Beam it up, Scotty

So you've designed that cool Web page of yours, but are getting stuck at uploading it to your site.
It's really simple if you have the know-how

Manu Khanna

Once you have your Web pages ready, it's time to upload them to your Web site. You may have registered a domain of your own, or you may have taken free Web space at some sites such as Geocities, Freeservers, AngelFire, etc. Of course, if you are feeling rich, you may have bought Web space at some paid Web hosting service such as www.xoom.com or www.pugmarks.net (one of the few Indian Web hosting services).

Most of the free Web hosting sites also offer paid packages. They give some services for free but if you need extra services such as extra storage space, you need to pay for them. All these free hosting services give your Web page a name such as www.yourname.itgo.com. In this example, 'yourname' is the name you choose and the free hosting service adds 'itgo.com' to it.

If you are looking for something like www.yourname.com, then you have to register yourself with Network Solutions or some other domain name registrars by paying some amount (usually, it is Rs 650 per year) as annual fee .

Whether you're using a free Web hosting service or one that you need to pay for, when it comes to uploading your Web pages, there are basically three ways of doing it. You can either use the program provided by the hosting services for uploading files (which usually allows you to select four or five files at a time) or you can use the uploading functions built into your Web page designing software such as FrontPage or Dreamweaver. The third method is through FTP (File Transfer Protocol), which involves using a specialised FTP software, connecting to the hosting service and then transferring all your files in one go. The last two are the most commonly used.

Hosting your Web page
If you are wondering which is the best Web page for you, then we present here a few of the Web hosting services that we have gone through. Almost all the leading Web hosting services offer free Web space for hosting your site. The free space does come with a price in the form of banner-ads that are displayed on your site, or other pop-ups. There are sites that promise more space and that too without banner-ads or pop-ups, but then again, they expect you to pay up after some time. So, depending on the free space that the sites pro-
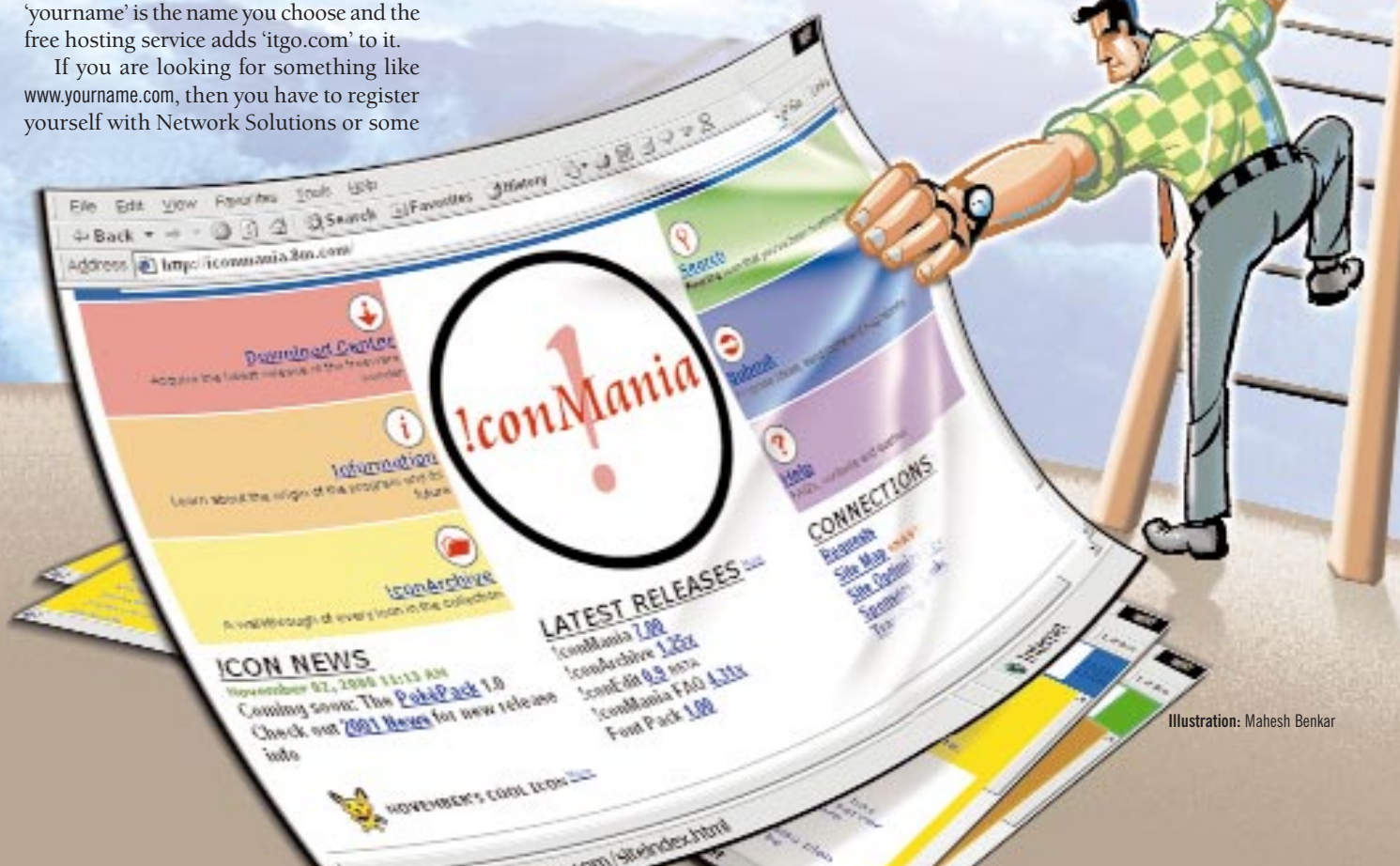

Illustration: Mahesh Benkar

vide and the services they allow, we have shortlisted a few sites, which we think are the best in terms of features.

