, in the case of orkut and the recently launched personalized search agent from Google, this is perhaps aiming at the specific user and their tastes and interests. orkut’s privacy policy states: “we may share both personally identifiable information about you and aggregate usage information that we collect with Google Inc. and agents of orkut”. When orkut launched in January 2004, their privacy policy originally warned that “by submitting, posting or displaying any materials on or through the orkut.com service, you automatically grant to us a worldwide, nonexclusive, sub-licensable, transferable, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable right to copy, distribute, create derivative

works of, publicly perform and display such materials” [5]. This question of whether personal details are to become the new currency of the digital market is not a new one [6].

Details such as contact address, age and date of birth are all potentially open to abuse and identity theft. Despite the claims of sites that contain the TRUSTe or WebTrust logos, just how highly the privacy value of these sites has been rated have yet to be determined. Unfortunately, it is still the case that most users sign up and contribute information without even reading the privacy policy. LinkedIn is far more aware of privacy: they states in their privacy policy that they are the sole owner of the information collected on the site. LinkedIn also never lists the people to whom a member is directly connected to. By default, a member's network of professional persons is closed. The site itself also strongly discourages users from placing e-mail addresses or other contact information in their user profiles.

Another issue with privacy is the mining of contacts from the Microsoft Outlook email client by sites such as Spoke, LinkedIn and Ryze. Priceless contacts are uploaded to these sites despite all the privacy warnings. The problem with these types of sites is that they are located in one central point, and even though the possibility of hacking into the sites is slim, it is still a possibility and open to criminal theft.

3.5 Other Issues and Factors

There are a number of issues surrounding these social and business networking sites and one of the biggest ones is the question of identity. Are people really who they say they are and is the information in the user profile true? Members such as movie stars and celebrities, famous politicians and make believe characters have cropped up on many of these sites. Sites like orkut and friendster where galleries of people can be browsed also makes the sites highly addictive. This section will review these issues in the online world.

Fakesters.

These are false identities that many people assume when online, often in the form of contemporary celebrities and stars, but also people can take photos of real people and steal their identities (especially with the widespread use of camera phones and in particular when reputations of people are valuable). Identity theft is even more difficult to monitor as most networking sites are not able to identify who is legitimate and who is not. In the past, Friendster has taken a dislike to these fakes as they have the potential to undermine real persons on networking sites. Friendster has attempted to eliminate all of these fake users by removing them from their sites and servers. This forced removal of accounts does not seem to follow the natural evolutionary process of sites that are emerging on the Internet at present. The culture that is emerging with social networking sites has yielded terms like “friendster”, “fakester”, “friendster whore”, “orkut-certified”, “orkut jail” and “tribe”, and these are very quickly emerging as new figures of speech in modern society and parlance.

Addiction

A lot of these sites are extremely addictive and it is quite easy to spend valuable time searching through the sites out of curiosity or from a voyeuristic point of view, especially on sites such as Tribe, orkut, Friendster and Ryze where there are galleries of persons to view and where the relationships are explicit. It is all too easy to browse and take an interest in persons that you see online, and to take a peek into their lives. This can create a sense of familiarity with people you do not know and this can be brought into the real world, as a sense of knowing that person online can make a person feel or believe that they know that person in the real world too. There is also the potential or danger in this of stalking people offline. However, is the virtual representation of humans in two dimensions likely to replace the real three dimensional models? It is unlikely, as there are only so many ways in which personalities can be represented online in these social sites. It is not really possible for these sites to represent the full human experience or model everything in the offline world, especially in the world of

dating as there are so many more factors involved in dating rather than just a two dimensional set. Imitating all the senses online is quite a distant achievement as of yet. There is also the issue of how will these social networking sites promote a sense of social responsibility amongst its members, both offline and online, although the issue of common sense does play a large part in the use of these types of sites.

4 Conclusions

This paper has provided an overview of portal sites and the rationale for the development of portals specifically dedicated to the creation of social networks. A classification of social networking portals has focused on sites tailored towards social or professional pursuits, and a comparison of the methods for establishing membership and user-to-user links on such sites was presented. An evaluation was performed on search, communication and privacy features, as well as the relative popularity of a number of prominent sites. However these sites are at the evolutionary phase there is also the problem that once people join them there are no incentives to return to them once the initial interest wears off and there are many steps to go before these sites evolve into a persistently form of social identity on the Internet. These sites need to make more of the emerging technologies such as RSS feeds, FOAF and XML feeds as they grow and evolve. RSS and weblogs could be used more to circulate content and context about individuals thereby increasing the value of the relationships. They could also contemplate linking together to create a truly online community as a whole. The categorization of the communities needs to be strengthened also as thousands of forums of different communities lie under a single topic or category.

Also the control of unsolicited emails amongst the sites will need to be set within these sites in accordance with the User and their needs within the users profile so that the user has more democratic control over their presence in these online networks. Some of the features are too broad blurring the line between professional and social as in the case of the Ryze business network

where members have begun to date one another. There is no confusion in the use of the site where the border of use for the network is more defined.

We are seeing a shift towards the Semantic Web as a Web of relationships evolves towards a metaweb that is one towards a Web of relationships. With the rise of the social and business networks online we are seeing the growth in the number of connections and relationships. The connections between people and their links and the valuable contribution to one another in learning and providing a number of positive links across a network. The next generation communities will evolve as a mixture of humans and intelligent software forming knowledge networks that will enable a type of distributed intelligence across the internet amongst communities, individuals and social and business networks. There will be the evolution of these types of sites also with the auto-creation or nomination of RDF assertions about individuals based on the user profiles. There will also be the emergence of the social networks for knowledge collection, collaboration and dissemination. There will be a people search based on the most connected individuals or those most connected with you.

The role of the User profiles in these networks will steadily increase in value as these networks take a shortcut through the sea of persons out there on the web to show the value of these connections based on the relationships people have with one another.

References

[1] Lara, R., Han, S.H., Lausen, H., Stollberg, M., Ding, Y., Fensel, D.: An Evaluation of Semantic Web Portals. In:

Proceedings of the International Conference in Applied Computing (IADIS04), Lisbon, Portugal (2004)

[2] Wellman, B.: For a Social Network Analysis of Computer Networks. In: Proceedings of the 1996 ACM SIGCPR/SIGMIS Conference on Computer Personnel Research. ACM Press, New

York (1996) 1-11

[3] Heineman, M., Kim, G.: Surfers Spend Nearly Two Hours on Friendster, an Hour More Than Top Dating Sites.

Nielsen//NetRatings Press Release, 26 November 2003.
http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/pr/pr_031126_us.pdf

[4] Hopkins, J.: Investors Court Social-Networking Sites.
In: USA Today, 9 December 2003.

http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2003-12-09-meet_x.htm

[5] Black, J.: Privacy Matters: The Perils and Promise of Online Schmoozing, New Issues About Online Privacy.

In: BusinessWeekOnline, 20 February 2004.

http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/feb2004/tc20040220_3260_tc073.htm

[6] Baig, E.C., Stepanek, M., Gross, N.: Special Report on Privacy: The Internet Wants Your Personal Info, What's In It for You?

In: Business Week Online, 5 April 1999.

http://www.businessweek.com/1999/99_14/b3623028.htm

[7] Wellman, B., Gulia, M.: Virtual Communities as Communities: Net Surfers Don't Ride Alone.

In: Smith, M.A., Kollock, P. (eds.): Communities in Cyberspace (1999) 167-194

[8] Brickley, D., Miller, L.: FOAF Specification, 13 March 2004.

<http://xmlns.com/foaf/0.1>

7.2 Netiquette

Quickstudy by Brian Sullivan

Definition: Netiquette is all about etiquette on the Internet. Think of it as rules of good behavior adapted for electronic communications via e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms and discussion forums.

1. Don't lie about who you are. In Computerworld.com's forums, one man recently took a very strong stance defending Microsoft. Other forum members accused him of working for a company that partners with Microsoft but not disclosing that fact. Members said they recognized the man's arguments and writing style from other forums. After the brouhaha, the offender apologized for causing trouble and vanished off the boards.

Vanessa DiMauro, Computerworld.com's director of communities, points out another problem with a fake identity. People form relationships in discussion groups, and you don't want to end up in a position where you have to reveal that you're not the 24-year-old roller-skating blonde you said you were.

More important, DiMauro says, such a misrepresentation of identity is simply a violation of trust, and that's never good form.

2. Know when to shut up. These days, it's hard to determine when a conversation is over, according to Joseph Cothrel, vice president of research at Participate Systems Inc. in Chicago. He says we've all been in instant messaging or e-mail conversations that just keep going on and on. Do you really have to say "You're welcome" to the guy who just said "Thank you"? Sometimes it feels like everyone is trying to out-polite one another.
3. Know when it's OK to talk. When you first show up at a discussion forum, it's not always a good idea to plunge right in, Cothrel says. Take a look around, and read the forum guide-

lines and other posts to see how the community fits together. Jumping in with a harsh opinion won't create a good first impression, and the Web, like life, is all about making a good first impression.

4. Check your grammar. More and more often in discussion groups, members are chastising people who use bad grammar or misspell words. Cothrel says that nothing kills an argument for him like seeing a simple word misspelled consistently. He says you have to wonder: If people can't spell, do they really know what they're talking about?
5. Don't ask about e-mail you just sent. Don't buttonhole someone in the hall or telephone him five minutes after you send a lengthy e-mail and ask him what he thinks about it. Give him a chance to read it, digest it and reply via e-mail. According to Cothrel, more and more people consider discussions about e-mail messages a waste of time.
6. Follow threads you start. When you start a thread on a discussion forum, especially if you asked a question, follow that thread. And if you solve the problem you asked about, tell the board. Likewise, Cothrel points out, if the advice you received from the other members led you to a solution, be sure to tell them.
7. Don't use instant messaging for long messages. Betsy Waldinger, vice president at Chicago-based OptionsXpress Inc., spends a lot of her day working on an online customer-service chat system that operates a lot like instant messaging. She says it's important to send short messages and to break up long ones over many screens. If you don't, she says, you force the people on the other end to wade through an overly long message - and you keep them waiting for an answer while you type.
8. Send a message before you drop in. At companies where

instant messaging is part of the culture, Cothrel says, you should always send someone a note before dropping into his office. This gives the other person a chance to let you know if he's in the middle of something. It also saves you the trouble of walking over to his office only to find that he's gone home.

9. Log off instant messaging when you're not using it. I often leave my messaging program on when I'm not around and come back to find messages asking questions and other messages in which the senders ask why I'm ignoring them. One of these days, someone will send me an embarrassing message and there it will be on my computer screen, flashing for all to see. And it will be my own fault.
10. Never send an e-mail you wouldn't read in public. The night before his wedding, a Massachusetts state official sent a colleague an e-mail saying he wasn't sure he wanted to get married. Unfortunately, he hit Send All, and all state employees with e-mail accounts received the note. Boston Herald gossip reporters evidently received numerous forwarded copies, and they printed the message in the newspaper. Word is, the guy's fiancée married him anyway.
11. Think twice before forwarding e-mail. The jury remains out as to whether forwarding messages is acceptable. Obviously, it's sometimes necessary for business reasons, but people do it far more often than they need to. Philip Zimmermann, creator of Pretty Good Privacy encryption, has said he's not a fan of forwarding e-mails. How often would you even think of taking a handwritten letter you've received, making a photocopy, putting it in an envelope and sending it off to someone else? Zimmermann says the same thought and respect should go into forwarding e-mail.

7.3 E-mail Netiquette 101

The following article teaches the dos and don'ts when receiving or sending e-mail. Many users new to e-mail, are completely unaware of the unwritten rules of e-mail etiquette (commonly called netiquette) and some of the popular acronyms and "emoticons" >) used to quickly convey a message or emotion with electronic mail.

This article is not about the mechanics of sending e-mail - which buttons to push or how to do a file attachment. Those details are different for every different e-mail software package, and are better handled by manuals for each respective program. Instead, we will focus on the content of an e-mail message: how to say what you need to say. This article can be extremely beneficial for e-mail newbies whose inexperience often create wordy letters and take too much company time in conveying a simple message to others.

What Makes E-mail Different?

Electronic communication, because of its speed and broadcasting ability, is fundamentally different from paper-based communication. Because the turnaround time can be so fast, e-mail is more conversational than traditional paper-based media.

In a paper document, it is absolutely essential to make everything completely clear and unambiguous because your audience may not have a chance to ask for clarification. With e-mail documents, your recipient can ask questions immediately. E-mail thus tends, like conversational speech, to be sloppier than communications on paper.

This is not always bad. It makes little sense to slave over a message for hours, making sure that your spelling is faultless, your words eloquent, and your grammar beyond reproach, if the point of the message is to tell your co-worker that you are ready to go to lunch.

However, your correspondent also won't have normal status cues such as dress, diction, or dialect, so may make assumptions

based on your name, address, and - above all - facility with language. You need to be aware of when you can be sloppy and when you have to be meticulous.

E-mail also does not convey emotions nearly as well as face-to-face or even telephone conversations. It lacks vocal inflection, gestures, and a shared environment. Your correspondent may have difficulty telling if you are serious or kidding, happy or sad, frustrated or euphoric. Sarcasm is particularly dangerous to use in e-mail.

Another difference between e-mail and older media is that what the sender sees when composing a message might not look like what the reader sees. Your vocal cords make sound waves that are perceived basically the same by both your ears as your audience's. The paper that you write your love note on is the same paper that the object of your affection sees. But with e-mail, the software and hardware that you use for composing, sending, storing, downloading, and reading may be completely different from what your correspondent uses. Your message's visual qualities may be quite different by the time it gets to someone else's screen.

Thus your e-mail compositions should be different from both your paper compositions and your speech. Hence, this article will show you how to tailor your message to this new medium.

Using Proper E-mail Context

In a conversation, there is some minimum of shared context. You might be in the same physical location, and even on the phone you have, at minimum, commonality of time. When you generate a document for paper, usually there is some context embedded in the medium: the text is in the proceedings of a conference, written on a birthday card, handed to your professor with a batch of Econ 101 term papers, or something similar.

With e-mail, you can't assume anything about a sender's location, time, frame of mind, profession, interests, or future value to you. This means, among other things, that you need to be very,

very careful about giving your receivers some context. This section will give specific strategies for doing so.

Useful Subject Lines

A subject line that pertains clearly to the e-mail body will help people mentally shift to the proper context before they read your message. The subject line should be brief (as many mailers will truncate long subject lines), does not need to be a complete sentence, and should give a clue to the contents of the message. For example:

Subject: need projector by Tues

John - I need the projector for Thursday's demo in New York. They need to be packed and shipped by Tuesday night.

Here the subject line summarizes nicely the most important details of the message.

If your message is in response to another piece of e-mail, your e-mail software will probably preface the subject line with Re: or RE: (for REgarding). If your e-mail composition software doesn't do this, it would be polite to put in RE: by hand.

Subject: Re: need projector by Tues

Bill - I've got the projector already packed from last week's demo, but I don't have the pointer device right now. Can you cope without it till you get back?

