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## Internet Is Like The Wild West - It Is Run By Cowboys!

**Getting started on Internet for many companies is one step too far...**

With all of the hype it would seem that getting a company on the Internet would be easy. Why! Don't they have connection to it shrink wrapped and sold in the local computer super store?

Wrong. If you have the skills, you are at least sixty days from your company's approval to proceed, until all the pieces work together.

On page three, you can see the communication network we have installed in our Santa Monica Offices. In the

process of implementing our solution, we have learned much and have discovered that there are at least three areas where the best of organizations face serious pitfalls.

- √ Service Installation Delays
- √ Hardware Complexities and Incompatibilities
- √ Software Limitations and Incompatibilities

### **Service Installation**

Phone company installation is often delayed and filled with a host of problems such as Frame Relay switching, signal strength, and wiring to local telephone company offices, which many times are difficult to diagnose and often do not show up in the normal line testing.

Provider Service Activation (your connection to the Internet) may be delayed because the

## Telecommuting Is Cost Effective For Many Small To Medium Sized Firms.

**The cost of world wide networks and connectivity is now available to all.**

In the last several months the cost of connectivity has dropped significantly. It is now no more expensive to support remote offices than some modems, PCs and file servers.

Organizations are starting to operate as if the Information Highway is here now. The number of firms that are linking up with the world wide networks is in the thousands each week. This really came to light in a number of projects that we worked on this past winter.

We had a fairly large outsourcing bid that we had to produce. The project was in the Midwest and

the potential bidders were from all around the country. There were at least six separate E-Mail systems that were used. They all had one thing in common - they had links to Internet. In the course of the project we put our office network to work and were able to communicate with many of the potential suppliers electronically. It did work.

On the following page you can see how our network is structured. Each of our consultants has a PC, E-Mail that is hosted in our corporate headquarters, dial-in links to our system and the capability to access all of it either from our office or from a hotel room.

When our consultants are working out of their homes it is almost as if they were in the office. On the road it gets to be a little more difficult since so many of the hotels still have not made it easy to dial out with modems, and corporate PBX systems with other than two pair wiring



### **The Information Highway Will Lead Some To Riches**

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## **Internet Is Like The Wild West - It Is Run By Cowboys!**

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providers are over extended and do not have the staff that speaks "English" and "communicates" well. As a matter of fact, a good number of service providers rely on phone company delays to cover many of their own shortcomings.

Domain name registration (what the world calls your Internet connection) can take 3-6 weeks; make sure it is submitted to NIC as soon as possible. Your provider must do this for you and you do not normally know that this has not happened on time, until you try to turn on the system and you can not talk on the Internet. If you want a particular name you have to make sure that no one else has taken it.

After domain name registration is complete the domain name(s) still need to be added to the provider's domain name server; this can add days until your Internet site is accessible by others. One provider does this only once a week. In that case if you miss by a minute you may have to wait a week.

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### **Hardware**

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The hardware link is controlled by a box (CSU/DSU) that many vendors do not want you to program. If you leave the vendor the capability to program it for you remotely, you have left the door wide open for someone to break into your system.

Not all CSU/DSU's are created equal - it is not unusual for an inexpensive "black box" CSU/DSU to have problems on phone lines with marginal signal strength.

The router (the firewall) should support 56kb, ISDN, T1 and have multiple dial-up port capability. If it does not and your volume picks up you will have "flushed" several thousand dollars down the drain. There is no trade-in value for anything - it is worse than a car.

If you go cheap and slow, you will end up spending more in the long run when you have to upgrade. Servers (WWW, FTP, Mail, etc.) should be as fast as possible, with plenty of memory and disk space. At a minimum you should use at least a 90 mhz with 2 gigs of storage. Another considerations should be the operating system. DOS will not do and Windows is not worth the effort.

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### **Software**

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Internet software has bugs. There is more than enough "freeware" that has not been tested and is not fully supported. Professional software developers are just moving into this field.

Web readers are not all the same - the standard answer from many vendors is that a solution will be provided in the next release that is always going to come out "next week"!

WWW pages and forms need to be designed carefully and tested with a variety of browsers. One particular syntax for forms worked with all of the browsers we tested, except with Mosaic on a UNIX/Motif system, where it caused a general protection fault on our server.