www.crosswinds.net: Crosswinds offers free e-mail accounts and free unlimited Web space for personal and business-oriented sites! It also supports FTP uploads and even provides for uploading CGI scripts which are very important if you are planning to add some interactivity. The only catch is that when anyone logs on to your site an ad appears in the form of a pop-up window. Pop-up windows should never bother you as you can get rid of them easily.

www.tripod.com: Tripod is one of the most popular Web hosting services around and comes with 50 MB Web space and provision for FTP uploads including CGI support. Instead of banner-ads, a pop-up window opens whenever someone accesses your page.

www.homestead.com: It might not be the best site with just 12 MB space, and only browser uploads because of its lack of support for FTP. There's also a strip ad at the bottom of each page. But the site is made up using the Homestead Sitebuilder

Homestead comes with software to help you build pages

software, which you can download (approximately 7.5 MB). This software allows you to work on your site even when you are offline and supports drag and drop as well, which makes it much easier to upload files.

www.terrashare.com: Not only does Terrashare provide you with 50 MB Web space, it also pays you a certain amount of money for each hit that you receive. Now, isn't this cool?

www.freeservers.com: It offers 20 MB of free space plus a Web-based e-mail account and personal domain name such as www.yourname.freeservers.com. The best feature of this site is its page building tool which is quite useful.

www.angelfire.com: Angelfire can be the grandfather of all Web hosting services as it was one of the very first to come up with the idea of Web pages for the common man. But sadly, it does not live up to that reputation. Both Angelfire and Tripod are owned by Lycos Network, but the two bear little resemblance to each another. Other than a few shared tools and Angelfire's generous storage space (up to 30 MB), this service doesn't keep up with its sibling. Also, its site building tools are a little awkward to use. But still it is a good place to host your first Web page.

Arranging your files
An HTML page may contain a number of elements such as images in various formats (JPEG, GIF, PNG, etc), embedded scripts, etc. Your page can also link to other downloadable files such as document files (.doc), PDF (.pdf), or zipped files.

To ensure that there are no broken links, you have to see to it that all the files are present in the appropriate directory. While you can put all files in a single directory, it makes sense to create different directories while you are creating your site on your PC. For instance, you can keep a directory for images and another one for downloads, and probably even categorise them as utilities, tools, themes, etc.

While uploading your Web site, copy all the directories. Most servers will recreate the same directory structure and links automatically, so you will not have to bother about creating the directories or checking the links again.

While naming the files also, there are certain norms that you may have to follow. When you type a URL in your brows-

er, a series of requests and responses take place between the browser and the Web server before the page is displayed. The Web server basically sends the index (or main) page to the browser and the contents of this file get displayed on your browser. By default, index.htm or index.html are the two files the browser requests from the server. If these two files are not present, the browser would look for instructions to open an alternative page from the Web server. Most free Web hosting services insist that your main or home page should have the file name as index.htm.

Uploading from the hosting service
If this is the first time you are making Web pages, then you will probably use the services provided by the hosting site. Using this method you can upload only four to five files at a time, which makes the process slower.

Most Web hosting services offer this method. You just have to log on to your account on that particular service and start uploading. Let's take the example of a hosting service such as Geocities (www.geocities.com). The first step obviously would be logging on to your account with your username and password. Once logged on, choose the Upload & FTP option from the Advanced Tools portion of the screen. Now, under EZ Upload, browse for the files on your computer. At one time you can only upload five files. So, if you have more than five files, which you are sure to have, you will have to repeat this process till the time you are through with all your files.

Using Web page designing software
Almost all Web page designing software have uploading features or publishing to Web features incorporated in them. Let's see how this is done in the case of Macromedia Dreamweaver 3.0.

Step 1: Open Dreamweaver, choose New Site from the Site menu. This will bring up the Site Definition window. Enter a name for your site under Site Name so that you can easily go to the site again the next time you start Dreamweaver.

In Local Root Folder, enter the directory on your hard drive where your Web site files are located. You can also use the Browse button to browse to this directory.

Choose a name and local storage folder for your site

Step 2: In the same window, from the Category tab click on Web server info and fill up the necessary information such as

● For Server Access, choose FTP

● For FTP Host, enter your site name, for example, yourname.itgo.com. To find out the 'host name' (the machine where you will upload your files) for your service, you will have to check up the FTP Help of your Web hosting service

● For Host Directory, enter just a forward slash: /

● For Login, enter your username

● For Password, enter your password

● To stop Dreamweaver from asking for your password every time you upload files, make sure there is a checkmark against the Save password checkbox.
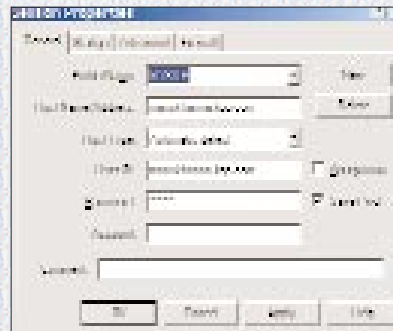
Step 3: Once you're done, click on OK to save the changes. You should get a screen with your remote site on the left hand pane and your local site (files stored on your desktop) on the right hand pane. You are now ready to transfer your files from your computer to your Web hosting service. Select the files and folders you want to upload and click on the Put button to transfer your files. The time taken for this process to complete may vary depending on the connection speed.

Uploading the power user way
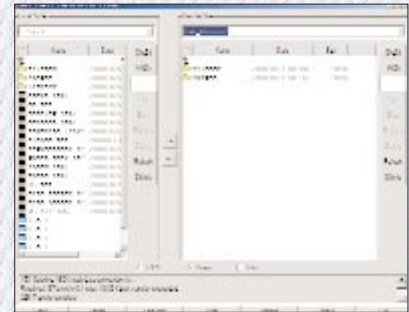While first time users may use the above

Using WS_FTP LE

Step 1: Start WS_FTP LE. You will now get the Session Properties window. Enter Host Name, User ID and Password and click the OK button.