Information, Please

Make sure not to get too terse with your subject lines in e-mail. Typing subject lines like "Information", "Help Please", "Urgent", etc. are not helpful to the recipient of your e-mail and can be quite annoying.

Quoting Documents

If you are referring to previous e-mail, you should explicitly quote

that document to provide context. Some e-mail programs will do this for you automatically when choosing to “Reply” to a received e-mail.

Instead of sending e-mail that says:

yes

Say:

> Can you cope without it till
> you get back?

yes

The greater-than sign (>) is the most conventional way to quote someone else’s e-mail words, but your e-mail software may use a different convention. Not quoting someone from a previous e-mail can quickly cause confusion in a conversation of back-forth e-mail.

A simple rule of thumb is: Will the other person remember exactly what I am responding to? If you are uncertain, then always quote the recipient, when answering or commenting on something he/she had written on some earlier e-mail.

Summary

You may know what you are talking about, but your readers may not. Give them the proper context by:

- m Giving useful subject lines
- m Quoting the previous message

Understanding E-mail Formats

The underlying rules governing e-mail transmission are highly standardized, but there are a large number of different software programs that can be used to read e-mail. It’s quite possible that the message you send won’t look at all the same when displayed

on your correspondent's screen. You therefore have to be careful about how you present your text. This section will discuss the problems that may arise from a mismatch between the sending and receiving software, and show how to avoid them.

Fancy Text

Some e-mail reading software only understands plain text. Italics, bold, and color changes will show up as control sequences in the text. You might send something like:

Hiya! Hey, I loved the presentation you gave to Jack this morning. Great Job!

but if your correspondent's software can't handle formatting, the message could show up as:

Hiya! Hey, I <I>loved<I> the presentation you gave to Jack this morning. Great Job!

Web documents are particularly difficult to read with older e-mail programs. You may have a choice of sending the web page as text or as HTML; keep your correspondent's capabilities in mind when you make that choice.

Web Links

Some e-mail reading software will recognize URLs (Uniform Resource Locators, or web addresses) in the text and make them "live." While some software recognizes URLs from the "www.", most software recognizes URLs by the http:// at the front. Thus, if there is a URL in your e-mail, it is much safer to include the http://!

Attachments

Some mailers support "attachments", where you can specify a document to send through e-mail. This allows people to share essentially any file in any format. GIF-encoded Picture images, Word documents, PDF files, Excel spreadsheets, and executable files are just

a few of the types of documents that can be sent. File attachments are extremely popular, but have certain pitfalls to be aware of.

First, AOL users who send or receive file attachments to non-AOL users (or vice-versa) do not always work well. AOL uses a different encoding scheme than other e-mail programs. A workaround that always works for full file attachment compatibility is to compress the file being sent using a standard PKZIP utility (like WinZip).

A second problem to concern yourself with is file size. Many ISP's mail servers have a physical file size limit on attachments and will reject the e-mail if the attachment is too large. This file size varies depending on the ISP, but you can usually expect attachments larger than 5 Megabytes to be rejected by most mail servers.

Lastly, avoid sending exe file attachments, especially to businesses, because most educated recipients will not accept or open this form of file attachment. An exe file attachment is unfortunately responsible for the spreading of many computer viruses today, and most businesses and cautious users have altogether eliminated the opening of these attachments.

Summary

If you don't know what e-mail reader your correspondent has, play it safe.

- Don't use formatted text
- Always try to send web pages as text, not HTML
- Type in http:// before your URLs
- Be cautious with attachments

Using Proper E-mail Intonation and Gesture

The most difficult thing to convey in e-mail is emotion. People frequently get in trouble for typing exactly what they would say out loud. Unfortunately, without the tone of voice to signal their emotion, it is easy to misinterpret their intent.

Not only does text lack the emotional cues that vocal inflection gives, text lacks cues from body language. There is no twinkling of the eyes to say you are kidding, no slapping the back of your hand in your palm to show urgency or frustration, no shoulders slumping to display discouragement.

While you cannot make hand and facial gestures, or make emphasis by lowering or raising your voice, there are common techniques used when e-mailing someone to convey vocal inflection, emotion, and gestures.

Light Emphasis

If you want to give something mild emphasis, you should enclose it in asterisks. This is the moral equivalent of italics in a paper document.

Instead of:

I said that I was going to go last Thursday.

Say:

I *said* that I was going to go last Thursday.

Or:

I said that I was going to go last *Thursday*.

Which of the above two you choose depends upon whether you are adamant about the commitment you made or adamant that you didn't mean Wednesday. (Restructuring the sentence to remove the ambiguity would be an even better idea.)

Strong Emphasis

If you want to indicate stronger emphasis, use all capital letters and toss in some extra exclamation marks. Instead of:

> Should I just boost the power on the speaker?

No, if you turn it up to eleven, you'll overheat the amplifier and it might explode.

Say:

> Should I just boost the power on the speaker?

NO!!!! If you turn it up to eleven, you'll overheat the amplifier and IT MIGHT EXPLODE!!

Note that you should use capital letters sparingly. Just as loss of sight can lead to improved hearing, the relative lack of cues to emotion in e-mail makes people hyper-sensitive to any cues that might be there. Thus, capital letters will convey the message that you are shouting.

It is totally inappropriate to use all capital letters in a situation where you are calm. Don't do this:

HEY, I JUST WANTED TO SEE IF YOU HAD MADE ANY PROGRESS ON THE WILLIAMS ACCOUNT. STOP BY AND SEE ME SOMETIME.

People will wince when they read that e-mail.

Smileys or Emoticons

A facial gesture can be represented with what is called a "smiley" or "emoticon": a textual drawing of a facial expression. The most common ones are:

:) or :-) happy, friendly

;) or ;-) droll, ironic

>:) or >:-) devilish, teasing

:O or :O shocked, bewildered

:(or :-(sad, displeased

>:(or >:-(angry

Note: To understand these symbols, turn your head counter-clockwise and look at them sideways. You should see little faces.

Typical examples:

Hey, guess what - I got my consulting assignment next Thursday! :)

I'm on my way to fame and fortune now! ;)

There are many more smileys than the one's mentioned. We'll leave it to you to find more.

Pause Equivalents

Imagine that you ask someone if you can turn the knob up to ten and a half. Suppose he says, "Well", then pauses for a long time, scratches his head, looks down at the floor, winces, grits his teeth, and says again, "Well", then pauses and says, "It might not explode." You'd get a sense of just how bad an idea it would be, while the text:

Well, it might not explode.

gives less information. Consider using lots of white space and typed-out vocalizations of "I'm thinking" sounds, as follows:

Weeeellllll.... errr hem.

Wellll, it *might* not explode.

Summary

It is difficult for most people to express emotion well in a short message. Fortunately, you can use a number of textual tricks to help convey the emotion:

- m Asterisks (for emphasis)
- m Capital letters
- m Punctuation

- m White Space
- m Lower-case letters
- m Smileys

Learning E-mail Shortcuts

When writing to someone you know is up on e-mail netiquette and standards, one can really save time by using abbreviations/acronyms for common phrases, expressions, or emotions used when composing a letter.

Typical example:

AFAIK, Nobody saw me stuffing my face. <LOL>

Interprets to “As far as I know, Nobody saw me stuffing my face. <Laughing out Loud>”.

The following is a partial list of common abbreviations used on many chat sites, newsgroups, and personal e-mail correspondence:

AFAIK	—	As Far As I Know
ASAP	—	As Soon As Possible
BTW	—	By The Way
FAQ(s)	—	Frequently Asked Question(s)
FWIW	—	For What It's Worth
FYI	—	For Your Information
GDR	—	Grinning, Ducking and Running
HTH	—	Hope This Helps
IAC	—	In Any Case
IANAL	—	I Am Not A Lawyer
IMHO	—	In My Humble Opinion
IOW	—	In Other Words
LOL	—	Laughing Out Loud
NDA	—	Non-Disclosure Agreement
OTOH	—	On The Other Hand
PITA	—	Pain In The Axiom
QA	—	Quality Assurance
Q&A	—	Question & Answer

ROFL	—	Rolling On the Floor, Laughing
RTFM	—	Read The Fine Manual
TIA	—	Thanks In Advance
TS	—	Tech Support
TTFN	—	“Ta Ta For Now” (à la Tigger from Winnie the Pooh)
WAD	—	Works As Designed
WRT	—	With Respect To

7.4 Make Your Site More Interactive with Microsoft FrontPage 2002 Six Interactive Elements to Help Grow Business

Published: March 2002

The information contained in this document represents the current view of Microsoft Corporation on the issues discussed as of the date of publication. Because Microsoft must respond to changing market conditions, it should not be interpreted to be a commitment on the part of Microsoft, and Microsoft cannot guarantee the accuracy of any information presented after the date of publication.

This White Paper is for informational purposes only. MICROSOFT MAKES NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, AS TO THE INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT.

© 2002 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

For the latest information, please see
<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage>

The Microsoft Office Web Site Creation And Management Solution

Overview

Interactive Web pages add not only interest and important functionality to any small business online presence, but also can help grow business. Web authors can use Microsoft® FrontPage® version 2002 to add a wide variety of interactive elements such as discussion groups, interactive calendars, online video, pop-up menus, banner ads, and image swapping. These elements will help your Web site acquire and keep online customers who want to be kept up to date on your latest product offers and services.

This article assumes that the reader has at least Advanced Beginner to Intermediate skills using FrontPage in a Microsoft Windows-based PC environment and understands how to author a basic Web site.

What Will a More Interactive Web Do for My Business?

Making your Web site more interactive is good for business because it can stimulate customer interest while providing a number of tools to improve your customer experience and your bottom line. In addition, using the powerful authoring features of FrontPage 2002 to quickly develop more interactive Web pages, offers a wide variety of opportunities in terms of improving communication within your organization, customer services, sales tools, and direct sales via e-commerce technology thus improving your Web site Return On Investment (ROI). Below are six ways to make your Web more interactive using FrontPage 2002, how they will help you grow your business online, and information to get started using them.

Discussion Groups

A discussion group makes a Web site highly interactive because it allows site visitors to discuss topics online about articles or comments that have been posted to the site, and gives them the opportunity to reply, as well as post new articles or comments. Visitors

can also search to find articles and discussion threads of interest. Discussion groups in general provide a forum for your site's visitors to communicate with each other. These forums can be used to harvest feedback from your customers or gauge interest in new products or services.

While discussion groups are usually open to everyone visiting the Web site, with FrontPage 2002 it is also possible to set-up secure and private discussion groups, limited to certain users who must register and log in to the discussion on the Web site. These private, secure discussion groups can be used to help your employees, partners, and suppliers collaborate on projects, brainstorm ideas, refine documents, just to name a few.

Using Microsoft SharePoint Team Services (a technology included with FrontPage 2002), it is possible to create special types of discussion groups called "Web document discussions" where users, working together on the same information, can discuss it by attaching comments directly to team Web pages and documents. This type of discussion group is available only on Webs hosted by Web servers running SharePoint Team Services. To find out more about SharePoint Team Services, see Microsoft Resources at the end of this article.

Setting Up a Discussion Group in FrontPage 2002

A discussion group makes a Web site highly interactive because it allows site visitors to discuss topics online about articles or comments that have been posted to the site, and gives them the opportunity to reply, as well as post new articles or comments. Visitors can also search to find articles and discussion threads of interest. Discussion groups in general provide a forum for your site's visitors to communicate with each other. These forums can be used to harvest feedback from your customers or gauge interest in new products or services.

While discussion groups are usually open to everyone visiting the Web site, with FrontPage 2002 it is also possible to set-up

secure and private discussion groups, limited to certain users who must register and log in to the discussion on the Web site. These private, It only takes a few quick steps to setup a full featured FrontPage-based discussion group on your Web site. Just open your FrontPage-based Web in FrontPage 2002 and follow these steps:

1. From the File menu, point to New, and then click Page or Web.
2. In the New Page or Web task pane, under New from template, click Web Site Templates and select Add to current Web.
3. Select the Discussion Web Wizard then follow the directions on your screen to create a discussion group.

Interactive Calendars

Interactive calendars on Web pages display information similar to what you would expect to find on any calendar with the additional ability to change their display or take site visitors to related information based on user actions such as clicking on a particular day in a month.

These interactive calendars can fulfill many uses based on how they function in your Web site. For example, a calendar could be used to browse local activities and events as well as allow users to post their own activities and events or report any incorrect or improper messages. Interactive calendars can also be used to provide a quick way for users to find and select a date on a Web page event registration form.

Interactive calendars on your business Web site can effectively provide your sales personnel in the field, suppliers, or customers with important schedule, event, or time critical promotion information.

Implementing Interactive Calendars Using FrontPage 2002

There are a number of ways to implement interactive calendars using FrontPage 2002. One of these is to create a SharePoint Team Services-based interactive list using the Events list template. A SharePoint Team Services-based interactive list is a framework that

you design to enable site visitors to store and view information in your Web site. For example, you could create an online sign-up sheet for an event, or you could create a list that allows you to add content to your Web site remotely, via a Web browser. An events list is designed to store information such as dates and location and uses an interactive calendar to display that information. And if site visitors have a SharePoint Team Services-compatible calendar, such as Microsoft Outlook 2002 installed, they can export items from the events list to their calendar. To find out more about SharePoint Team Services, see Microsoft Resources at the end of this article.

Another way to implement an interactive calendar is to use the Dynamic HTML (DHTML) calendar behavior and scripting in your FrontPage-based Web site. DHTML is a Microsoft enhancement to HTML version 4.0 that enables you to create visual effects or improve the layout of a Web page. The calendar behavior is used to provide a quick and easy method for users to find and select a date. It can be used in any situation where date input is required, such as on a Web page form, in utilities, or in applications.

To find out how, go to:

<http://msdn.microsoft.com/downloads/samples/internet/behaviors/library/calendar/default.asp>

Online Video and Streaming Media

Online video can make your Web site more interactive by allowing users to run video clips or streaming videos on the site.

Video clips are made by capturing video segments with a computer configured with the appropriate hardware and software. These segments are then stored in files that can be used on Web sites similarly to the way graphic and text files are. Video clips can be very large files, even very short, small format clips, and there can be problems using them as your Web visitor must download the entire video clip to their browser, before it can be viewed. The time involved to do this can result in a negative user experience especially if they are on a low bandwidth Internet connection.

However, with streaming video (and other streaming media files), downloading is more transparent because the files are fed to the user in a continuous stream as they view the media. Streaming video can also be enhanced by including other streaming media such as slides, graphics, animation and live data.

In addition to making your Web site more attractive, using interactive video can also be used to create engaging media rich presentations to deliver messages to your customers, investors, or partners. Businesses can use online video and streaming media as a cost-effective means to present business plans, visions, objectives, products, services, etc, and hopefully in doing so increase their bottom line.