Not all operating systems are supported by all products - NT for example is still not supported to the level of UNIX for Internet client and server products. That is changing -- daily.

These are just a few of the pitfalls that you need to be aware of. Our advice is to do it now and be the first on your block to be there but remember that you will be in a pure R&D mode. It will take some time for the process to be robust enough to be "shrink wrapped". By that time it will be too late to take advantage of the technology — you will need it to keep up. ☺

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# Telecommuting Is Cost Effective For Small To Medium Sized Firms

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require a dedicated line to dial out of a facility.

This is where Internet really comes in. Many organizations now have links to the net. With this capability our consultants are able to get to our office mail system without having to worry about how they are going to "hookup".

The network that we have put in place is not all that complex, rather it is one that takes advantage of the systems that we already had in place. They include the PBX which has a robust voice mail system, a fax server that sends and receives well over 100 faxes a day when business demands it, and a network that has over 15 gigabits of data relating to current and prior consulting assignments of the firm.


As part of our direct sales business, orders can be placed via Internet and they are routed to our order processing computer. If it is a credit card sale, the system will do an automatic credit validation. Once the credit is approved the invoice is generated automatically as well as the shipping label for our express delivery company. On some electronic orders the

only thing that our staff has to do is pack the box.

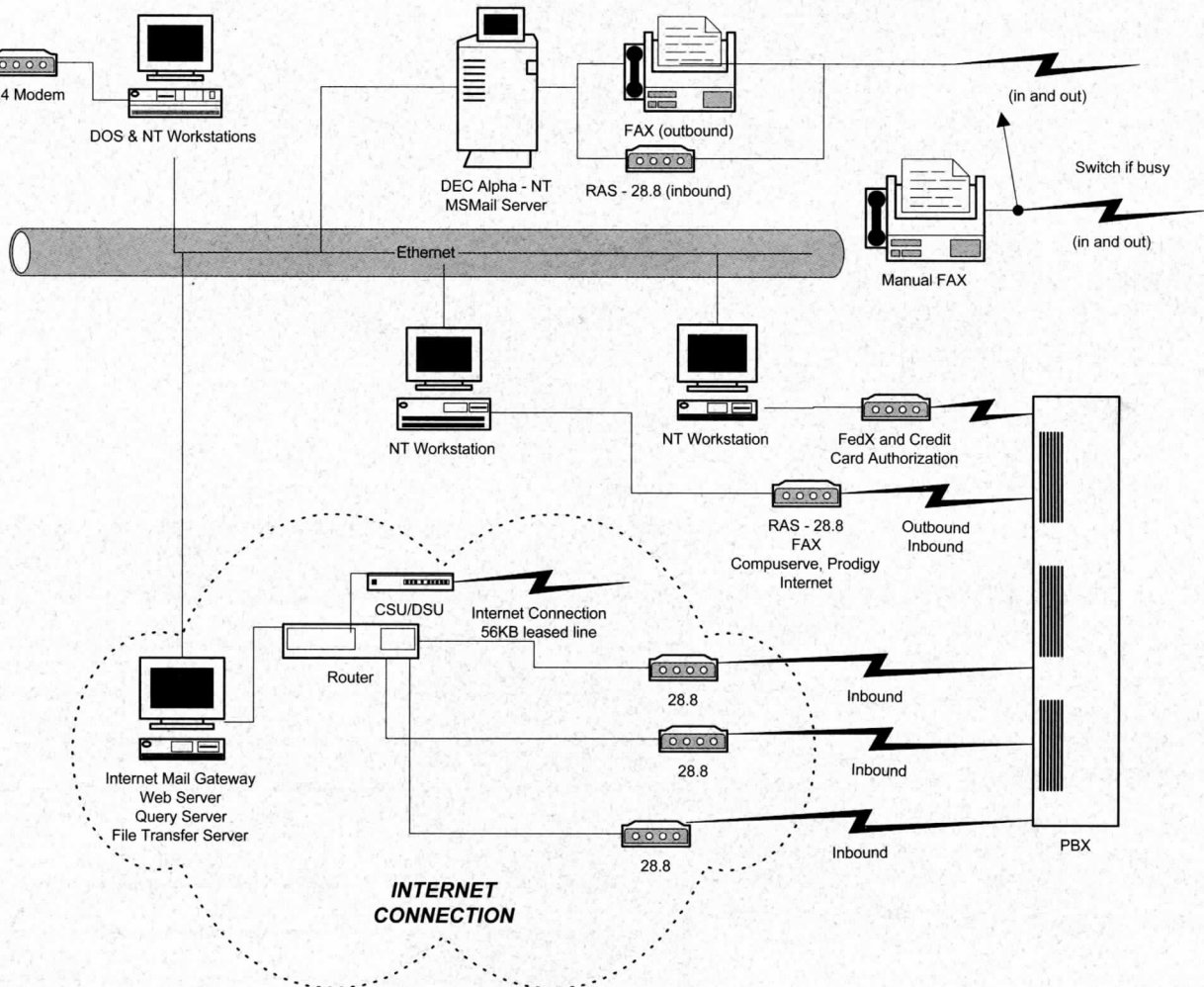
All of this is one way that we are able to manage our business without having to add "human infrastructure". We can grow to double our size without the addition of a single administrative or office staff member.