Fill in the Host Name, User ID and password of your Web hosting service

Step 2: Now WS_FTP will connect you to the site where you are going to publish your pages. Once connected, you get a window similar to that of Windows Explorer. In the left pane of the

You can view the local files and the files at your Web site in the same browser window

screen you can see your hard disk and in the right pane you can see your remote host.

Step 3: Browse to the directory where you have your files stored and select them.

Step 4: Now click on the Front Arrow (>) to transfer the files to your Web hosting service.

two methods, experts tend to use FTP. You have FTP client software such as WS_FTP LE or CuteFTP or even the good old download manager GetRight for this purpose (even Windows has an FTP client). Using an FTP client is almost similar to using Dreamweaver or Front-Page. Before you get down to using an FTP client you should know a few things about your account such as your username, your password, the host name and your URL or Web address. Once you have this information in hand, the whole process will go off like a breeze. You only have to open an FTP program, put in the host name of your Web site, put in your username, enter your password, connect to the site, highlight the files you would like on your Web site and finally click on

the option to transfer them to your Web site. That's it, you can have your Web site up and running.

The advantage of using an FTP client is that it is also possible to download the files from the site of your Web host to your home computer for storage and for offline editing. It's preferable that you upload or download when the connection speeds are the fastest in your location (yes, that does mean you have to stay up late).

There is one small problem with using FTP clients though. There is no safety net when deleting files using an FTP program. Some programs will not ask to verify whether you want to delete your files. The best solution, therefore, is to always keep a backup on your PC.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Police	Fire	Ambulance	PC Care
100	**101**	**102**	**www.drchip.com**

All the best
CONGRATS!

There are greeting card sites and greeting card sites,
but very few cater to exclusive Indian tastes. A look at what www.mubarakho.com has to offer

Their free greeting card collection even allows you to send cards in various Indian languages. So, you can go ahead and send a personalised card to your friend in his or her mother tongue

Nilesh Kakade

Mubarakho literally refers to a congratulatory message. And it is in keeping with this spirit of salutation that we also have a site, www.mubarakho.com, which specialises in gifts and greetings for all occasions. So, let's keep the festive spirit going and take a look at what the site has to offer.

MubarakHo basically lets you send cards to anyone on the Internet absolutely free. Go to the site's home page, and it's clear that there are two main sections in which it is divided—the Gift Shop and Send Free Greeting Cards.

Their free greeting card collection even allows you to send cards in various Indian languages. So, you can go ahead and send a personalised card to your friend in his mother tongue. You get animated as well as static post cards in most of the categories, whether it be birthday, love, friends, or academics. Planning to launch a new Web site? Then there's the right card for you in the Launch category. The Mera Bharat Mahan category has cards which pay tribute to our Kargil heroes. Another category includes cards from HelpAge India. Cards in this category are based on Indian art and culture, though we do feel that there's not much choice in this category.

Sending a card is quite simple. Just click on the category and then click on the card that you like. You get a page where you can personalise your message, identify the recipient's name and e-mail address and type the actual message. A good feature is that you can send the same card to multiple recipients by just separating the different e-mail addresses with a comma. On the page where you get to personalise your card, there's also a small icon at the bottom which you might easily miss. Hover the mouse around this icon and you get a menu which asks you to rate this card on a five-point scale and even asks for your comments.

Navigate a little below on the home page and you come across the Events section, which is nothing but cards relating to the special occasions for that particular month. This section does need a bit of updating though, for even while we were in November, the section featured October Events such as Gandhi Jayanti and Diwali.

The Gift Shop offers a great deal of variety. You can send gifts such as chocolates, sweets, watches, jewellery, flowers, etc. There are mouth-watering chocolates, *mithai*s and dry fruits to choose from. The chocolates (walnut, almond, cherry, raspberry—the list of flavours just goes on) are neatly packed in the form of cute teddy bears or heart shapes. And if you are thinking of what to give your boss who is a programming whiz, probably a customised chocolate CD would be a nice idea. But don't complain to us if your friends develop a sweet tooth.

And if you don't like to say it with chocolates, flowers are probably right for you.

To send across the gifts, you need to register first, which you can do from the home page. The purchases have to be made by credit card and the site supports 128-bit SSL (secure sockets layer) to ensure secure transactions. You can select the items you want gifted and add it to the Basket, and then click on Purchase to specify the recipient's address and the message. The number of cities where you can deliver is also quite decent.

Registering also gives you access to certain other features such as My Favourites and Address Book, so that you can select your favourite greeting cards and add it to your My Favourites list. (A somewhat similar thing is done in the Kwick Pick section on the home page, which is a listing of some of the best cards in some of the categories). Also, in the Address Book, you can keep a note of special events such as birthdays. (It's far better than sending a belated card/bouquet and getting brickbats in return). While registering you can also select to be updated about the site through newsletters.

Apart from the various greeting cards, the site also sports a search engine based on a tie-up with Yahoo! You can enter your search items and a new window displays the results.

With a variety of cards to choose from, and the multilingual aspect of the site, MubarkHo lives up to its tag line of 'Come Celebrate Life, *Desi* Style'. ▣

Choco-licious

Say it with chocolates! You can choose from a variety of flavours to sweeten up the day for the person you are sending the gift to
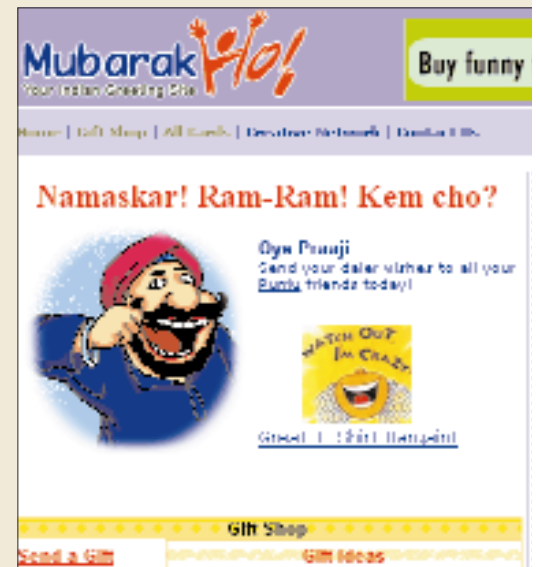
Phool ke paigam