The Microsoft Windows Media Player Add-in for FrontPage

You can use FrontPage 2002 to easily add video clips to one of your Web pages by going to the Insert menu, selecting Photo and then Video. Or alternatively, you can use The Microsoft Windows Media Player Add-in for FrontPage.

This add-in enables new capabilities for FrontPage users including the ability to: quickly embed Windows Media into FrontPage-based Web pages; control the look and feel of the media playback experience; and publish to a Web or streaming server automatically. All this functionality is available from within the add-in's wizard without having to write any script.

To download The Windows Media Player Add-in for FrontPage, go to the FrontPage Add-in Center URL listed below, click on the download, then the link to save the add-in to your computer. The download is available at:

<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage/downloads/addin/searchdetail.asp?aid=50>

Double click on the file WMPFPAddin.exe to begin the installation. The installation wizard will walk you through setup of the add-in components. Then, to use the add-in, open a Web page in

FrontPage. To embed the Windows Media Player in a FrontPage-based Web page, position the cursor in the page where you want the video to appear, and from the Insert menu, select Windows Media Player.

With the Windows Media Player Add-In Wizard open you can:

- m Select Audio or Video content, and use the wizard to determine what order you want multiple media files to play in.
- m Select the controls you wish to appear in the Web page, enabling the user to start and stop the playback of the media.
- m Select the playback options, such as the number of times you wish the media file to play, whether the file should start automatically etc.

When you finish, the Add-In does the rest behind the scenes. You can then preview the embedded Windows Media content in your FrontPage-based Web site.

Pop-up Menus

A pop-up menu is a navigational element that when clicked on displays an additional menu box listing the contents of the section appearing immediately next to the navigational item you selected (typically using a nice effect such as a scroll-down). The pop-up menu can have additional visual effects like when a user moves the mouse over one of the article titles in the menu, the title changes color. Clicking the title sends you to a destination Web page. The menu can remain visible until you click somewhere else on the page.

Pop-up menus can be key navigational elements to effectively provide Web site-wide navigation. For example, pop-up menus used to display a list of articles for each section of a site and can help your Web visitors by saving them time and effort in their search for useful information. Pop-up menus provide an elegant way to simplify the navigation of complex or data-heavy sites and they avoid the annoyance of using the back button repeatedly or scrolling to find information. Finally, your Web site will benefit

from the reduction in server hits that comes with more efficient use of site navigation. All these benefits will improve your customer online experience.

Getting Started with Pop-up Menus

With FrontPage 2002, there are several ways to add pop-up menus to your Web site. One is to use a pop-menu or DHTML menu Add-in for FrontPage which can be found in the Formatting section of the FrontPage Add-in Center at:

<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage/downloads/addin/searchresults.asp?idcat=10&x=13&y=10>

Alternatively, you can learn how to build a pop-up menu from scratch in FrontPage by going to the article (with demo and sample code), Build a Pop-up Menu Using Dynamic HTML and JavaScript at: <http://www.microsoftfrontpage.com/content/ARTICLES/articles.htm>

Banner Ads and Banner Ad Managers

Another method of adding interactivity to your Web site is by adding banner ads, in which ad pictures can contain one or more hyperlinks to your products and services or to 3rd party advertising to generate additional revenue streams. Banner ads can also be configured to act as rotating billboards on a Web page. Rotating banner ads present products, services and businesses in a visually more interesting and dynamic way.

Banner ad managers can be used to organize and display advertisements for several different products, services, or businesses within the same banner ad Web page real estate.

The FrontPage Banner Ad Manager and bCentral Banner Network

The Banner Ad Manager in FrontPage 2002, allows you to quickly organize and display banner ads using a timed sequence of pictures complete with transition effects between pictures. You can

set the size of the banner ad, the transition effect to display between pictures, duration that pictures are displayed, order of the ads, and the default hyperlink for each ad.

To use the Banner Ad Manager in FrontPage 2002, open a Web page in the program and from the Insert menu, select Dynamic Effects and then Banner Ad Manager.

The best way to select a transition effect in the Banner Ad Manager is to create a banner ad and preview it, trying various effects until one matches your needs. Then preview the banner ad by clicking the Preview tab or click Preview in Browser on the File menu.

You can also attract new customers with no cost advertising by joining the Web's largest banner network, the Microsoft bCentral™ Banner Network, and advertise online. The bCentral Banner Network is a cooperative model in that for every 2 ads you display on your site, you earn a credit toward displaying your banner on another member's site. The amount of free advertising you receive is directly proportional to the amount you give others.

To access the Banner Network from within FrontPage 2002, select the Insert menu, click Web Component, then bCentral Components, and then in the right pane, double-click bCentral Banner Ad. Or learn more about the Banner Network by visiting the bCentral Web site at: <http://adnetwork.bcentral.com/>

Image Swap

Related to rotating banner ad displays, image swapping adds interest by making your Web site more dynamic. Image swapping involves replacing images with other images in a variety of ways under a variety of circumstances. Image swapping can be used to guide users to areas of interest by highlighting an element on a page when a user's cursor movement triggers a graphic element to be swapped with another thus creating an eye-catching change. Image swapping also provides ways to create simple animations

and other dynamic effects without negatively affecting how quickly a particular Web page takes to be loaded in your site visitor's browser. Image swapping makes your pages come alive, enhancing your Web site visitor's online experience, and gives your site a longer lasting impact.

Scripting Image Swapping in FrontPage 2002

With FrontPage 2002, you can create a wide range of image swap effects using DHTML and scripting techniques.

To use DHTML to swap an image in FrontPage, open a Web page in Page view in the Normal pane and select an image you want to swap with another. Then from the Format menu, click Dynamic HTML Effects. This displays the DHTML Effects toolbar. On the DHTML Effects toolbar do the following:

1. In the On box, click the down arrow, and then select the event that will trigger the swap animation, in this case Mouse Over.
2. In the Apply box, click the down arrow, and then select the type of animation effect you want to occur, in this case Swap Picture.
3. In the Choose Settings box, click the down arrow, and then choose the settings for the effect: Choose picture. Now select the picture to swap when the event you selected in step 1 occurs.

To use scripting to swap images in FrontPage, start with a search on scripting resources on your favorite Internet search Web site. It should provide you with all the information and complete scripts to use you could ever ask for.

Next, use the scripts and information you found on the Internet to create custom high-end swapping effects using the Microsoft® Script Editor included with FrontPage 2002. This script editor can be quickly launched right from within FrontPage and provides powerful tools to help build just the special effect you want. You can learn more about the Script Editor in FrontPage and

how to get started using it by going to the following article High-end Scripting in Microsoft FrontPage version 2002 at:

<http://www.microsoftfrontpage.com/content/ARTICLES/articles.htm>

Summary

As we have demonstrated, there are many ways FrontPage 2002 can help you create more interactive Web pages adding interest and important functionality to any small business online presence. Some of the interactive elements that we have covered in this white paper include discussion groups, interactive calendars, online video and streaming media, pop-up menus, banner ads, and image swaps as just a few ways to make your Web site more compelling to your customers.

More Information

This paper has covered key issues of relevance and importance to any enterprise, small business, or individual evaluating why FrontPage 2002 is an excellent choice for creating more interactive Web sites for your business. The following list of resources will lead you to more information:

Microsoft Resources

<http://www.microsoft.com/Frontpage/> for information and resources on Microsoft FrontPage version 2002.

<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage/sharepoint/> for information about collaborating on documents, and collecting team knowledge over the Internet or your corporate network with Microsoft Office XP and SharePoint Team Services from Microsoft.

<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage/downloads/addin/default.asp> for information and downloads of add-ins for FrontPage at the new FrontPage Add-in Center.

<http://www.bcentral.com/default.asp> for information and resources on Microsoft bCentral services.

<http://www.microsoftfrontpage.com/content/ARTICLES/articles.htm> for articles on Microsoft Script Editor in FrontPage version 2002 and building Pop-menus using DHTML and FrontPage.

7.5 Making Your Web Sites More Accessible with Microsoft FrontPage 2002 White Paper

For the latest information, please see <http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage>

The Internet provides us with an easy way to publish and find information. However, information on the Internet is not always readily available to all users. Some people are unable to access the Internet through traditional Web browsers such as Microsoft Internet Explorer without the use of assistive technologies that enhance the way they interact with information. These assistive technologies, available from a wide range of third-party providers, include screen readers and Braille devices, audio browsers, screen magnifiers, text-only browsers, and voice input software. Other users, such as mobile professionals, are increasingly turning to alternative technologies to browse the Web, technologies such as cell phones and handheld computers with low-resolution displays. For each of these groups of users, it is important that a Web site provide alternatives.

Web programming today facilitates many types of non-text Web elements such as images, frames, applets, and tables. Yet most assistive technologies provide input to their users by interpreting text. What happens when an assistive device encounters a non-text element? In some cases, the device might stall. In other cases, the device simply provides no information about the element.

Today it is quite possible for Web developers to enable anyone to access the information on a Web page. When information on the Internet is accessible, everyone-including users of assistive and alternative technologies-can find and benefit from it.

This paper provides design techniques and suggestions for creating accessible Web content. Using the Microsoft FrontPage Web site creation and management tool, Web designers can reach the largest audience possible.

Specific Design Suggestions

These tips are intended to help you make your Web site more accessible. This is not a complete list, but it will offer some ideas and things to think about as you design and edit your Web site with Microsoft FrontPage 2002.

Use Single-Column Text

When developing a Web site, it is best to place all text in a single column. Multiple-column text is hard to read by most screen readers because they read text from left to right regardless of certain cells and formatting. Additionally, the single column approach is also best for serving visually impaired users who use screen magnification software.

For some types of sites, of course, this may not be practicable. If this is the case, consider providing an alternate linear version. For a multi-column table, to take an example, use separate paragraphs to represent the information in each cell, and sequence the paragraphs in the order that one would read them in the table.

Add Document Type Definitions to Better Define Your Document

Use a document type definition (DTD) at the beginning of your Web pages. DTDs are recognized by Web page validation tools as well as by Web browsers and assistive technologies. When you explain exactly what type of document your Web server is serving, the user's browsing technologies will be able to present that document in the most effective manner.

You can create a custom template that contains the DTD, so every document you create from that template will include the DTD. To do so:

1. In FrontPage, open a new page.
2. Switch to HTML view.
3. Place your cursor at the top left corner of the HTML page, in front of the <html> tag.
4. Type the document type definition you want to use. You can use a custom one or one used in the samples below, such as:

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.0  
Transitional//EN"
```

```
"http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-html40/loose.dtd">
```

5. Choose File and Save As.
6. In the File Name field, type the name you want to use for your template—for example, DocTypeFrames.
7. In the Save As Template dialog box, add or change the Title, Name, and Description fields as appropriate. You may want to leave “Save Template in Current Web” selected. This creates a shared template that downloads into the custom templates directory for a person’s profile. Every person who opens this Web will get this shared template automatically downloaded to his or her local machine. If someone wanted to share a template with its DTD, this is one way to do it.
8. Click OK.

The next time you create a new page using the Page Templates dialog, your new DocType template will show up.

Alternatively, you can add a document type definition to an existing template, such as the normal.htm template—located at <INSTALLDIR>\Templates\1033\Pages\normal.tem\normal.htm—or any other built-in template. All pages subsequently created from that template will include a document type definition.

Here is sample syntax for the most commonly recognized DTDs:

- **Strict:** Recommended if you rely solely on style sheets to define the look or presentation of your page.

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01//EN"
"http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/strict.dtd">
```

- **Transitional:** Recommended if you use formatting in favor of style sheets to define the look or presentation of your page. World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Transitional DTD information can be found online at www.w3.org/tr/1999/rec-html401-19991224/sgml/loosedtd.html.

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01
Transitional//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/loose.dtd">
```

- **Frameset:** Recommended for frames pages. W3C DTD Frameset Information can be found online at <http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/sgml/framesetdtd.html>.

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01
Frameset//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/frameset.dtd">
```

Note that the “!DOCTYPE” tag should appear in uppercase. If you click Tools and Page Options to use the HTML Source tab to apply formatting rules and have the “Tag names are lowercase” attribute selected in combination with the “Reformat using the rules below” option, FrontPage will change the document type definition to lowercase, which can cause problems for compatibility checkers.

Use Image Maps Properly

Whenever possible, use client-side image maps rather than server-side image maps. Client-side image maps are more user-friendly for users with assistive technologies. However, in some instances, the image map cannot be represented by a standard geometric shape. For example, you might be trying to provide users with a

map of your state. The state map has active regions for each county. If you must use a server-side image map, be sure to provide redundant text links for all active regions of the map.

To provide redundant text links for server-side image maps, you can:

1. Provide a list of text links for active regions of the image map.
2. Include the links in the body of the OBJECT element.
3. If the image map uses the IMG element, place the text links in the document after the IMG element and note the location of the links.

Provide Alternative Text for All Images and Non-Text Elements

You should add alternative text to images on your Web site. This will provide key information to audiences using screen readers, browsers that don't show images, or users who have turned off image viewing to speed up their browsing process.

To add alternative text in FrontPage:

1. Select the image.
2. From the Format menu, choose Properties. Or press SHIFT+F10 and then O.
3. In the Picture Properties dialog box, click the General tab. Or press CTRL+TAB until the General tab is showing.
4. In the Alternative Representations section, type alternative text in the Text field.
5. Click OK, or press ENTER.

The alternative text should describe the image, as well as its purpose or use on the page when applicable. When you create alternative text, you can pretend that you are describing the image

to someone over the phone. As concisely as possible, your alternative text should convey the same essential information that the image conveys.

For example, suppose the Microsoft logo appears on a page and is used as a link to the Microsoft Corporation Web site. The alternative text for the logo might read “The Microsoft logo, with a link to the Microsoft home page.”

In another example, suppose you are trying to explain to the page visitor how to apply for a grant. Instead of using a traditional bullet, you have used the paragraph symbol to indicate to the applicant that he or she must start a new paragraph for each requirement in the application. When you describe the bullet with alternative text, you might want to type something like “new paragraph”. In this example, the bullet enhances the meaning of the content. The paragraph symbol, used as a bullet, is a reminder to the reader that each item should be listed separately. When the bullet does not enhance the meaning of the content, you can use words like “bullet” or “asterisk.”

Using Alternative Text with Image Maps and Image Map Regions

FrontPage 2002 includes a dialog box that enables you to add alternative text to image maps and image map regions. To add alternative text to an image map region, do the following:

1. Select the hot spot.
2. From the Format menu, click Properties. Or press ALT+ENTER.
3. In the top right corner of the dialog box, click Screen Tip or press ALT+P to add alternative text to the selected hot spot.
4. In the Alternative Representations section, type alternative text in the Text field.
5. Click OK, or press ENTER.

