

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF
PERSONAL COMPUTER USERS
WHO FREQUENT THE INTERNET,
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON GIST
SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS.

safe surfing

- A ONLINE CONTENT ENHANCEMENT
- B RECYCLING OPTIONS
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Online Content Enhancement

I read an article recently indicating that the year 2007 was the first in which more travel (51 percent) was purchased online than off-line. Isn't it exciting to see this trend from off-line to online patronage repeated in very many industries?

MEDIA ENHANCEMENT

Although I'm still bitter about how MSNBC "analyzed" McCain's victory speech in New Hampshire



(<http://moreaboutpolitics.info/moreaboutpolitics/?p=1139>), I've been meaning to comment about the excellent online content they produce. For quite some time television networks have tried to do everything possible to enhance the interactive experience viewers can get from watching TV. Probably prompted by the success of online-only productions like MSNBC, major and not-so-major networks alike have created impressive online products that rival the very TV shows they shadow. ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, sure, but GSN, TLC, HGN and virtually every network is now producing reams of pages on their



websites devoted to the viewers of every successful show they produce. If you're a fan of a particular show, check out what I'm talking about by going to the network's site and punching up the show to see all the auxiliary entertainment the producers are trying to get you to enjoy. There are games, quizzes, biographies, music and scads of auxiliary content. And a lot of it IS enlightening and enjoyable, if you have the time.

But, in my opinion, among the best and most effective use of this kind of enhancement is what Brian Williams touted at the 2008 Consumer electronics Show (CES) in



Las Vegas this year. (See here for more information: (<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2704,2248063,00.asp>) "Ten minutes after the (Nightly News) broadcast concluded, the episode was live on the Nightly News Web site for streaming, complete with additional video clips and other Web-only extras." Often, things that you might never see or hear, such as the rest of a longer and revealing interview with a presidential candidate, are immediately and ONLY available online.



These days, dozens of examples exist of this sort of meaningful enhancement of traditional communications media. Not only do the producers of TV shows create internet content, but radio presentations and newspaper

articles have associated internet productions as well. Web producers ranging from your local stations and

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newspapers to the big national and international guys (e.g., BBC, NPR, Wall Street Journal) produce these increasingly popular and



valuable web pages. Usually they offer particularly valuable

features that are only available online like archives of recent broadcasts and articles, new alerts and pages tailored to your specific interests. What a great way to use the internet to focus on you!

So next time you read, see or hear a broadcast piece that leaves you asking as many questions as it answers ("Well, what about this?" "Why didn't they cover this?"), mouse on over to their accompanying web page article to get the "rest of the story." Quite often you'll be surprised how much was left on the cutting room floor and how many questions that material might answer for you. As a minimum, go to their sites to get the email address of the author or producer. I predict that you'll be very pleasantly surprised about how many will respond to your questions personally with sound, enlightening information.

MERCHANDISING AUGMENTATION

Another form of online enhancement is in the field of retail merchandising. In the early days of the internet we might have seen JC



Penney's and Sears simply repeat a newspaper or TV ad online. What a leap



we've taken now! Some of the largest companies solely exist on the internet (e.g., Amazon and eBay) and almost all large companies have online presences that are completely independent from their brick and mortar outlets, offering unique and distinct discounts, coupons and specials, sometimes even offering free shipping. Check out Sears, Walmart, Sam's Club, COSTCO, Target and many other retail sites for their online-only specials.



And an increasing number of these major institutions have something at their sites that they usually call their "outlet"

(e.g., Dell and HP).



(Yep, that'd be where you'd find Barry.) Others even have their own auction sections (e.g., Amazon and Sears).

So, when shopping, don't forget these valuable resources, especially the major stores' outlet and auction sites.



Amazon.com Auctions
Bid to Win! Value Guaranteed.



Oddly, they are rarely searchable through shopping search engines (like BizRate.com, Shopping.com, StreetPrices.com, PriceGrabber.com or

even Google.com). You have to know to actually visit the right site.

That's probably next on



the horizon though: a search engine devoted to the best prices available at discount outlets (some already claim they do that, but they don't).

BANKING

Here's another example of where the internet has begun to overtake brick and mortar institutions - where what started as an "enhancement" to a traditional function overtook the original. It probably started with PayPal, but now virtually every major bank has a significant presence you to totally automate your banking. It is now considered by many to be safer to pay your bills online than it is to pay by mail. And in many cases it is also cheaper. So why doesn't everyone? It's probably just a matter of people feeling insecure, much as they did when banks were new and mattresses were considered safer!



SECURITY

If you leave your teenagers at home or your youngsters with a babysitter or at a nursery, today it's a relatively simple process to monitor them via webcam. Similarly, you can easily set up a virtually invisible security camera to monitor your yard, your front door or any other part of your home. Monitoring can be either in real time or recorded and viewed later (for checking what the babysitter takes from the refrigerator, for example).



This technology in an apartment building recently caught a very brazen thief stealing and removing furniture from the entry foyer. Within hours the culprit and his unbelievable Chutzpah were transmitted all over the world via YouTube! What a perfect use of technology and the internet!



There are thousands of webcams installed all over the world now, most for security to one degree or another. There are also numerous sites that will help you find live webcams. Some are

pretty sleazy and seek to empty your wallet, but a good way to find legitimate sites is to go to a web site in the industry of the sort that interests you. For example, CALTRANS lists its traffic cams at <http://video.dot.ca.gov/>. Sacramento County lists theirs at www.traffic.saccounty.net/projects/TOC/trafcam.asp.

Here are two of the many legitimate sites that offer lists of webcams: www.liveviews.org and www.earthcam.com.