You can also send flowers to express how you feel

All that glitters

Looking to buy jewellery for your beloved? You can do it from the gifts section
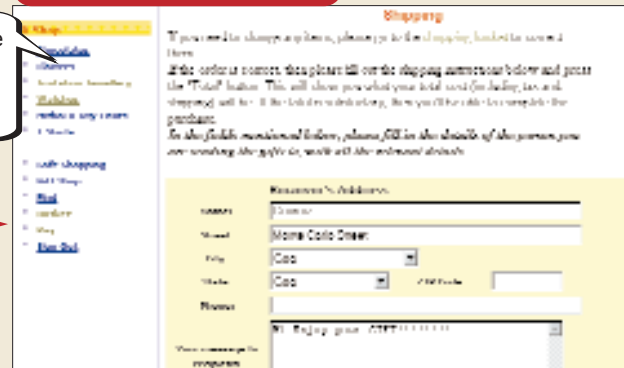
www.muba

arakho.com

Greetings galore

Namaskar, Kem cho bhaaya? (How are you?) Send personalised greetings in the language of your choice

Click and be done

Send gifts online and be rest assured of the delivery

Come Celebrate Life, *Desi* Style

Timeless appeal

Pressed for time, but still want to show that you cherish the good times? Gift a watch. You can choose from a variety of designs

Illustration: Sean D'Souza

Bhavish Sood

Ever stared at a blank Web page without any content? Would look really strange, wouldn't it? Successful Web sites depend on effective categorisation and display of information. The reason why surfers come to your Web site, whether personal or corporate, is primarily for the content that is displayed there. There are different methods by which you can source content for your Web site. You can set up your own team, but this may prove expensive and time consuming. Or, you can source it from third party content providers or syndication agencies such as Reuters, Bridge or iSyndicate. Of these, the first two are paid services, whereas the last mentioned provides free content.

Actually, acquiring content by syndication is not a new concept—much before Web sites came into the picture, newspapers regularly used syndicated articles. There was only one answer to the question, 'how to generate content covering a vast landscape both in terms of geographic and topic coverage?' The answer was in tying up with specific wire services such as Reuters and Bridge News who had the credibility and the resources to offer such content. Newspaper cartoons were the earliest forms of content syndication in the world of print. Then came the Web which ushered in the concept of free content with the premise of building traffic to accelerate revenues.

Many a times, the sourced content can be re-branded with your own offerings. For example, Dakindia (www.dakindia.com), an e-mail to print service operating from India, has four categories of news displayed on its home page. Clicking on any one of them takes you to the Web site of the content generator through the syndication service Moreover (http://w.moreover.com).

Obviously, there are advantages and disadvantages in sourcing content from a third party or a syndicate. The advantages

Content
Above
All

**Tired of searching
for content people
to manage your Web site?
How about creating an entire portal
with the content totally free of cost?**

first: you get world class content from excellent sources at no cost and that too without having to update it manually. Another advantage if you are running a commercial portal or a metasite (a site which provides links to other sites) is that you don't need to employ expensive content developers to maintain the content. The obvious disadvantage is that

viewership leakage takes place, that is, visitors to your site are directed towards the article source which resides on another server, thus driving the traffic away from your site. There's also the problem related to the authenticity of the source. But then, why crib when you get something for free? Let's take a free tour of these sites.

Editors choice

iSyndicate (www.isyndicate.com) is the most famous address on the Web when it comes to content syndication, especially for news content. You can subscribe to the information after filling out a simple registration form. The content categories include news, weather, stock quotes, comics, business and finance, travel and leisure, science and technology, etc. Some of the content providers include about.com, epinions, CMP, CNet and CNN. The only disadvantage with iSyndicate is that they don't provide scrolling headlines.

World Wide Information Outlet (http://certificate.net/wwio) is another content powerhouse, but unlike others which are primarily news-based, this one syndicates features on varied topics such as business, technology, religion, sports and travel among others. The biggest advantage with this syndication service is that you can post content on your own server with ust author credits and link back to the Web site.

News Index (www.newsindex.com) is one of the most comprehensive news-based search engines on the Web. This engine allows you to choose from not only the type of ticker you want to display but also lets you select the parameters under a particular category of news. For example, if you were interested in business and finance news, you have the flexibility to define what kind of headlines you want and you can even select the companies whose information you want to

iSyndicate, the most preferred destination for free content

display. The site provides for a lot of customisability. The ticker is in the form of a Java applet, so all you need to do is paste the code generated by the Web site on to your page and you are up and running.

Screaming Media's (www.screamingmedia.com) global Digital Content Network

This is how your Web site looks with free content from dakindia.com

consists of over 2,800 publications, supplying content to more than 1,100 subscribers such as MSN. Among its prominent providers are Associated Press, New

Get streaming media with www.screamingmedia.com

York Times Syndicate, *USA Today* and the *National Geographic* magazine.

Screaming Media offers four types of syndication services—custom edition providing real-time news and photos; news stand, which packages news under different categories and provides for automatic updates; content toolkit which provides for utility content such as stock quotes and weather; and content direct, which gives you direct feeds from a variety of brand names.

Screaming media also offers Screaming Wireless, which is essentially wireless content for consumers having mobile phones and PDAs. The biggest advantage with this service is that you have the choice of selecting the content or having it posted automatically.

News headlines

If you are looking for news then there are plenty of sources to choose from depending on both the geographical coverage area and topics. However, the biggest disadvantage with most of these feeds is that only the headlines are displayed on your page and the full information resides on the content providers' servers, thus resulting in viewership leakage.