If you wish to provide alternative text associated with an `<AREA>` tag, you will need to do so through HTML view. You can use the following example to add alternative text using the `<AREA>` tag:

```
<IMG src="campus.gif" alt="Image map of buildings on the
corporate campus" usemap="#map1">
<MAP name="map1">
<AREA shape="rect" coords="0,0,30,30"
href="library.html" alt="Library">
<AREA shape="rect" coords="34,34,100,100"
href="caf1.html" alt="Main Cafeteria">
<AREA shape="rect" coords="34,34,100,100"
href="aud1.html" alt="Main Auditorium">
</MAP>
```

Alternative text should also be provided for:

- ▮ Symbols
- ▮ Animations
- ▮ Applets
- ▮ Objects
- ▮ Ascii Art
- ▮ Frames
- ▮ Scripts
- ▮ Picture bullets
- ▮ Picture spacers
- ▮ Horizontal Rules
- ▮ Buttons
- ▮ Video and Audio

Do Not Use Color Alone to Convey Information

Your Web should be usable for individuals who cannot discern color or for users who are not viewing your site on a color screen. For example instead of using blue text to indicate sale items, consider inserting the text “sale item” before each sale item listing.

Although there are some style techniques available through markup language, style techniques can be cosmetic to the user, just as color is.

Color combinations, such as background color and text, should provide good contrast so users with color deficits or low vision and users with black and white screens can still use your site. For more information about the subject, Lighthouse International provides an excellent article on “Effective Color Contrast” at http://www.lighthouse.org/color_contrast.htm.

Make Tables Accessible

Tables are used commonly in Web design. Sometimes tables are used to organize a page, perhaps as an alternative to frames. However, when tables are used to present data, the table must be made accessible.

You should designate a header row, a header column, or both for your table. To designate a row or column as a header row in FrontPage 2002:

1. Select a row or column.
2. On the Table menu, click Properties and then click Cell. Or press ALT+ENTER to reach the Cell Properties dialog box.
3. In the Layout section, select Header cell.
4. Click Apply and then click OK.

You also should associate data and header cells. A summary should describe the relationships of cell contents, and a caption or title should describe the type of information the table conveys. Scope, headers, and axes should be identified. An example of an accessible table follows:

```
<TABLE border="1"
summary="This table charts the number of products sold
by each member of marketing, the type of product, and
whether it was Trialware or Released.">
<CAPTION><b><i><font size="4" color="#CC0099"><br>
Number of products sold<br>
by each member of sales</font></i></b>
</CAPTION><TR>
```



```

<TH id="header1">Name</TH>
<TH id="header2">Number of Products</TH>
<TH id="header3" abbr="Type">Type of Product</TH>
<TH id="header4">Trial or Released?</TH>
<TR>
<TD headers="header1">Johnson</TD>
<TD headers="header2">20</TD>
<TD headers="header3">AccVerify</TD>
<TD headers="header4">Trial</TD>
<TR>
<TD headers="header1">Smith</TD>
<TD headers="header2">30</TD>
<TD headers="header3">AccVerify Server</TD>
<TD headers="header4">Released</TD>
</TABLE>

```

Follow Guidelines for Blinking or Flashing Elements

Blinking or flashing elements are a potential source of harm to some Web site visitors, so you should avoid screens that flash at frequencies between 2 and 55 hertz.

There are ways to create dynamic effects without causing elements to blink or flash at all. If you want to provide a focus for the page visitor, consider using an image or an animated graphic instead of a flashing element. Scrolling text, for instance, can be used to achieve a dynamic effect. Through the use of a scrolling text applet, the scrolling text can become static text with a keyboard command. This ability to pause the text presentation helps users with cognitive disabilities who might need additional time to process information. Visit trace.wisc.edu/world/java/scroll-text.html to view an example of a scrolling text applet.

Set a Logical Keyboard Order in Forms

To help users navigate through a form using the keyboard, you should ensure a logical tab order - the order in which the cursor navigates through the form information if the user tabs through the form. To set tab order for forms in FrontPage 2002:

1. Select the form element.
2. On the Format menu, click Properties. Or press ALT+ENTER to open the Properties page.
3. In the Tab Order field, type a number for the form element. (Form elements should be numbered sequentially to assist the user in navigating the form.)
4. Click OK. (Repeat steps 1 through 4 for additional form elements.)

Set Keyboard Shortcuts For Form Fields

It is possible to set keyboard shortcuts for all of the elements in your form field. This feature allows all users to navigate the form easily. To set keyboard shortcuts in FrontPage 2002:

1. In Page view, type text next to the field to create a label for it.
2. Select the text and the field.
3. On the Insert menu, point to Form, and then click Label.
4. Select a letter in the field's label to use as the shortcut.
5. Click Underline.

Use Accessible Plug-Ins for Multimedia Elements

Be extremely cautious when inserting the latest technologies into your Web site. Multimedia presentations offered through products such as Flash, Java, and Shockwave are seldom accessible to users who are not up to date with the latest technologies. There also are numerous Web browsers that simply do not have the capability to integrate such technology into their platform.

If new technologies are used in your site to communicate a specific point vital to the user experience, consider offering a more traditional presentation instead of, or in addition to, your multimedia. However, if you must incorporate a new technology that requires a plug-in, the plug-in itself should be accessible.

Scripts and applets should be keyboard accessible or work with assistive technologies such as screen readers. In addition, pages with scripts, objects, and applets should be completely viewable when turned off or viewed from a browser that doesn't support them.

Creating Accessible Multimedia Presentations

For multimedia presentations, you should synchronize equivalent text with the presentation itself. Synchronizing equivalent information with a presentation is the same concept as using captions for a television movie. The text equivalent of the animation is presented on screen. The animation and the text equivalent are synchronized, so that the text equivalent describes the animation.

When you synchronize presentations in the same way for Web content, you are assisting people with vision and hearing difficulties. For people with visual impairments, the screen reader interprets the animation. For people with hearing impairments, the text version adequately describes the animation and the sound.

Because people accessing your Web content might have visual and hearing impairments, make your content describe the animation and the sound accurately. For example, be sure to describe noises that indicate the tone or mood of the animation, like a door slamming or a crowd cheering.

Creating Accessible Applets

In some cases, multimedia presentations require user input and cannot be replicated in an alternative format. For example, a mathematics program allows students to enter numbers and perform calculations. When providing equivalent text is not possible, make the applet accessible. You can make an applet accessible by providing descriptive text in the element content.

Allowing Additional Time

Multimedia presentations should allow a viewer additional time, if requested, to process information. One method of allowing the user additional time to view information is to use a scrolling text applet that allows the user the option to read the message in static form. To see an example of such an applet, visit trace.wisc.edu/world/java/scrolltext.html.

Using Multimedia Alternatives

Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language (SMIL), QuickTime, and Synchronized Accessible Media Interchange all support synchronized multimedia presentations with captioning. If you provide multimedia files in special formats, you also must provide a link to the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) where the media player can be downloaded. When you provide information to users that can be accessed through specific applications or plug-ins, the applications and plug-ins should be accessible.

Use Style Sheets to Control Layout and Look and Feel

Using style sheets to control the layout and look of your site is an advantage for users using special software to help them read or understand your site. By developing a standard style that will be used throughout your site, you can assure many of the accessibility issues discussed previously. By identifying specific accessibility requirements, you can help the developer creating your style sheets to maintain a specified level of quality with regard to those requirements.

You can edit any style sheets in FrontPage 2002 to suit your own needs, and you can create and use your own style sheets. Note that some earlier browsers may not display all style-sheet attributes, so it is important to verify that your pages still work with style sheets turned off.

Consider an Alternate Accessible Page Only as a Last Resort

Alternative accessible pages should be created only when it is not possible to make the original page accessible. This means that you must make every attempt to make the original page accessible. If you determine that it is not possible to make the original page accessible, then you may create an alternative page that is accessible. The alternative page should provide the page visitor with an equivalent experience, and thus it should be updated as often as the original page.

Strive for Clean and Simple Language

It is always a good idea to strive for clean and simple language on your Web site regardless of the abilities or technologies associated

with your audience. As your goal is to communicate your message to as many people as possible, using difficult terminology and industry buzzwords without a detailed explanation can cause an undesirable level of frustration at your Web site.

Strive for clean and simple language, easily understandable by anyone who might examine your Web content. Consider a glossary or terminology page if you are using terms not part of normal discourse. It also is a good idea to write out the full meaning of an acronym the first time it is used (and identify the acronym itself parenthetically).

Strive for User-Friendly Navigation

Because visitors to your Web site might not be navigating through the traditional browser interface, it is very important to produce a clear navigational structure for your Web site. Options such as a simple text menu bar can help someone on the most primitive browser easily find their way through your site easily.

When creating a hyperlink, use text that is descriptive. For example, the phrase “Click here” or other non-descriptive text is not as helpful to the user as “Go to the Microsoft home page.”

Strive for a clear, consistently positioned navigational structure for your site. Not only does it make the site accessible, but it also is excellent practice for all levels of Web design.

Be Cautious When Working With Frames

In many ways, the best approach in the development of an accessible Web site is to stay away from frames. Frames pages can create problems for any non-traditional browser. Trying to convey the concept of a frame through a reader is extremely difficult.

Provide Descriptive Text for Frames

Accessible Web content can include frames. However, the frames must have descriptive text so that users with browsers that do not support frames can access them. As an alternative to frames, you

can use tables. Using tables, you can achieve the same effect as using frames, and it is likely that all browsers support tables.

Provide a NOFRAMES Version of Frames Pages

Consider providing a non-frames version of your Web site if frames are deemed necessary.

If you use a FrontPage frames template page as the base for your frames page, FrontPage creates a NOFRAMES page for you. Complete that page with the information conveyed by the frames page so users who are using technologies that do not support frames can access the same information.

Create Titles on All Frames

Frames should have a descriptive title that indicates the type of information contained on the page. For instance, a frame that will display the latest news story might be titled “Latest News” or “Current News”.

When you have created your frames page in FrontPage 2000 and are saving the document, you will be prompted for a Page Title for each frame in your frames page. Above the title bar is a default frames title. Click on the “Change Title...” button to the right of this default title and type your descriptive title in the “Set Page Title” dialog.

If you wish to update an existing set of frames with more descriptive titles, right-click in the frame you wish to update (or select the frame and press shift+F10 to access the menu). Select Page Properties and on the General tab, type the descriptive title in the “Title” text box.

Use Inline Frames with Alternative Text

FrontPage 2002 supports accessible inline frames, or i-frames. I-frames should have alternative text and titles, just as frames should. Because some browsers and assistive technologies do not support i-frames or frames, the alternative text should provide

the page visitor with the information that is contained in the i-frame element.

Use Metadata to Enhance Accessibility

The use of metadata is included in W3C's accessibility recommendations because metadata makes documents easier to find and use. Metadata enhances accessibility, while also enhancing usability for everyone. Metadata can give the user preliminary information about the document, such as the language, author, subject, title, owner, purpose, age appropriateness, keywords, and more. Metadata carries unlimited potential. It can make use of an unlimited number of fields, or metatags.

Be sure to take advantage of the title, keywords, and description metatags. These three metatags are standard to many search services and engines. Search engine crawlers often place a high priority on these metatags and their metadata values.

Other Resources

The importance of accessibility standards has been recognized around the world, and other resources are available for those who want more information on developing accessible Web pages:

- m The U.S. Access Board has issued a set of standards for Web-based information in a document called "Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards (Section 508)." This document, available on the Web at www.access-board.gov/sec508/508standards.htm, was published in accordance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. To learn more about Microsoft's efforts to support Section 508, visit www.microsoft.com/enable/microsoft/section508.htm.
- m W3C has developed a set of universal guidelines for Web development. The guidelines have been published in a document titled "Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0," which is available on the W3C Web site at www.w3.org/tr/wcag10/.
- m Microsoft has put together more information about accessible

Web design guidelines. This information can be found online at msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/nhp/Default.asp?contentid=28000544.

- m Microsoft has formed a strategic relationship with HiSoftware, a developer of Microsoft FrontPage add-ins. HiSoftware offers accessibility solutions that are available as stand-alone products, server-based products, and FrontPage add-ins. AccVerify™ SE for FrontPage can help you make your Web content accessible and user-friendly by verifying compliance with industry accessibility standards. To download AccVerify SE for free, visit www.hisoftware.com/msacc/index.html. To learn more about the strategic relationship between Microsoft and HiSoftware, visit www.microsoft.com/presspass/press/2001/sep01/09-24hisoftware.asp.

In Conclusion

Web surfing no longer is limited to users who sit in front of a computer screen viewing the Internet on the latest browser with the fastest computer processor. As the audience has expanded in both participants and Web clients, the need to provide a browsing experience for everyone becomes essential. It is good business to build a Web site that can be viewed by as many participants as possible.

As seen above, the tools provided by Microsoft FrontPage 2002 enable you to build an accessible Web site. FrontPage 2002 supports 100-percent HTML preservation and allows you to create a Web site exactly the way you want to. Make sure to use the tool to build a Web site that is as accessible to as many people as is possible.

The information contained in this document represents the current view of Microsoft Corporation on the issues discussed as of the date of publication. Due to the nature of ongoing development work and because Microsoft must respond to changing market conditions, it should not be interpreted to be a commitment on the part of Microsoft as to, and Microsoft cannot guarantee, the accuracy of any information presented after the date of publication.

This document is provided for informational purposes only.

MICROSOFT MAKES NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, IN THIS SUMMARY OR OTHERWISE AS TO THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN.

7.6 Beginner's Guide To Corporate Blogging

Corporate Blog: A Definition

Blogs - an abbreviation of 'weblogs' - are published on the web, typically as microsites standing by themselves but today also as parts of traditional web sites. They reflect the interests, thoughts and opinions of the person, sometimes persons, publishing the blog. Blogs are characterized by frequent updates, an informal tone and many links to other blogs and web sites.

A corporate blog is a blog published by or with the support of an organization to reach that organization's goals. In external communications the potential benefits include strengthened relationships with important target groups and the positioning of the publishing organization (or individuals within it) as industry experts. Internally blogs are generally referred to as tools for collaboration and knowledge management.

The Nature of Blogs

To understand blogging as a corporate communications tool, we must understand the nature of blogs (See page 3 for a basic definition). You can find as many definitions and explanations as you like. In our opinion, these are the relevant distinctive features of blogs.

- The Personality
- The Voice
- The Links
- The Conversations
- The Frequency
- The Feed

The Personality

Blogs are not objective. They give you biased opinions, and you know it. In a way, they're much like reading letters from someone. After a while you can sense that person's values and interests, and you can't remove the person - the personality - from the equation. That would make both writing and reading pointless, or at least transform it to something else than blogging. People write blogs, not the Corporate Communication Department (but people working there can).

The Voice

Closely related to the above, a blog has a voice of its own. An author's voice. There's no template to use. A blogger must dare to be a person instead of an official and a voice will be heard. Most probably it will be an everyday voice; natural, direct and informal, maybe even funny or irritating. Blogging shouldn't be compared to journalism, but you'll find a similarity between Personality/Voice and the ingredients of really good newspaper columns.

The Links

Blogging has been called the Art of Linking and links are a major part of most blogs. As blog readers we want it. With the Web growing absurdly by the minute, we have no chance of keeping up. The blogs do that for us, in often very small niches. But it's not just the links - people have been putting together lists with links since the birth of the Web. With blogs we like, we get the most interesting links with at least some degree of context.