And here is a particularly nice live webcam, especially for those who miss the old aquarium screensavers:



www.montereybayaquarium.org/efc/cam_menu.asp



POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Now even political campaigns are being launched and conducted online! Although it's unlikely that Ron Paul will get the GOP nod this

year, his progress so far has been largely due to the internet. And who can forget Howard Dean (try as we may)? His initial success and eventual downfall might both be attributable to the internet; his infamous scream was probably circulated more rapidly and widely than virtually any other medium could have achieved. If you missed it, check it out here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-80QAgtSg&feature=related>



Better yet, and more relevant to my point that the internet offers real benefits, are some new sites that will truly help you decide which candidate's platform is most closely aligned with your own

views. First take a trip to www.ontheissues.org and take their quiz. Supposedly you will learn out how you think relative to the candidates. But I must tell you that I have taken the test three times and had three different results. Obviously you'll want to take any of these results with the standard "grain of salt."

For more quizzes and research into candidate platforms, check out these sites:

- www.glassbooth.org
- www.washingtonpost.com
- www.selectsmart.com/president/2008.html
- www.votebyissue.org
- www.deho.net/candidate

Web Site Finds

www.clarkhoward.com

Clark Howard has a great nationally syndicated talk show and his web site is just as handy as his radio show. He and his staff cover areas ranging from personal financing and debt issues to fixing plumbing problems! His advice is very well researched and extremely sound.



www.annualcreditreport.com

If you haven't heard, you are permitted one free credit report annually from each of the three major credit bureaus. Here is a central location to help you claim those reports.



www.fakechecks.org

Certainly you've seen the email scams offering to send you thousands or even millions of dollars (e.g., a share of a lottery or inheritance) in exchange for a fee or for helping to transfer the funds out of another country. And hopefully you thought "if it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't." The number of people that fall for that scam is quite surprising. Many have lost a good chunk or even all of their life savings. Please visit this site to learn more and share the URL with your friends, especially your more senior friends. They seem to be the most vulnerable.



Recycling

Recycling is not only good for the environment, it can be good for the wallet.

CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

This suggestion is too late for this year, but file the thought away for next year. A very easy way to get rid of old but operational computer-related equipment (even if it's not necessarily operating perfectly or is missing something like, say, an operating system) is to donate it to a non-profit or not-for-profit charity. After all, it's illegal to throw it in the garbage and it costs extra to leave it with many legal recyclers. So why not find a charitable organization that could put it to good use? Goodwill, the Salvation Army and other similar organizations usually need completely operational equipment, but many other organizations are happy to have equipment that needs a little work. For example,





many schools teach courses in computer repair. Other organizations (including schools) have tech departments responsible for repairing in-house equipment and they are often more than capable of replacing a hard drive or CDROM, adding an operating system or replacing a keyboard.



COSTCO

COSTCO just started a new program that offers to take virtually all used (or useless) computer products and even pays you for some of it. They have a value estimator that is very simple to use. Even shipping is covered. See here: www.greensight.com/CostcoTrades

INK CARTRIDGES

Many office supply companies offer ink cartridge refilling services now that save quite a bit of money over full-priced brand name replacements. Check out Staples, OfficeMax and Office Depot, to name a few. Additionally, numerous companies will pay you for your spent cartridges, including shipping. The cartridges won't bring much, but you don't have to risk harming the environment by tossing them in the trash either. Google "sell ink cartridges" or try here: www.tonerbuyer.com



Stumper Contest

Didn't get even a single guess regarding last month's stumper....not one! Either it was a doozie of a puzzle or it was of absolutely no interest! It had to do with the aggravating and seemingly constant pop-up window asking you to sign up for or into Windows Messenger.



"How do you get rid of Windows Messenger?"

Barry Codron, a U.S. Air Force retiree, lives (with his wife and doggie and near his children and grandchildren and their doggies) in the Sacramento area. Although technically fully retired, he enjoys writing and consulting in areas including technology and music, among other fields that pique his interest from time to time. He welcomes your questions, comments, ideas or corrections at barry.mart@sbcglobal.net.

How to Remove Windows XP's Messenger

1. Fire up the Windows Explorer by pressing the windows key (⊞) and "e" simultaneously;
2. Navigate your way to the WINDOWS folder on your root drive (usually C:\Windows, but sometimes C:\, sometimes some other drive designation such as E: or G: and sometimes C:\WINXP).
3. Then go to the INF folder. (So most of you, though not everyone, will go to C:\WINDOWS\INF);
4. Look for the file sysoc.inf.
5. Double click the file and it should open in the Notepad (if you set it up as your editor, the default setting)
6. Make a backup of the file before altering it just in case you need to recover the original. Do this by saving the file as you opened it as, say, sysoc.bkp (select "All Files" as the File type rather than the default "TEXT" files.)
7. Then make the following changes:
8. Look for the line containing "msmsgs" in it. Near the end of that line, you'll see the word "hide." Delete the word "hide" leaving the adjacent commas next to one another.
9. Save this new version of the file as "sysoc.inf," again being sure to change the file type to "All files," and close it.
10. Now, open the Add and Remove Programs applet in the Control Panel and click the Add/Remove Windows Components icon.
11. Find "Windows Messenger" in the list and remove the checkmark from its box.

That should do the trick. Remember that adjusting Windows with tweaks such as this always comes with the warning that you do so at your own risk. I've rarely had problems doing this sort of thing, but they do occur and you do run a risk, especially if you mistype something or edit the wrong file and don't make a backup of the file(s) being edited.

Some of this Messenger tip was borrowed from a very good site called FreePCTech (and you **know** how I like "free"). So visit them at <http://freepctech.com/guides.shtml>



OK, now for this month's stumper:

When you want to send an email from Outlook Express that includes a photo or graphic, what step must you take to insure your recipient get's the picture and not the infamous "Red X."