Moreover (http://w.moreover.com) is a great content aggregator. The site has access to more than 1,500 editorial sources and they provide 'Web feeds' in more than 334 categories.

The Webmasters have a choice of 12 formats to integrate their Web feeds with their applications. Some of these formats are HTML frames, e-mail, Flash and XML.

7am News (www.7am.com) is a news breaking service, delivered through an easy-to-install news ticker. This Web site has the reputation of breaking news on the Web just like CNN does on television. When NATO launched its air attacks against Serbian targets in Yugoslavia, 7am.com was the first news site on the Web to break the news. Some of the popular categories that are syndicated are:

- **Worldnews:** News and current-affairs stories from all over the world, except the US.
- **Worldnetnews:** News and stories about the Internet industry and markets from around the world.
- **Investornews:** News on economic, legal, managerial and investment information from around the world.

News Harvester (http://webreference.com/headlines/nh) is another such service operated by Internet.com, and covers 20 news categories such as e-commerce, Internet, finance, Web development, etc. You can

Think of a category and moreover.com will have it

choose from a variety of formats such as Perl and Perl/DHTML.

From CMP net (www.cmpnet.com/licensees/headlines/allstories), you can receive the HTML code for all the stories you select by e-mail. This code then just needs to be pasted on to your site. News is provided by Techweb Technology News.

Tips, cartoon strips and weather updates

Cyber Tip (www.cybertip.net/applet) features tips in 20 categories that you can choose from. You can select the category and include the HTML code in your pages which are then updated automatically every day by way of an applet. Some of the categories include tips on health, beauty and investment, among others.

The site Weather Underground (www.wunderground.com) is useful if you are looking at providing information about the weather in US cities. Weather Underground provides a small ticker that can be displayed on the home page.

Arnold Roth cartoons (http://cagle.slate.msn.com/art/truesellsheet.html) can be added to your Web site by just including two lines of HTML code. The cartoonist requests a link back to Arnie's home page (www.cagle.com/arnie) and that his cartoons should not be displayed along with cartoons from somebody else's page.

Struggling to earn your daily bread? Take a few tips from www.cheapskate.com

Best of the rest

Cheap Skate Monthly (www.cheapskatemonthly.com) is a 12-page newsletter published every month. It is dedicated to helping those who are struggling to live within their means, and tries to find practical and realistic solutions for their financial problems. You can syndicate content from this Web site by pasting a small HTML code on to your Web site. After that, the updates take place automatically.

Click Quick (www.clickquick) is a guide to all the affiliate programmes available on the Web. On this site, you can read reviews about the top sites in each category from where you can source your content. The ratings are compiled by the site Webmaster and from user feedback.

Future of content syndication

Since content providers provide content through proprietary solutions, these are fraught with technical problems. To tackle these issues, a consortium of application server and content companies, led by Vignette, created a standard syndication protocol based on XML, called Information and Content Exchange (ICE). ICE is one of the most innovative uses of XML, in part because ICE is mainly a protocol with a little bit of data, while most XML standards

7am gives you breaking news before anybody else

focus solely on data. These new technologies, along with software such as Kinetica Interact (www.kinetica.com), are creating an impact on the way content syndication takes place. The Kinetica Interact platform is a software application that automatically redistributes and transforms online information assets and is based on technologies such as Java XML and the ICE protocol.

While there is the ever-present danger that a content provider may decide to pack up bags and leave you with some broken links rather than some world class content, syndication as a concept, both in paid and free format, will continue to thrive.

BIG
BROTHER
IS WATCHING

You may feel indignant if your company starts reading your e-mails, but corporates call for such restrictions under the pretext of productivity
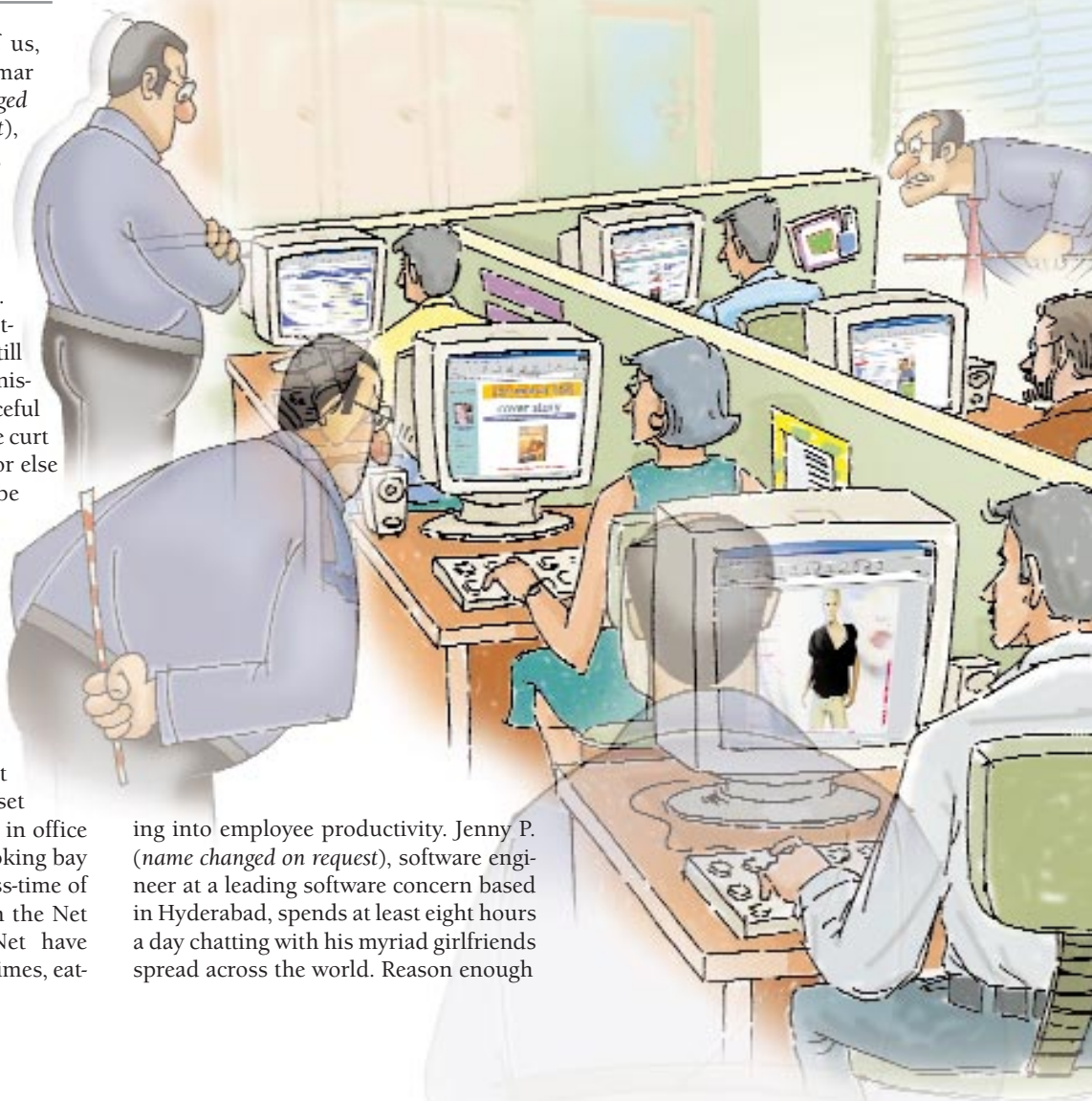
Frank Jennings