The Conversations

You're not alone out there. There's always other blogs sharing your interests. You become a part of the conversation by linking to those blogs from posts of your own, stating your opinions, publishing related information or thoughts. If you do it well they link to you, and a kind of conversation between blogs has started. It's of course not necessary to actively try to converse, but most bloggers would argue that this is an important part of blogging.

The Frequency

Blogs are immediate, almost instantaneous. Blogs are at their best when you get the feeling that the blogger publishes as soon as he or she has something to say. As a result it's not frequent enough to publish once a month, even once a week. You might get some subscribers/readers, but you'll never become a voice they listen to, look forward to hearing from.

The Feed

This is tech stuff, and a blog can be defined by the content-related characteristics alone. But most blogs are published both on web sites and as so called feeds. You'll find more about this in the "Read blogs" section.

That's what blogs are. What, then, are corporate blogs? A corporate blog is a blog published by, or with the support of, an organization to reach that organization's goals. Some would say this contradicts the original idea - that of the independent voice giving its views on the world, in a conversation with other independent voices. Probably it does. You must decide for yourself if that's development or degeneration.

Related links: <http://www.corporateblogging.info/basics/what/>

Reasons for Corporate Blogging

From a business perspective there are several potential reasons to blog. But, as always, it depends on what you want. Blogs are no different from channels like video, print, audio, presentations and so on. They all deliver results - but of varying kind. The kind you can expect from blogs is mainly about stronger relations with important target groups.

- m Become the Expert
- m Customer Relationships
- m Media Relations
- m Internal Collaboration
- m Knowledge Management
- m Recruitment

- m Test ideas or products
- m Rank high in Search Engines

Become the Expert

Position yourself and your company as the thought leader of your business.

Customer Relationships

In a forum where your main objective is not to sell, you'll have a more personal relationship between you and your customers. Blogs are a fast way to join the customers' discussions, provide tips and insights or receive feedback.

Media Relations

It's every PR consultant's dream to create a channel where media regularly check what you have to say, instead of media just being passive - sometimes indifferent - recipients of press releases.

Internal Collaboration

Use blogs as a workspace where project members keep each other updated without wasting time writing reports or searching the Outlook inbox.

Knowledge Management

Blogs works in two ways. First of all, they're an easy way for the readers to find information and resources they want or need. That's obvious and could be used internally in many organizations. Second, blogs are a kind of "university light" for the blogger. Blogging is on-the-job learning.

Recruitment

If you establish your company as a thought leader, people in your business will pay attention. They'll read and discuss what you have to say. Chances are good they will see you as an attractive employer.

Test ideas or products

A blog is informal. It's part of a conversation where people (often) can comment, and the blog can provide you with a measure of

value. Publish an idea and see if it generates interest. Does anyone link to you? What do they say?

Rank high in search engines

Well, this has nothing to do with relations. But Google and other search engines reward sites that are updated often, that link to other sites and most importantly, that have many inbound links. Start a blog at your regular site and your ranking will boost.

Related links: <http://www.corporateblogging.info/basics/why/>

Six Types of Corporate Blogs

Corporate (or Business, Organizational) blogs can be classified into six different categories. Each category shares common characteristics and the blog content can be expected to differ between the categories. Furthermore, there are differences in terms of target groups and purposes. Even if we also see hybrid forms where blogs are examples of more than one category, an organization that professionally incorporates blogging into its communications strategy will likely prioritize one purpose (for each blog).

CORPORATE (OR ORGANIZATIONAL) BLOGS

External blogs:

- m Sales blogs
- m Relationship blogs
- m Branding blogs

Internal blogs:

- m Knowledge blogs
- m Collaboration blogs
- m Culture blogs

Sales blogs - external

- m Purpose: To market or sell products/services, make citizens aware of public services, get donations for charities or political parties etc.
- m Blogger: The organization itself, or more specifically individuals within it writing on behalf of the organization.
- m Target groups: (Potential) clients/customers and citizens, that is

persons and/or other organizations that are directly involved with the publishing organization, or those it wants to reach with the purpose above.

Relationship blogs - external

- Purpose: To create, uphold or strengthen relationships.
- Blogger: The organization itself, or more specifically individuals within it writing on behalf of the organization.
- Target groups: Often smaller and more specified than with sales blogs. Examples are support blogs aimed at customers of a certain product, finance blogs for IR purposes, PR blogs for media, blogs trying to reach students, future employees, politicians/officials etc.

Branding blogs - external

- Purpose: To strengthen the brand, the profile, of the publishing organization or individuals within it.
- Blogger: Not necessarily the organization itself. Individual employees' or executives' blogging ("insider blogs"), if supported by the organization, can be viewed as a branding blog. The same goes for adverblogs and blogs that are not apparently connected to the organization.
- Target groups: See Relationship and Sales blogs.

Knowledge blogs - internal

- Purpose: To give employees information and insights relating to their work assignments; news, business intelligence, reports about ongoing projects etc.
- Blogger: The organization itself through one or more designated bloggers, or potentially all employees through a entirely open blog publishing model.
- Target groups: All employees with a certain interest.

Collaboration blogs - internal

- Purpose: To provide a working team with a tool for research, collaboration and discussion.
- Blogger: The team.
- Target group: The team.

(There's only a fine line - if any - between this blog category and business wikis. You could also see for example Relationship Blogs change into more wiki-like publications.)

Culture blogs - internal

- m Purpose: To strengthen organizational culture. Typically through informal content of social or non-work related character.
- m Blogger: The organization itself through one or more designated bloggers, or potentially all employees through a entirely open blog publishing model.
- m Target groups: All employees as employees, and not as professionals (developers, managers, assistants and so on).

Read Blogs

There are basically three ways to read a blog: Visit the web page, use an online news aggregator or download a reader.

Ordinary browsing doesn't need any explanation. If you can use a browser, you can read blogs. Soon you'll discover more and more blogs you want to read. That's where the so called feeds will help you. Most blogs are published both on web sites and as feeds. To put it simply, the feed means that you don't have to visit the site to read its content. You can subscribe to updates and have them delivered to you. The fastest way to start is with online news aggregators. They're really easy to use and you of course have the advantage of being able to reach them from any computer. I use - and recommend - Bloglines. Create an account and start subscribing to feeds.

Another option is to use news aggregators that you download and install in your computer. Search Google for "news aggregator" or "rss reader" and you will find many alternatives. Personally I like NewsGator that runs in Microsoft Outlook. Make sure that your aggregator reads both RSS- and Atom- feeds, if not many blogs will be out of your reach. It's as easy as that.

Related links: <http://www.corporateblogging.info/basics/read/>

Publish Blogs

You don't have to buy anything to start blogging. You don't need to know coding. At least not to start with. The most well-known free blog publishing system is Blogger - www.blogger.com - and

they also offer free blog hosting. It works fine and is fully customizable to fit your needs and design (but then you'll have to do some coding). You can integrate it with any site. No doubt, free services pose a problem. You never know how long they will be free, or even available at all. What will happen to your data if they shut down? Considering that our focus is corporate communications it's generally not a good idea to rely on free services, no matter if we're talking about blogging or other services. That leaves you with two more options:

- m Paying for a service like Blogger, e.g. TypePad.
- m Buy a blog publishing system. An example of this is MovableType.

Just don't overdo it. While ordinary web projects always are technical to some degree, blog projects don't have to be. They shouldn't be from the start. If you've never blogged it's much more important to get to know the format. How does it work? How can you use it for business?

Related links: <http://www.corporateblogging.info/basics/publish/>

Steps to your Business Blog

You do it anyway you want to. But here's a list if you want to make sure that you think about all aspects of blogging before you start.

I could add a #0, though: Just do it. Never mind risks, lack of resources, communications strategies. Never mind what you are supposed to do in the blogosphere. It is a new world, a new communication era. And it seems quite easy to get a new job these days...

I'm not sure that would be totally wrong. A lot of good blogs have started that way. But here's the more traditional approach.

1. Start using RSS for news, jobs or press releases

Well, this you should do even if blogging isn't for you. But if you are going to blog you need to feel comfortable with this form of

publishing - get used to the fact that you will have, hopefully, a lot of readers that never actually visit your site. For many with a background in traditional publishing (e.g. many communications directors...) this could be worrying.

2. Thoroughly study what a blog is

You have to know blogs to be able to decide on whether or not to start one. And not just “know” them as a reader of 5 or 10 different blogs. You should do rather extensive research. What are the distinctive features of blogs? What blogs are there in your business? What do you think the audience likes or dislikes about them? With all this done you will still need to find your own tone and niche, and this will depend heavily on who the bloggers are. But you will know what it is like out there.

3. Be specific with purpose

Absolutely no one will be happy if you start a blog because you can. You need, as you would with all other communication channels, be very clear on the purpose. “We will start a blog because...” Just remember that a blog may fill other purposes than you are used to. A purpose like “some of our sales people want a less formal and sales focused forum to share their knowledge” is a brilliant start.

4. Ask yourself, do you really need a blog?

Why on earth would you want a blog? For the purpose above maybe a series of seminars would work just fine. If you have done your research and now know your goal, it is time to ask yourself if it’s worth it. Do you have the culture of openness and honesty that blogging will demand from you? Are there any business risks, and are you prepared to take them?

5. Ask yourself, do we have the resources?

Just one word: Time.

6. Co-ordinate with other communication channels

Nothing strange here, you would never start a new channel without discussing and outlining its relationship with all the other

things you do. If you are going to blog maybe the e-mail newsletter should reference the blog? Or be replaced by it?

7. Who's the blogger?

The Department of Corporate Communications does not blog. No organizational unit does. People working there do. You of course have to find people that want to, that wish nothing else but to, blog. In most real life cases I have seen this has actually been the starting point, and those people have been the advocates for the blog in the process we're talking about here.

8. Make a decision on all aspects, features of blogs

Will you allow comments? Will they be moderated by you? Is Trackback a feature to offer? What RSS versions? Atom, too? Categories or not? A blogroll, maybe? Make sure you know what all these small peculiarities of blogs are and if you think they will help you. And then you need to take some more important decisions. What will you write about and what is absolutely impossible to write about? Will you for example link to competitors? Tip: If you say no to this, start at #2 again...

9. Choose which tool to use

There are a lot of tools to compare, but if you have done #8 you know what to look for.

10. Create a blogging policy

Again, if you have done #8 you know what to put in this - you can get some guidance from others (see the web page of these 14 steps for links).

11. Make sure the blogger(s) know blogging

Blogging is a skill. Not a very unique one, but a skill. The blogger must first of all know how to write, and he or she should know how the blogosphere works.

12. Launch quietly

Ideas and fine plans are one thing. But how does it turn out? Are

the enthusiastic bloggers good enough to be very visible representatives of your brand? I recommend you start low-profile. You could even consider to start behind the firewall or with a password-protected blog.

13. Start doing subtle PR

Don't issue a press release stating you have a blog. You wouldn't be the first to do it, but it never seems appropriate. There are other means.

14. Success or failure? Decide on the future of your blog

It doesn't take more than two or three months, from my experience, to find out if a blog is good enough to deliver results. Have you been linked to by other blogs? Is anyone commenting? Do you get feedback from your target group? You also know how much resources the blog really demands by now, which means you have all the information you need to make a long-term commitment. Or just give it up. For related links on some of these steps, see

<http://www.corporateblogging.info/2004/09/14-steps-to-your-business-blog.asp>

7.7 Weblogs: Realigning Business, Technology & Communication

Weblogs were started as an underground and alternative tool for self-expression but have become one of the most significant Internet developments since HTML. Often self-published, they are among the most well read pages on the World Wide Web, with a powerful voice and an influential effect. In fact, the voice has had such a far-reaching impact that it has been credited with fueling the publicity that led to the resignation of US Senate Majority Leader, Trent Lott. And now, weblogs are poised to exert a similar impact on the world of business.

This white paper looks at the rise of the weblog phenomenon and examines its potential effect on business, and how businesses

can harness this realignment of technology and communication. Weblogs will give rise to a new “generation” of authorities by making it easy to share meaningful information and content as needed, and at the fast-paced and often irregular speed of business.

Weblogs: Realigning Business Technology & Communication

From the Consumer to the Business World

The earliest weblogs were simple lists of URLs of new sites as they arrived on the web. Their evolution began with The National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA), which introduced a “What’s New” weblog page. Shortly after, Netscape launched its own “What’s New” page, one of the most viewed blogs of the mid 90’s. The end of the decade brought the Internet explosion, an event that expanded and transformed our lines of communication, and it took weblogs along for the ride. Structured like personal online diaries, consumer weblogs were the next stage of the evolution, giving individuals a way to share their most intimate thoughts and feelings. The writing was witty, irreverent, and often bombastic. Soon there was a whole Internet subculture of ‘blogger communities’ - crowding around each other’s most intimate thoughts and feelings like groupies around a table in a digital cafe. Slowly but surely, the most successful weblogs grew from one person’s need to share with a friend to one person’s ability to rivet the attention of hundreds.

Today, there are thousands upon thousands of weblogs. There are weblogs devoted to nothing but cataloguing weblogs. Moreover, they’re already evolving into a business tool that is beginning to gain strength in complementing current content-based technology. In the past, Internet publishing has lacked infrastructure and while there have been many information-rich sites, few have had a distinctive opinion or “voice.” Weblogs provide a point of view and will generate power in the audiences that they inspire. The “voice” of a weblog will be the main point of interest and will create a following. The best weblogs will be those that create interest through relevant or insightful content and will gain

strength not through a publisher-provided platform, but because of a resonating voice that compels attention. These blogs will inspire ideas and in turn, influence decisions, giving more individuals in a business setting strength and influence.

Periods of rapid change unleash new forces that Harvard Business School Professor Clayton M. Christensen termed “disruptive technologies” in his 1997 book, *The Innovator’s Dilemma*. Already a new and emerging technology, weblogs have potential to be a disruptive technology. Their self-publishing advantages are changing how individuals and companies are digitally communicating and collaborating. They make the amount of time and money companies now invest in traditional online development seem excessive and wasteful. And they’re making a lot of webmasters nervous. If anyone can build, populate and update a weblog, what does that mean to the future of conventional web development?

Small companies can design and deploy a weblog in a matter of days without incurring outside resource costs. CNET Radio, an all talk, all technology radio station in the Bay Area, uses a weblog to extend the audience experience to the Internet. CNET Radio’s weblog posts upcoming events, teases the next on-air topics and weekly posts its Free Plug Friday - a list of sponsors currently running radio commercials on the station. In addition to CNET, there is a growing core of companies that have started to use weblogs to strengthen communications with customers and constituents. In mid 2002, The New York Times posted its weblog, a continuously updated list of news headlines from around the world. Macromedia, the software maker of Flash and Cold Fusion began to use weblogs in the wake of multiple software releases so that it could effectively field questions and concerns from developers and customers. Other well-known companies that have begun to implement weblogs into their communications strategies are Shell, which has a weblog with forums dedicated to the environment, security, technology and society, Jupiter Media, which was the first to deploy weblogs for individual research analysts, and the Drudge Report, an online up-to-the-minute news source.