On the consulting side, as time goes on we will be able to provide better service to our customers since we will not have to "commute" to the office any more. In our case we have one senior staff member who comes into the office once every four to six weeks. He finds it much more effective to spend more of his time at the client's office.

The important things that we have to do to insure that the firm operates as one, is provide a common set of tools, frequent voice communication with voice mail, and written communication with E-mail.

As we look ahead the old George Allen quote applies. "The future is now" 

## PSR - INTERNET AND DIGITAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS







## Forecast for the National Information Systems Market

*Things have started to slow down a little in several parts of the country. It does not look like a major downturn will occur in the next several months*

by M. Victor Janulaitis  
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The war of the politicians is about to start with the next set of elections looming in the wings. The good news is that there will be no new taxes for us to worry about. With that as a preamble we can see that many organizations are continuing to expand.

In the next few months there will have to be even more expansion as computer desktops start to come to the end of their economical and technological lives. That will be the catalyst for our next expansion.

Many organizations are now starting to go back and rethink the decentralization and down-sizing that they have faced in the last several quarters. We have seen a surge in the demand for strategic planning and infrastructure creation. Many organizations are now going to revisit the past and in a number of cases to make some of the same mistakes that they did in the late 1970's. Organizations and individuals with the ability to learn from the past will be the ones that will be the next set of winners.

For example, just like in 1967 many organizations see the need to have "policies and procedures" created and implemented. At the same time one large organization that has spent over \$100MM developing a Client Server based system

has just realized that the legacy system they were going to replace is not really all that bad. The only thing that is needed in the short term is to "document" the existing application. While they are at that, they will need to add some additional processing power to the same system since the new system is still at least 20 months away.

When all is said and done, it means that the basics are what is needed. One organization that has been written up internationally as the classic example of how re-engineering should be done, is now in total disarray as they have found out that it did not work.

Given all of this our guide words are as follow:


⇒ **"Ask what value you provide"** - At the end of each day you should ask yourself what have you done to earn your salary. Were you doing something that added value or added cost?

⇒ **"Look at the past to see the future"** - As time goes on is your organization making the same old mistakes with new people. The true value of experience is that it helps you

to know what is going to happen before it does.

⇒ **"Just because it is new does not make it better"** - How many times have we seen people come in and just change things? Change without value or purpose is waste. As new ways are found to do things, are the old ways evaluated for the good in them so they are not lost in the frenzy to change the world?

⇒ **"Times and business climate will change"** - If times are good they will get bad just as when times were bad they got better. The same is true of centralization and decentralization, growth and maintenance.

Add on to all of that the changes that will be caused by all the international turmoil we are facing and the next several quarters will be very exciting. Ask yourself this question - What will the impact of Mexico, Japan, China and the bankruptcy of several non-US billion dollar corporations mean to all of us? 

*Vic*



Published by:

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Location	Prospects Short Term	Prospects Long Term
Northeast	Excellent	Good
Mid-Atlantic	Good	Excellent
Southeast	Good	Good
South	Good	Good
Midwest	Good	Excellent
Southwest	Good	Excellent
West	Excellent	Excellent
Pacific Northwest	Good	Good/Poor
Best Location	West	West