Like most of us, Ashok Kumar (*name changed on request*), systems engineer, Patni Computer Systems (PCS), Mumbai, also loved to chat on the Net with friends or with the new contacts that he developed. He had mastered the art of chatting and life seemed just perfect, till an e-mail from his system administrator jolted him out of his peaceful state of mind. The mail was quite curt and to the point: stop chatting or else your Internet access will be blocked. The e-mail came as quite a shock to Kumar. He and the other employees in his organisation were totally unaware till then that their Internet usage was being monitored.

What happened at Kumar's workplace is not an isolated instance. The Internet has changed the cultural mindset of many. At one time, indulging in office gossip at the canteen or the smoking bay may have been the favourite pass-time of office goers. Today, chatting on the Net and browsing through the Net have become the new favourite pass-times, eat-

ing into employee productivity. Jenny P. (*name changed on request*), software engineer at a leading software concern based in Hyderabad, spends at least eight hours a day chatting with his myriad girlfriends spread across the world. Reason enough

for employers to monitor the Internet access of their employees. Many companies now impose a restriction on Internet access or monitor Internet usage with the stated objective of increasing productivity and work output. Some companies inform their employees about it, while there are others that don't. And as companies go about their work, it's the employees who feel uncomfortable about what they perceive as the 'office peeping Toms'.

I'll be watching you

"Our Internet access is continuously monitored by the system administrator. And more often than not, that is enough deterrent from acting in a wayward manner while on the Net," says Ajay Sunderrajan (*name changed on request*), system engineer, PCS. The feeling of being watched is enough to prevent most employees from visiting irrelevant Web sites or whiling their time away in chatting. And if at all the employees want to indulge themselves, then it mostly gets done after office hours for some companies do tend to relax their Net access restriction after 6 pm. Some companies though don't do actual snooping. They prefer that their system admin-

Florence David
SYSTEM ENGINEER, WIPRO INFOTECH, BANGALORE

istrator goes round the office and watches over the employees' shoulder. Needless to say, many find this kind of prying foolish. Says Rajesh Verma (*name changed on request*), a software analyst in an export and software development company, "We normally open multiple windows and whenever the administrator comes near us, we just open another window to show that we are working."

Third-party monitoring

Apart from the 'over-the-shoulder' method, companies use monitoring software such as Surfwatch, Webtrack or Super-Scout for keeping tabs on what the employees are up to. Says Thiyagarajan Rao, a system administrator in a Hyderabad-based company, "Earlier, we used to manually monitor our employees, but as the number of employees grew, we were forced to use monitoring software such as Cyberpredator." The idea is not just to discourage the misuse of the Internet, but also to avoid any legal problems due to a cyber crime that may be committed by an employee.

Blocking sites

Monitoring the Net access of employees normally takes place in two-three different ways. At one level, the employer may just keep track of the sites that you are visiting, which is a kind of passive snooping. At another level, companies may decide to block certain sites, restrict certain services and also read e-mail which they feel are suspicious. In this case, the employers are playing an active role in monitoring how their people use the Net. Says Sandeep Kumar (*name changed on request*), system administrator for a software company in Bangalore, "During the recent cricket tournament in Sharjah our server crashed because many employees were visiting cricket sites to check the live score. This prompted us to invoke Net restriction."

Companies facing similar problems feel that blocking such sites is the most feasible solution, especially in cases where employees visit pornographic sites. Music sites are another favourite among companies when it comes to blocking access, because of the Net congestion that occurs when audio files are being downloaded. Some companies have an elaborate list of 'sites not to visit' which include pornography and adult sites, online gaming sites,

Legal Eye

Many employees protest against cyber snooping, but employers are firm on their stand and justify their action. According to the Electronics Communication Privacy Act of US, employees have limited privacy rights when it comes to official mail. But in India, in spite of the new cyber law, there does not exist a concrete law which draws a line between privacy and security issues. As a result, there are no rules for cyber snooping by companies. But to be on the safer side, it is the company's obligation to verify all legal aspects before getting into employee snooping.

Illustration: Mahesh Benkar

shopping, greeting and matrimonial sites and in some cases even news sites. Popular Web-based e-mail sites such as Hotmail or Yahoo! are also banned in some instances. Job sites are also a part of the forbidden list for some companies. After all, which company wants employees to use official time to apply to another company!