Weblogs, whether they're for business or pleasure share two basic components: Regularly updated content about the main topic of the weblog and a list of links to the site's regular community members - usually along the side of the screen. This encourages discussion and idea-sharing, which is one of the stickier reasons to keep coming back. The adoption rate of weblogs continues to go up commensurately with additional, anyone-can-do-this applications. Primalrecords.com, an online music retailer, has a fully transactional weblog that functions as smoothly as a conventionally developed web site. Of course, the all-telling clue that weblogs are really coming into their own as accepted business media is how many now carry advertising.

Business Blog Strategies - Early Adopters

As with any new technology, the more progressive companies are the early adopters. They have the vision to look beyond the initial rudimentary application and appreciate a self-publishing tool that will significantly change how we communicate and collaborate. For example, every organization has vast stores of intellectual capital idling away in the minds of its leaders and top managers. But the ability to share it has been limited by conventional forms of communication: Meetings, reports and presentations. Email certainly opened up the lines to two-way discourse, but unlike weblogs, the exchange does not build on itself. Moreover, it's generally one-at-one communication, often with no expectation of dialogue beyond a single reply. Web sites, and extranets in particular, have the technology for targeted community building but they're clunky dialogue tools, requiring HTML programmers to cut and post all the content and a certain amount of hosting support.

Now companies are encouraging staff members to self-publish professional weblogs, thereby doing an end run around the walls that have prevented free range business discussion on the Web. No battling for representation on the company site. No request forms for content changes and updates. Equally important, the weblog's self-publishing technology automatically democratizes the use of the web. Typically, one department is responsible for managing

and maintaining the Internet. If it's marketing, then it's a good bet that the majority of the company's online efforts will be devoted to marketing. Weblogs give every department, and every individual in every department, the ability to leverage the Web according to his or her needs. Plus there's a certain element of personal power that's hard to deny. Suddenly the best thinkers have their own digital voice that they manage and control themselves.

To that end, weblogs are proving that proactive employees are hungry to try something new. Especially if it can dramatically enhance their effectiveness. Salespeople are creating tight, weblog-based communities with like-minded customers. R&D specialists are building weblog communities with colleagues within the company and with industry peers at large. One book retailer uses a weblog as a less expensive and more effective way to host an author appearance. The author is given a web address to a branded template that is ready and waiting for content. A few sentences gets the discussion thread going and within minutes readers are reviewing characters, discussing plot lines, asking questions and sharing perspectives with others interested in the same book.

From Knowledge Management to Sales

One of the most significant outcomes of all is how weblogs are changing the process of Knowledge Management. Weblogs can archive themselves and eliminate the need for a cumbersome e-library. They can be searched by publisher or by topic. More importantly, they are turning knowledge management from a lump of information that resides on a distant server into a real-time, dynamic exchange among certain groups. Example: A large packaged goods company can have a weblog, published by the senior product manager, for every product - a perpetually "live" communication destination for sales, marketing, and R&D teams. Every morning, the product managers post updates right from their desktops (they can even do it while they're on the road). The rest of the product's weblog community can then check in and review sales numbers, post manufacturing issues, suggest improvements, review upcoming marketing rollouts, and check inventory ther-

mometers. Other forms of “meetingware” can enable these tasks. But the key here is that there is no need for technical support. This is practical knowledge management. And weblogs are the perfect tool for keeping the discussion live and on the surface of daily life at the office.

Weblogs are already enabling salespeople to create tighter relationships with customers by establishing ongoing dialogue threads. These threads can be opened up to include more of a customer’s stakeholders on a particular buying decision, or more of the salesperson’s internal advisors. Imagine a salesperson sets up a weblog for each major customer. Every morning, or every week, he or she types a short paragraph into the content field of each weblog - news about product enhancements, troubleshooting tips, upcoming promotions. The customers can read them and respond at their convenience, they feel connected and relevant and have a personal, one-to-one persistent dialogue that can be dropped off and picked up at any time. All the salesperson has to do is check the responses regularly to maintain his or her end of the discussion. This helps in timing new product presentations, identifying issues and potential problems, sharing new industry thinking - all in a format that is as personal as a phone call.

Or take the case of an electronics engineer who is responsible for parts availability in a large company that manufactures patient monitoring devices. He’s part of a team developing a new heart monitor. Using a weblog, he can tap the experience and knowledge of the rest of the company’s engineers, even those in Germany and California, as he goes about designing and subcontracting components for the new device. Before, this type of professional knowledge exchange would be discouragingly time-consuming and disjointed. Now, instead of phoning or emailing one engineer after another until he finds the one with the appropriate knowledge, he can micro-broadcast his weblog to the company’s engineering community at large. The other engineers can answer at their convenience, which makes their participation more likely in the first place, and there’s a forum for productive discussion.

What if two engineers differ on the solution, or both have viable answers? Now the entire group can cluster around the weblog and help determine the answer.

Marketing organizations in particular will appreciate a recent use of weblogs to conduct research. Normally, 5-10 people are called into a “focus group” to share thoughts and reactions to everything from product ideas to advertising campaigns. A weblog can generate the same kind of “live” discussion without actually requiring people to gather in one place. Not only does this mean significant production savings, but the responses tend to be more thoughtful and more honest. One company posted a proposed advertising campaign and “sistered” it to a weblog so participants could easily view and respond. Afterwards, all the researcher had to do was review the dialogue thread. There was no need to videotape and transcribe. It had already been done *de facto* - just because of the weblog format.

The value of a weblog is only limited by the imagination. Of course, in order to be actually adopted, weblogs have to prove their worth not only in marketing, sales and R&D, but in accounting, too.

Measuring Business Value

Every company that uses weblogs calculates their value in different ways: For example, what is the return on community? What is the relative cost in time spent creating and updating a weblog to the goal at hand? For the engineer building the heart-monitoring device, the weblog provides him with the answers he needs to do a better job. This in turn helps speed the device to market.

The retail bookstore, on the other hand, realizes value by giving customers a reason to come back. Their weblog builds true brand loyalty by giving readers a chance to interact with a favorite author. Not only does the weblog format encourage higher attendance than an on-site event (people can drop in at their own convenience, from their desktops at home), the retailer saves the cost of traveling the author from store to store for face-to-face appear-

ances. Equally important, the weblog supplants the need for offline direct marketing. Customers interested in joining the author's discussion can be reached via email or simply by posting an event notice on the company's main site. Weblogs save companies millions of dollars by eliminating the need for more costly, paper communication.

The value of weblogs as critical marketing tools will only increase as they begin to include the deep analytics that are available in other forms of online marketing. Tracking and monitoring what viewers are reading and responding to results in a database of the most useful kind of customer information: individual and group behavioral trends that are based on interest in certain topics and sub-topics (versus information that is only demographic in nature). This enables companies to hone specific content and promotions for very high interest micro-audiences, which can then be delivered via the weblogs at a fraction of the cost of conventional offline and online marketing. The data gathered can also be mined and shared for future product development.

Taking the First Steps

So how does a company begin weblogging? A few simple steps are all it takes.

1. Start with a short, but explicit plan for what you want to accomplish with your weblog(s). Better customer relationships (measured by repeat sales)? A more collaborative marketing effort (measured by faster development time)? Thought leadership (measured by increased demand for commentary and publicity)? Efficient recruiting (measured by faster candidate pool for lower posting/advertising costs)?
2. Identify the right publisher(s). Your top salesperson. The head of R&D. It could be anyone who can exact business value from an online community. Just make sure he or she is articulate and committed to the idea. Look for extroverts.

3. Find a weblog template that can be branded with your company's logo. Weblog applications for corporate deployment are showing up in do-it-yourself kits that can be up and running in as little as half an hour.
4. Provide each internal weblog publisher with a set of weblogging standards. These include confidentiality policies, product disclosure guidelines and basic dos and don'ts (i.e. - don't refer to customers by name unless they want you to. Do update the thread on a daily basis.)
5. Whether you implement weblogs across a discipline (as in the packaged goods example we gave) or as a trial balloon, find a way to track their content and topics. This information can further pollinate sales and marketing initiatives, help the company prioritize subject matter and guide future weblog themes.
6. Use the weblog as a way to give your key people voice and power. It is a vote of confidence in them to ask them to publish. It will go a long way to demonstrating the company believes in them and their thinking.
7. Periodically "check-in". If participation in a weblog grows dramatically, find out why and learn from it. If participation drops dramatically, find out why and learn from it.
8. Allow the weblog to have a distinct voice and use it to strengthen the brand. One of its key advantages is the quick, constant exchange of bits of information that may not be substantial enough to belong in a newsletter. In doing so, the bond with clients is strengthened and new voices are heard.

Once a company has embraced the value of self-publishing, more and more uses for weblogs will become obvious. Five years from now, Corporate America will have completely normalized

their use into virtually every aspect of daily business delivery. Weblogs may have started as an underground tool for freedom of expression, but the business world is quickly adopting them to liberate their intellectual capital, their product and service development, their salespeople and customers from the incredibly limiting modes of conventional offline and online communication.

Bibliography



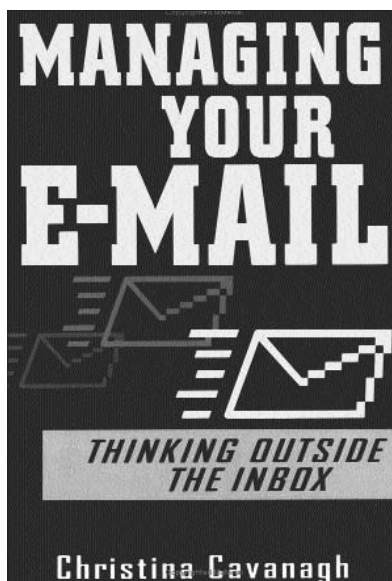
There are books about everything. And in recent years, books have also been written on topics such as Web hosting, blogging and so on. If you're interested in any of these—for example, if you want to design a really professional-looking blog—you'd do well to read a book about it. This is not to say that there are no good Web sites out there that give you valuable information on such topics. Hence, in this chapter we've selected 10 books and 10 Web sites for your reference.

Managing Your E-Mail: Thinking Outside The Inbox

by Christina Cavanagh

E-mail is one of the most useful and efficient business applications ever developed. However, many people today dread the chore of sorting through an inbox crammed with messages that don't concern them and spam they don't want. This book is a straightforward guide dedicated to helping workers and organizations tame the e-mail monster and take back their time.

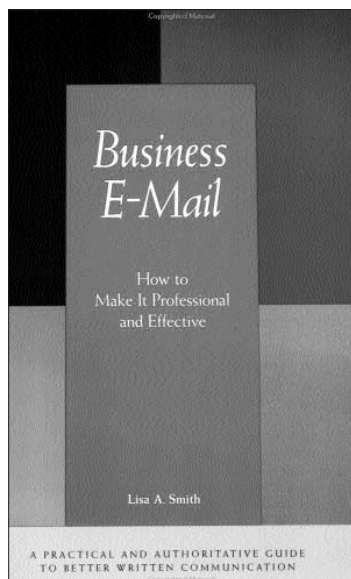
Managing Your E-mail is a simple, accessible reference for workers and organizations that want to get the most out of this ubiquitous and sometimes overwhelming method of communication. With new strategies for dealing with e-mail inefficiencies and practical tips on getting and staying organized, it will free up hours of time each week for what's really important. It examines the categories and patterns of e-mail misuse and presents practical, research-based explanations, solutions, and quick tips on topics such as best practices for responding to e-mail, when to choose more traditional communication methods over e-mail, how to structure an e-mail for high-impact, how to craft more readable and understandable messages, legal pitfalls to avoid, and more.



Business E-Mail: How to Make It Professional and Effective

by Lisa A Smith

This is a practical and authoritative guide to better written communication. “Because every line you write is a marketing tool”, you must present yourself in a positive way in all your written business communication. This book shows you how to make your e-mail messages work for you—to enhance your career and foster your company’s good image.



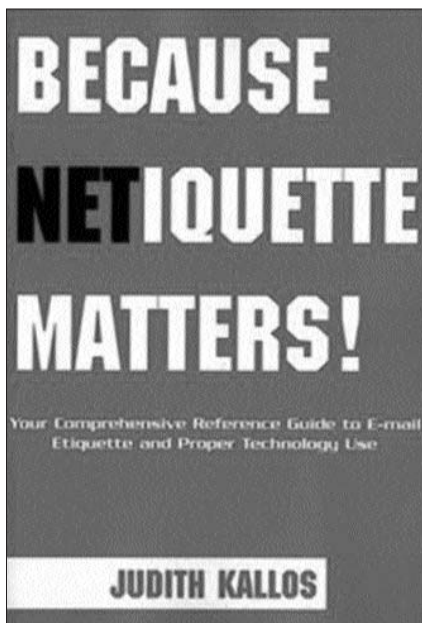
Because Netiquette Matters!

by Judith Kallos

In Judith Kallos' book, you get to learn the nuances of e-mail etiquette and everyday technology use from a personal and business perspective. In easy-to-understand terminology, the author has a conversation with you as though you were getting your personalised tutoring session on the important issue of online etiquette.

Many of the topics covered by the book are often encountered by people online, and they will only take a little effort on your part to apply.

Read this book so you can make the best possible impression online. After you're through with *Because Netiquette Matters!*, you'll be known as someone who is courteous and a joy to communicate with. Get rid of the intimidation and frustration that computers and online cause by using this pioneering book as your guide.



Professional Web Site Design from Start to Finish

by Anne-Marie Conception

While having the right tools to do a project is a great first step, you still need to learn the overall process of how and when to use those tools to achieve your goals—knowledge that not too many Web design books present. This book starts from the assumption that you have the right tools—an Internet connection and a Web authoring program or an HTML reference book, to begin with. If you don't, the first chapter will bring you up to speed.

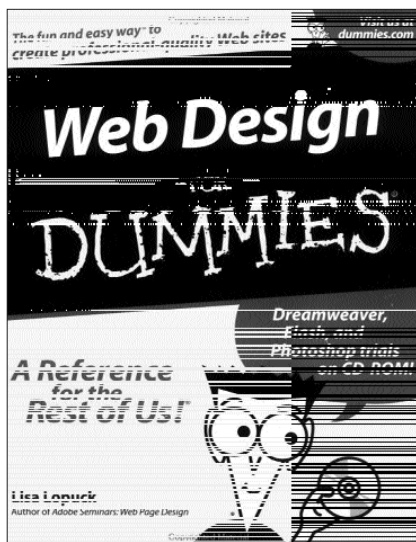


Then in clean, clear language, the book steps you through the Web design and development process from start to finish, from a successful studio owner's perspective: brainstorming site goals, gathering and converting content, developing a strategic site architecture, balancing elements of tone, message, and navigation, prototyping and presenting designs, organising and trafficking files, production, subcontracting, publishing and promotion.