Restricting protocols

Apart from blocking sites, companies may also restrict certain services. Protocols such as FTP or Socks, which are generally used for file downloads and instant messaging, are disabled. Some companies use dedicated firewalls for this purpose. This may reduce the Net congestion that takes place due to downloads or chatting, while at the same time allows the employees to browse.

Mailer d(a)emon

Only a few firms impose mail restriction on the employees. Some firms such as PCS have specified the e-mail size for outgoing and incoming mails and attachments.

Mail with certain key words are bounced back

Lizzie Anumitha
ASSISTANT SYSTEMS ANALYST, TCS, CHENNAI

Employers snooping into an employee's mail is a rare case. In most cases there is some filtering software which automatically blocks and sends back messages having certain key words such as sex. Cognizant Technology Solutions, Chennai for instance follows such a system.

Setting rights

Many firms do realise that monitoring and snooping may not be all that effective and, at the same time, creates an impression of high-handedness. Therefore, they try to evolve a system based on trust, designation and purpose. As Florence David, systems engineer, Wipro Infotech, Bangalore, puts it, "We have restricted access as per our login ID. For official purposes, we can browse without any restriction since we have separate logins for that. Mostly project leaders and other senior staff have such facili-

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ties. Also, employees whose work is totally dependent on the Net have unrestricted access."

Adds Lizzie Anumitha, assistant systems analyst, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Chennai, "Considering the diverse work of TCS, Net access varies from one business account to another and from one project to another. For projects with an e-com or e-biz line of business, it becomes mandatory to have access to the Net. Otherwise, only the project leaders are given Net access and restrictions are laid for trainees and team members. The project leaders are made accountable for how the Internet is used by their team members and for inculcating the appropriate culture in them."

Is monitoring efficient?

Of course, for every site that's banned, there are alternatives as Shiv Sekhar (*name changed on request*), a software analyst from Mumbai points out. "Though sites such as Hotmail and Yahoo! have been blocked, we always find some new e-mail service as there are many that exist," he says. "Though we have an efficient firewall and sites restriction, we always manage to get on the site by other means," adds Florence.

According to Anumitha, "Restrictions will never develop a conducive work environment. Distractions will come into play and override the full contribution of the individual's skills towards productivity. Restrictions will also deprive us from learning new technology and updating ourselves on the happenings in the IT industry."

Blocking sites may not solve the problem. Creating awareness about the problems faced and instilling a balance between productivity and entertainment seems a better option. Monitoring also raises the issue of democratic decision making. After all, who decides what is good and what is bad? Open discussions

Employee Monitoring Software

SuperScout (www.surfcontrol.com): An employee monitoring software for corporate solutions ensuring better productivity.
CyberPredator (www.ingenuity.co.uk): An Internet and network security monitor that sniffs all Internet/intranet traffic to and from the client browsers looking for forbidden words such as 'sex' and sends an alert when it finds such occurrences.
Spector (http://child-monitor.com): This software records the Internet activity of the user and stores video information which can

be played back later by the system administrator.
WinGuardian (www.webroot.com): A snooping software for monitoring employee activities on the Net.
IWarden (www.iopen.co.nz): This easy-to-use software restricts and monitors Internet access.
TaskGuard2000 (www.moonlight-software.com): This software secretly monitors employees' Net access and restricts access to some sites.

Game for More?

Chatting on the Net is for sissies. Real men prefer fighting it out with other men in the gaming arena

Manu Khanna

You think you are the master of the game and 'speed' is your motto, but that doesn't mean you are the best for have you checked out the online gaming sites and pitted yourself against the mean warriors from across the world? If you are one of the lucky few who have high-speed connectivity or T1 lines (hee, hee, we have), then what are you waiting for! Pick up those guns and get moving.

Online gaming sites

There's nothing more monotonous than playing a game by yourself. What do you do after you have checked out all the Ferraris, and destroyed all the cities? Or for that matter, what do you do if your Bridge partners don't turn up? Well, you can always pit your skills against real-life opponents in the Internet world. MSN Gaming Zone (www.**zone.com**) is a cool place to start off with. You can play certain games online for free while for

www.zone.com

playing premium games, you will need the original game CD or pay a subscription fee of around $10 for a month. There are a number of categories to choose from, right from action and adventure to board games and even trivia. The gaming rooms are arranged according to the level of difficulty, so you can enter the parlour of your choice.

Another company-sponsored gaming site is Heat (www.**heat.net**). Here, you can play a wide range of games and most action games such as *Quake II* or *Command and Conquer* are for free, but you might have to pay your way through for certain premium games.

In league with MSN Gaming Zone is Mplayer (www.**mplayer.com**). One of the biggest online gaming services in terms of number of people accessing it, this site has many unique features to its credit. With voice recognition technology, players can actually talk to each other.

If the action at these sites gets to you, you may be well

www.mplayer.com

advised to go in for some light gaming, or even treasure hunts or lottery at www.**gamesville.com**. If you are among the lucky winners, you could end up with lots of dollars. Apart from these games, there are also some weird news and articles related to gaming.

Resource centres

While playing *Quake III*, did you notice the cool MIP mapping features? If this sounds like jargon to you, don't despair. Very few of the game freaks realise the backdoor activities that go into the development of the game. Games programming and

www.game-developer.com

design is a vast area in which lots of new innovations are coming up. So, if gaming development is giving you the blues, go to www.**bluesnews.com**. This site features many articles on different gaming aspects, including separate sections on *Quake* and *Unreal Tournament*. It also sports patches for a number of games. You can also visit www.**game-developer.com** to learn more about

3D effects, graphics and OpenGL before you write the first codes for your game.