Design for Dummies

by Lisa Lopuck

Get the inside secrets for great looking Web sites that keep customers coming back. Web Design For Dummies covers all the latest Web technologies and tools such as Dreamweaver, Flash, XML, and SMIL. Site design is crucial to attracting and keeping Web visitors to your site. Turn to this friendly guide to discover what makes an attractive Web site. Discover the traps to avoid in Web site design and the keys to a successful Web site.



Build Your Own Web Site

by David Karlins

This one-stop resource demystifies the process, showing you step-by-step how to plan for, construct, and publish your own Web site. Connect to a remote server, get a domain name, and gather content. Then, construct pages using a variety of tools. Learn to use pictures and graphics, format text, create links and animation, take advantage of interactivity, and input forms. *Build Your Own Web Site* is a complete and illustrated step-by-step guide to the skills, tools, and accessories you'll need to produce professional-level Web sites—quickly.



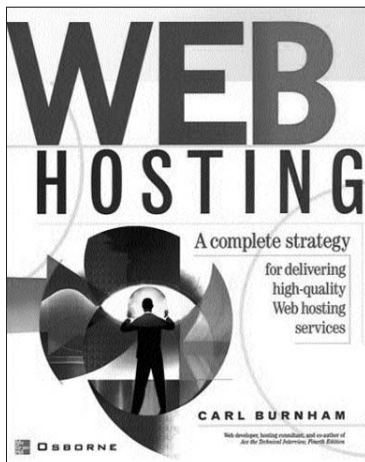
- m Establish a domain name and secure server space
- m Determine which Web site building tools work best for your needs
- m Use Dreamweaver, FrontPage, GeoCities, and other Web site authoring tools
- m Prepare text and photos for the Web
- m Create graphics, animation, sound, and other exciting Web features
- m Enhance your site with interactive search boxes and input forms
- m Use link-testing tools, hit counters, and online mail list managers
- m Increase traffic by working with search engines

Web Hosting

by Carl Burnham

This is a hands-on introductory resource for effectively serving as a corporate Web host. Shows how to implement the essential technology—running servers, operating software, network resources, and database-management applications—needed to offer customers high-quality service.

Web hosts need to assume the role of a frontline consultant, to offer insights and core solutions that “significantly add to a business’s existing processes”, according to Carl Burnham, the author. “Web hosts that focus on how their customer’s business operates, are able to speak their language, avoid “technospeak”, and be more responsive to customer support needs will thrive,” Burnham says.



“Web hosts that market on price, and not these critical value-added services will not survive. As more brick-and-mortar businesses now venture online, opportunities for web hosts to capture new markets continue to arise. Existing web sites with basic brochure-type content are seeking to add e-commerce capabilities.”

Besides providing essential strategies for IT professionals interested in web hosting, it also gives valuable insights to businesses. The business professional can learn about the different types of web hosts, how to improve their own customer service, and how a business can decide among hosting plans available to outsource to that will provide the most significant advantages for their type of operations.

The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog

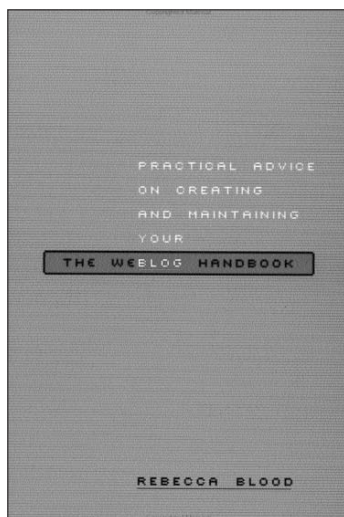
by Rebecca Blood

Weblogs—frequently updated, independently produced, and curiously addictive—have become some of the most popular sites on the Web today. The Weblog Handbook is the first book to explain how weblogs work and explore their impact on the media landscape.

There is no formula for creating a superb weblog—but there are lessons to be drawn from maintaining one. In *The Weblog Handbook*, Rebecca Blood draws on her experience as an early participant in the weblog community to share what she has learned in three years of “living online.”

With a clear and engaging voice, Rebecca explains how to choose among the available tools, even walking the beginner through the process of creating their first weblog. Along the way she answers commonly asked questions concerning weblog etiquette, how to attract readers, and the qualities that make a weblog stand out, alerting the novice to considerations—and pitfalls—they didn’t know to ask about.

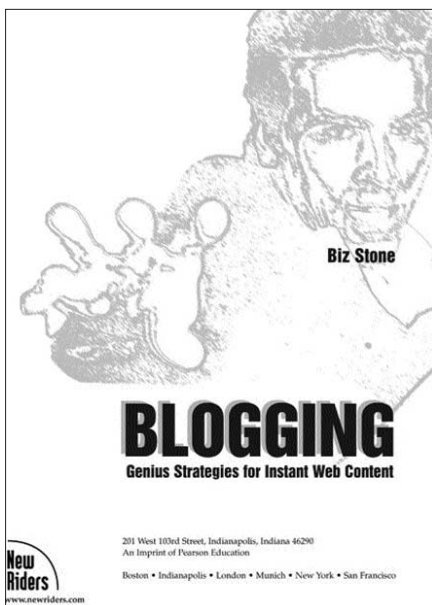
Finally, the author examines how the weblog community has grown and changed, the dangers confronting it, and the ways in which weblogs are affecting and affected by both online and offline culture.



Blogging: Genius Strategies for Instant Web Content

by Biz Stone

Turn your home page into a microportal with fresh content that will keep readers coming back. The first hands-on book on building blogs, this is an excellent tutorial for new bloggers, and includes many advanced techniques for veteran bloggers. Simply put, blogging is an easy way of updating a web page via a browser without the hassle of launching an FTP client or HTML editor. With all the templates, add-ons, and extra features associated with building this microportal, the blog is a new take on the home page. The blog brings the voice of its creator to the surface, builds it into the design, and keeps the content fresh and meaningful. This book features hands-on tutorials for building a blog, adding a user based commenting system, adding team members, syndicating with JavaScript, adding searches to a site, and much more. This is the book for creative web-enthusiasts looking for the 'next thing' and it's the first book of new ideas and advanced tutorials for bloggers already numbering in the hundreds of thousands.



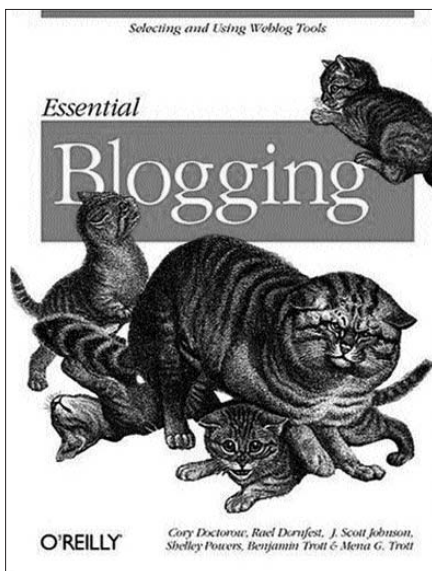
Essential Blogging

by Shelley Powers, Cory Doctorow, J Scott Johnson, Mena G Trott, Benjamin Trott, Rael Dornfest

Anyone can run a blog. From personal diaries to political commentary and technology observations, bloggers are making their voices heard around the world. *Essential Blogging* helps you select the right blogging software for your needs and show how to get your blog up and running.

You'll learn the ingredients of a successful blog, and then get detailed installation, configuration and operation instructions for the leading blogging software: Blogger, Radio Userland, Movable Type, and Blosxom. After showing you how to acquire, set-up, and run these leading software packages, *Essential Blogging* takes you through the more advanced features, so that by the time you finish, you'll be up and blogging with the best of them.

Written by prominent bloggers and authors of blogging tools, *Essential Blogging* is a no-nonsense guide to the technology of blogging.



www.wpdfd.com

Web page design for designers

web page design FOR DESIGNERS

WPDFD is presented by **CoffeeCup Software**
Web Design Software, Web Hosting, Search Engine Submission

Click Here to Learn More

Web Page Design for Designers
Web Design Archive

The culmination of over eight years of articles, reviews and information about the graphic design of Web sites.

tools & software

software, web hosting and search engine submission resources

articles

an alphabetical index of all monthly articles

editorials

monthly publication of articles, editorials & more

reference

general information from the original site

links

useful links submitted by readers

search & forums

find any word or phrase - or - chat in our forums

Web Page Design for Designers is
© Copyright 1996-2005 CoffeeCup Software.
All articles and content provided by Joe Gillespie

Joe Gillespie Joe Gillespie

Home | Web Design Tools | Articles | Editorials | Reference | Web Design Directory | Forums | Links | Search
www.wpdfd.com - Web Page Design For Designers is © CoffeeCup Software | Contact Us

An incredibly useful site! The 'Tools and software' section contains software, web hosting and search engine submission resources. There are over eight years of articles, reviews and information about the graphic design of Web sites! 'Editorials' is a monthly publication of articles, editorials and more. And, of course, there's a search feature—and a forum as well!

www.webfoot.com/advice/email.top.html

A beginner's guide to effective e-mail

Introduction	A Beginner's Guide to Effective Email
What Makes Email Different?	Revision 2.0 - Kurtin Jack-Sherrard
Content	See the list of alternate sites if this site is slow for you. There are also translations into German, Indonesian, and Chinese (Simplified and Traditional).
Format	You might also be interested in Finding Email Addresses or one of the books in my Overcome Email Overload series.
Page Layout	
Attachments	
Security	
Style	
Formality	
Structure and Signatures	
Summary	
Appendix A: Addresses and Links	
Appendix B: Contact Names	
Appendix C: Bibliography	
Most Overcome Email Overload with Success!	
Most Overcome Email Overload with Success! Outlook 2000 and Outlook 97/98	
World Wide Web Foot Press	

From the page: "This is not a document on the mechanics of sending e-mail—which buttons to push or how to attach a photograph. Those details are different for every different email software package, and are better handled by manuals for the program. I instead focus on the content of an e-mail message: how to say what you need to say. I don't think of this as e-mail etiquette (commonly called netiquette) because I don't think these guidelines merely show you how to be a nice person. These guidelines show you how to be more efficient, clear, and effective."

www.dtcc.edu/cs/rfc1855.html

Netiquette guidelines

RFC 1855	
Netiquette Guidelines	
Status of This Memo	
This memo provides information for the Internet community. This memo does not specify an Internet standard of any kind. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.	
Abstract	
This document provides a minimum set of guidelines for Network Etiquette (Netiquette) which organisations may take and adapt for their own use. As such, it is deliberately written in a bulleted format to make adaptation easier and to make any particular item easy (or easier) to find. It also functions as a minimum set of guidelines for individuals, both users and administrators. This memo is the product of the Responsible Use of the Network (RUN) Working Group of the IETF.	
Table of Contents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.0 Introduction 2.0 One-to-One Communication 3.0 One-to-Many Communications 4.0 Information Services 5.0 Selected Bibliography 6.0 Security Considerations 7.0 Author's Address 	
1.0 Introduction	
In the past, the population of people using the Internet had "grown up" with the Internet, were technically minded, and understood the nature of the transport and the protocols. Today, the community of Internet users includes people who are new to the environment. These "Newbies" are unfamiliar with the culture and don't need to know about transport and protocols. In order to bring these new users into the Internet culture quickly, this Guide offers a minimum set of behaviors which organisations and individuals may take and adapt for their own use. Individuals should be aware that no matter who supplies their Internet access, be it an Internet Service Provider through a private account, or a student account at a University, or an account through a corporation, that those organisations have regulations about ownership of mail and files, about what is proper to post or send, and how to present yourself. Be sure to check with the local authority for specific guidelines.	
We've organized this material into three sections: One-to-one communication, which includes mail and talk; One-to-many communications, which includes mailing lists and NewtNews; and Information Services, which includes ftp, WWW, Wais, Gopher, MUDs and MOOs. Finally, we have a Selected Bibliography, which may be used for reference.	
2.0 One-to-One Communication (electronic mail, talk)	
We define one-to-one communications as those in which a person is communicating with another person, as if face-to-face: a dialog. In general, rules of common courtesy for interaction with people should be in force for any situation and on the Internet it's doubly important where, for example, body language and tone of voice must be inferred. For more information on Netiquette for communicating via electronic mail and talk, check references [1,2,25,27] in the Selected Bibliography.	
2.1 User Guidelines	
2.1.1 For mail:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unless you have your own Internet access through an Internet provider, be sure to check with your employer about ownership of electronic mail. Laws about the ownership of electronic mail vary from place to place. Unless you are using an encryption device (hardware or software), you should assume that mail on the Internet is not secure. Never put in a mail message anything you would not put on a postcard. Respect the copyright on material that you reproduce. Almost every country has copyright laws. If you are forwarding or republishing a message you've received, do not change the wording. If the message was a personal message to you and you are republishing it to a group, you should ask permission first. You may shorten the message and quote only relevant parts, but be sure you give proper attribution. Never send chain letters via electronic mail. Chain letters are forbidden on the Internet. Your network providers will be revoked. Notify your local system administrator if you ever receive one. A good rule of thumb: Be conservative in what you send and liberal in what you receive. You should not send heated messages (we call these "flames") even if you are provoked. On the other hand, you shouldn't be surprised if you get flamed and it's prudent not to respond to flames. In general, it's a good idea to at least check all your mail subjects before responding to a message. Sometimes a person who asks you for help (or clarification) will send another message which effectively says "Never mind". Also make sure that any message you respond to was directed to you. You might be cc'd rather than the primary recipient. Make things easy for the recipient. Many makers strip header information which includes your return address. In order to ensure that people know who you are, be sure to include a line or two at the end of your message with contact information. You can create that file ahead of time and add it to the end of your messages. (Some makers do this automatically.) In Internet parlance, this is known as a ".sig" or "signature" file. Your .sig file takes the place of your business card. (And you can have more than one to apply in 	

This document provides a minimum set of guidelines for Network Etiquette (Netiquette) which organisations may take and adapt for their own use. As such, it is deliberately written in a bulleted format to make adaptation easier and to make any particular item easy (or easier) to find. It also functions as a minimum set of guidelines for individuals, both users and administrators. This memo is the product of the Responsible Use of the Network (RUN) Working Group of the IETF (the Internet Engineering Task Force).

<http://socialsoftware.weblogsinc.com/entry/9817137581524458/>

The social software weblog

thesocialsoftwareweblog

It's all about who you know

MY YOURLOG NEWSFEEDER MyFeeder

WIN member since Oct, 2003

Advertisement



Advertisement

Relevant advertisers delivered to your website. No maintenance required. Google AdSense google.com/adsense

MARKETPLACE

The best user oriented social casino anywhere. Play at the friendliest casino and win great prizes.

Find information on all types of software like: barcode, computer, music, loan, child care & more.

Need PDF? Convert PDF to Excel or Word with Inverted PDF conversion software.

Get your own best link here.

RECENT COMMENTS

8/17/2005
Adam on Login to Flickr with your Ya...

8/16/2005

thesocialsoftwareweblog

It's all about who you know

Home of the Social Networking Services Meta List

Posted Feb 14, 2005, 5:55 PM ET by Judith Meskill

Once again, this is my recently updated Social Networking Services Meta List. It is broken down into nine loosely built categories that will continue to shift. These social networking categories are: **business**; **common interest**; **dating**; **face-to-face facilitation**; **friends**; **MoSoSo** (Mobile Social Software); **pets**; **photos**; and **'edge' cases or social networking 'plus' sites**.

The mostly recently added services are marked with an *. Please keep submitting your comments, links, and recommendations for additions and deletions. This list now stands at 300 entries. Thanks... (=)

business networking sites

Affinity Engines, Appair*, Business Parc, BusinessPartnerships.ca*, Contact Network, Doostang*, eademy, eConozzo, Elyon, EntireMate, eXtremeNetworking.biz*, Friendly Favours, GoingProfessional, Growth Company, I'm Not From Here, InterAction, ITmob, IsNotWhatYouKnow, Join Network PLUS, LLC, Kickstart-Connect*, Kconnects, LinkedIn, Link Silicon Valley, matcheroo, Mediabistro, Monster Networking, NetMiner, Netmodular Community, Networking For Professionals, Online Business Networking Resource, Open Business Club (openBC), OrderGenerator, PeopleThatClick*, Point Relevance, Polypol, PowerMingle, RealContacts, ReferNed, Reunion, Ryze, SelectMinds, Senior Management Network*, Shortcut, Silicon Valley Pipeline, Spoke Software, Sullivan Executive Networking Community, Tacit - ActiveNet, TENO, Viadue*, Visible Path, WisdomBuilder, Zerendipity Networks, Zerodegrees.

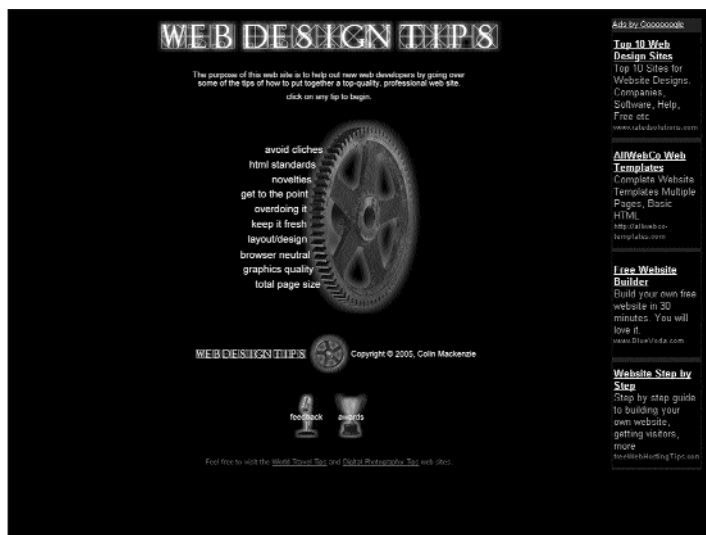
common interest networking sites

50 Something.com, 50Yearsplus.com, ANTIriender, ArtistNow!, AveManasingles, Bigcampus.net, BookCrossing, Buzznet, CampusNetwork*, Classmates, Collegester, Community Zero, Company of Friends, ConnectU*, DearSpace, Delphi Forums, Digital Squeeze, Downlink, FilmTrust*, Foodsters, Fun4, GamersClue, Globe Alive, gradfinder, HRTS - Hollywood Radio & Television Society, Jeweler*, LDS Circle*, Mediabuddies, Meet Me at HOT or NOT?, naboe*, Nelaysa Burning Man Community, Neurons, PayDemocracy,



This is a site about, and with links to, social networking sites. It is broken down into nine loosely built categories that will continue to shift. These social networking categories are: business; common interest; dating; face-to-face facilitation; friends; MoSoSo (Mobile Social Software); pets; photos; and 'edge' cases or social networking 'plus' sites.

www.colin.mackenzie.org/webdesign



Web design tips

From the site: "The purpose of this Web site is to help out new web developers by going over some of the tips of how to put together a top-quality, professional Web site."

www.corporateblogging.info

CORPORATE BLOGGING.INFO

Your Guide to Corporate Blogging

Blogging can play an important role in both external and internal communications of your organization. But to find out exactly how, you need overview. You need a place where many different questions on participatory business communication can be answered. That's what this is. You will find [basic facts](#), [examples](#) and [testimonials](#), and an eye on the current discussion.

Free Download
16-page PDF:
[Beginners' Guide to Corporate Blogging](#)

Fredrik Wackå, Malmö (Sweden)
Corporate blogger since July 2000. [More about this site and me.](#)

Corporate Blogging Blog

Subscribe to or syndicate ([How?](#)) ([Atom](#)) ([RSS 2.0](#))
Subscribe to [E-mail updates](#)

Thursday, June 30, 2005
Have a nice summer!

The sun is shining here in Malmö, Sweden and it's time to cool down and even unplug for a while. I won't be writing here again -- or even read other blogs -- until sometimes in August. Subscribe, or stay subscribed, and you'll know when I'm back. I wish you all a great summer.

Posted by Fredrik
Permanent link for [Have a nice summer!](#)
[Comments \(4\)](#) [Trackback \(0\)](#) [Other blogs about this post](#)

Blogging works: A personal success story

I want to tell you a blog success story -- a story about how I were able to start a project for client that never would have happened without blogging. We're not blogging in the project but that's not the point. The point is that *blog networking works*.

Remember the post where I and Neville wanted to find freelance writers? We

BUSINESS BLOGGING BASICS

- What is it?
- Why do it?
- How to read them?
- How to publish them?

TESTIMONIALS

Corporate bloggers tell you why they decided to give it a try.

EUROPEAN EXAMPLES


See what's going on in Europe - examples from Sweden to Germany to France to...

ABOUT & CONTACT

Information about this site.

MY TO-READ LIST

- [Internal blogging at Microsoft](#)
- [Why Blog? - Overlooked Uses for Blogs - \(Small Business Blog Center\)](#)
- [Does BusinessWire get RSS?](#)
- [Internal Communications is good for the bottomline](#)
- [Blogs 'n' Wine: Business Models or Drinks at a Social Gathering?](#)
- [Blog Bashing Continues](#)
- [NewOn: Microsoft really](#)


This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons License](#).

CORPORATEBLOGGING.INFO

From the site: "Blogging can play an important role in both external and internal communications of your organisation. But to find out exactly how, you need overview. You need a place where many different questions on participatory business communication can be answered. That's what this is. You will find basic facts, examples and testimonials."


<http://qq//allrss.com>

RSS Compendium

Ads by Google
[RSS Outlook](#)
[RSS Aggregator](#)
[RSS Newsfeeds](#)
[RSS Software](#)
[RSS Newreader](#)

RSS Links:
[Home](#)
[RSS Directories](#)
[RSS Editors](#)
[RSS Feeds](#)
[RSS History](#)
[RSS Parsers](#)
[RSS Readers](#)
[RSS Resources](#)
[RSS Search](#)
[RSS Submission](#)
[RSS Validators](#)
[RSS Versions](#)
[RSS Blogs](#)
[RSS Non-English](#)
[RSS Bookshelf](#)
[RSS News Beta](#)

RSS at:
[A9](#)
[43 Things](#)
[AlltheWeb](#)
[Ask Jeeves](#)
[Become.com](#)
[Blinklist](#)
[Blogdigger](#)
[BlogMarks.net](#)
[BlogPulse](#)
[brainespot](#)
[Business Wire](#)
[Clusty](#)
[connotea](#)
[de.lirio.us](#)
[del.icio.us](#)
[digg](#)
[Dogpile](#)
[Download.com](#)
[Exalead](#)
[Feedmarker](#)
[Feedster](#)
[FindArticles](#)
[Flickr](#)
[Furl.net](#)
[Google Groups](#)
[Google News](#)



[Web](#)
[allrss.com](#)

The RSS Compendium is designed to link you to information about RSS readers, resources, tools, etc...

This resource was originally a sub-set of files in my Weblogs Compendium resource, but it has grown so much that it now demands its own index.

XML Latest entries from the RSS Compendium Blog. The full blog is here

08/15/2005 03:59 PM
 Microsoft exec defends RSS rebranding
 A Microsoft Network executive is defending Microsoft's rebranding of RSS (Really Simple Syndication) into "Web feeds" after a flurry of Microsoft bloggers accused the software giant of trying to recast the Web-site syndication technology in its own image

08/15/2005 01:41 PM
 RSS Extensions
 RSS Extensions - intended to become a community site for the RSS technology community, for the benefit of everybody, and everybody equally

08/15/2005 03:29 AM
 Encyclopædia Britannica Online Daily Content...
 The initial RSS feed from Encyclopædia Britannica Online will include two items daily: Biography of the Day and This Day in History

08/14/2005 03:24 AM
 FeedCatch - RSS archiver
 FeedCatch - a free service for archiving headlines of an RSS feed

08/14/2005 02:54 AM
 Cinematography.com Forum RSS feeds
 Cinematography.com Forum now offers RSS 2.0 feeds for all publicly available posts in the forum

08/14/2005 02:50 AM
 New Hampshire Public Radio RSS feeds
 New Hampshire Public Radio has a number of RSS feeds

08/14/2005 02:45 AM

Content syndication - supply & demand at the online information conference, 30 November, London, UK

Ads by Google

Must have Outlook Plugins
 See what you can do with the right plugins for you!
[www.mapilabs.com](#)

Free Outlook RSS Reader
 RSS newsreader & aggregator for Outlook. Attensa for Outlook
[www.attensa.com](#)

RSS Feeds in Outlook
 Turn Outlook into a Feed Reader Free for personal use
[www.infotainment.com](#)

Free RSS Reader
 Support RSS 0.9, 1.0, 2.0 news feed all Windows

RSS Compendium

The RSS Compendium is designed to link you to information about RSS readers, resources, tools, etc. The links on the page include RSS Directories, Editors, Feeds, History, Parsers, Readers, Resources, Search, Submission, Validators, Versions, Blogs, and more!

www.thinkofit.com/webconf/afcnart.htm

Making Online Forums Work for Community Networks

Copyright © 1998 by David S. Woolley

This article was written for the inaugural issue of the *Association For Community Networking (AFCN) Newsletter*.

For additional Web Conferencing articles and resources, see the *Think of it Publications page*.

Online discussion forums have played a key role in community networks ever since the first such networks began to appear in the mid 1980's. Forums permit direct interaction among community members. They provide a place where local issues can be discussed and information can be shared quickly and easily.

The terms "forum" and "conference" are used to refer to a wide variety of things, ranging from chat rooms to real-time video conferencing. But this article will focus on text-based, asynchronous group discussions. Participants in such conferences can log in at their own convenience and read whatever messages have been posted since their last visit.

For a successful online forum, several elements are essential:

1. Clear purpose
2. Experienced hosts
3. Interested participants
4. Good software

Clear Purpose

The first step is to think carefully about why you want forums. Who do you expect to participate, and for what purposes? These questions are often glossed over as a community networking plan ("... and of course, we'll have a forum area...") but it's crucial to consider them. Unless your forums fulfill a clearly identifiable purpose, they are likely to languish.

People who simply enjoy online discussion for its own sake already have thousands of Web forums, Usenet newsgroups, and mailing lists to occupy their time. It's absolutely critical to define a specific purpose that distinguishes your conferences from all the others out there. You are most likely to succeed if your forums address the immediate, real-world needs of your constituency.

Start from a real problem or need, and then think about how (and whether) an online conference might fill the need.

Experienced Hosts

A forum host, or moderator, is someone who takes primary responsibility for the care and feeding of an online conference. The host sets the tone, establishes ground rules, initiates topics of discussion, encourages participation, and generally tries to ensure that the conference serves the purpose for which it is intended. This role is especially important in the early stages of conference building, as it takes a considerable amount

Making Online Forums Work for Community Networks

This page is actually a single article, with resources at the end. The article begins, "Online discussion forums have played a key role in community networks ever since the first such networks began to appear in the mid 1980s. Forums permit direct interaction among community members. They provide a place where local issues can be discussed and information can be shared quickly and easily. The terms 'forum' and 'conference' are used to refer to a wide variety of things, ranging from chat rooms to real-time video conferencing. But this article will focus on text-based, asynchronous group discussions. Participants in such conferences can log in at their own convenience and read whatever messages have been posted since their last visit..."

www.entrepreneur.com/article/0,4621,307745,00.html
Entrepreneur.com

[Tools & Services](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Books](#) | [Business Opportunities](#)

Entrepreneur.com

[Search](#)

[GO](#)

[eBusiness](#)

[Business Center by MasterCard](#)

[Home](#)

[Startups](#)

[HomeBiz](#)

[Franchise](#)

[Biz Opps](#)

[Money](#)

[Marketing](#)

[Management](#)

[E-Biz](#)

[Tech](#)

[Magazine](#)

[Hot Profiles](#) | [eBay Center](#) | [Career Journal Center](#) | [Internet Solutions Center](#)

[Topics A-Z](#)

Did you know?

21 Ways to Promote Your Site Online and Off

These 21 tips will help you get the word out about your e-business.

April 14, 2003

Offline Promotions

1. Always put your URL on letterhead, [business cards](#) and in e-mail signatures—wherever potential visitors are likely to see it.

2. If your employees wear uniforms, put your URL on them so every one of your customers sees a walking advertisement of your Web site.

3. Include your URL on all promotional items you give away—coffee mugs, T-shirts, keychains and so on. A daily reminder is a good way to get people to visit your site.

4. Be sure to include your Web address in all press releases you send out to members of the media. By having it at their fingertips, they may be more likely to include it in articles they write about your company.

5. Don't forget to put your Web address in your Yellow Pages ad. That's one place people see it every day.

6. Do you own any company vehicles? Be sure to put your URL on the side of any car or truck that's out there delivering your products.

advertisement



monster



Target the position.
Target the location.
Target the right candidate.

The fast, easy way for employers to find great local talent.

Post A Job
CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE

Article Tools

 [E-mail this](#)

 [Print this](#)

 [Bookmark this](#)

Related Articles:

- ▶ [A to Z of Legal Issues](#)
- ▶ [Pumping Up Your Site's Marketing Copy](#)
- ▶ [Dealing With Product Returns](#)

Also See These Topics:



BUSINESS AND STORIES

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?







VIEW OUR PHOTOS TO WATCH VIDEOS

RENEE AND ANDRAN
RICHARD SPER, BROOKLYN

This is a sort of tips and tricks site, with the difference that there are links to more resources, embedded within the tips. So if you want to know more about how to go about something, help is a click away.

A sample tip: “Not sure what your customers want? Try creating an online survey to get their crucial opinions on how well your site is selling to them.” ‘Online survey’ is linked here to another resource that tells you about online surveys.