News you can use

If you want specific information on certain games, you can either have a peek-a-boo at the developer's site or check out sites for games such as www.planetquake.com which deals

www.mplayer.com

exclusively with *Quake*. More information on role playing games (RPG) is available at RPG Zone (www.rpg-zone.com). This site covers all topics related to RPG—RPG Maker, emulators, reviews and previews, wallpapers and so on. Another good site is GameStats (www.gamestats.com). This is a gaming news site specialising in PC-based games (with a little Mac thrown in for good measure). Besides the usual news, reviews, FAQs, etc, the site hosts special online gaming events on a regular basis.

www.gamecenter.com

Two technology news-based sites, CNet and ZDNet also have exclusive gaming news-related portals. www.gamecenter.com from CNet seeks to cater to all your gaming requirements. So, you can purchase games, look up material related to Playstation and Nintendo, or even gaming hardware. www.gamespot.com is the gaming site hosted by ZDNet, and quite a lot of the categories are similar to the ones on Gamecenter. Apart from the usual reviews, there's quite a lot of emphasis on gaming peripherals.
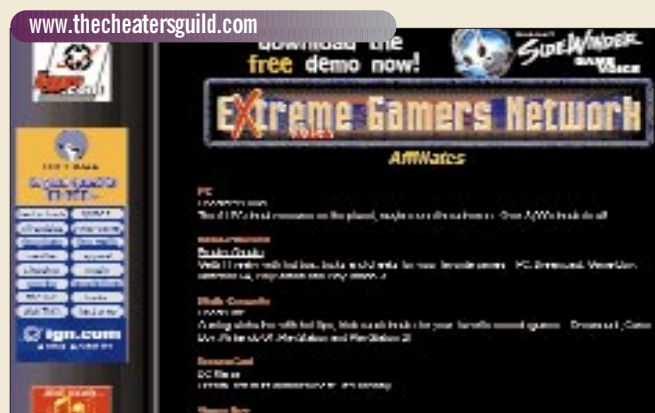
Cheat your way through

Probably, we spoke a bit fast. You are still at the first level of *Aladdin* and wondering whether *Quake* is too difficult for you. Or for that matter, you don't know where the doors to the next

www.gamefaqs.com

level in *Prince of Persia* are. Then cheat sites and walkthroughs are for you. So, don't lose heart—check out www.cheatcc.com. Cheat Code Central is a haven of cheat codes for all possible games on earth. It features game description, game endings and cheat manuals. You can also check out the cheat section of www.olesgamez.com if you desire. www.gamefaqs.com also offers you walkthroughs and cheat codes for many of your favourite games.

Of course, there's nothing to beat the Cheaters' Guild (www.thecheatersguild.com), a site exclusive for cheat codes. It sports cheats for both PC as well as Mac games, and boasts of

www.thecheatersguild.com

more than 3,000 cheat codes. Apart from the cheat codes, there are command line parameters you can use to increase your efficiency, dirty tricks (which are a variation of cheats), walkthroughs and hot hints. There are FAQs for most games and even Easter Eggs which show you hidden features of some of the games you play such as the credit lines, flying icons, etc.

On similar lines is the Cheat Index (www.cheatindex.com). If you are a true gaming freak then you might want to sign up for the free newsletter which sends you daily e-mail with cheat codes, demos, reviews, etc. This site offers cheats under six categories: PCs/computers, Playstation, Nintendo, Dreamcast, Gameboy and even the latest Playstation2.

Still searching

Yes, we know! Some of your favourite sites have not been featured here. So what? Check out http://gamez.com, a site dedicated to searching games on the Net. Also look at www.gamesearcher.com, another gaming search engine to search for your favourite sites or the top 50 gaming sites.

Happy now? So let's go for the Kill!

India sites

www.visaonnet.com

Remember the days when you spent hours at end standing in queues outside the US embassy just to inquire about the procedure to apply for a visa? Don't tell us you are still in the line! Obviously, you haven't heard of www.**visaonnet.com**, a site which saves you the headache of queues. On this site, you get to read about the visa application procedures for almost all major countries. You can download and print the passport application form as well. The site has a tie up with agencies such as MasterCard and

Visa by virtue of which you can find out where the nearest ATM is located. And once you have the visa, you can come back to this site and book the flight ticket too!

www.newindiaproducts.com

Sellaids started with the printing of yellow pages in Mumbai city, but has been quick to move on to the Web bandwagon. www.**newindiaproducts.com**, its Web site, allows you to search for the latest

products in any industry, be it engineering, computers or machine tools.

www.bookaranya.com

Bookaranya claims to be the first online secondhand book store in India. The site has books on a large number of subjects ranging from arts and architecture to children's books and literature. The books are reasonably priced. You might easily get a Charles Dickens classic for around Rs 50, whereas a brand new copy could easily set you back by around Rs 200. The site also has new

ISP watch

XPS Online to set up its own gateway

Connectivity speeds for Net surfers in Calcutta may increase soon. XPS Online, one of the category B ISP licence holders in Calcutta, has decided to create its own gateway. In this venture, XPS will use Singapore Telecom's satellite and offer leased circuits to the corporate sector from January 2001.

At present, all the ISPs in Calcutta use the gateway of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd for Internet connection. Mantra Online and Satyam Online, two major ISPs operating in Calcutta, are also set to launch their own gateway.

Exxat to debut in India's booming Internet market

Exatt Communications, a Bangalore-based Indian firm founded by four ex-employees of telecom giant AT&T, announced its intent of launching operations in the fast-growing local Internet market with a range of services including high-speed access and Web-hosting solutions.

The company expects its services in seven main Indian cities to be fully operational by mid-February, 2001. Three of Exatt's founders are Indo-Americans. Exatt provides infrastructure, equipment and management services needed for dial-up Internet services and is targeting ISPs, portal companies and multinational firms.

BPL Mobile pioneers

One of the largest cellular service companies in India, BPL Mobile have launched an Internet portal which can be accessed from mobile phones. Christened as miZone, the site allows subscribers flexibility to choose the mode of access by making the content available not only on WAP phones but also on normal cell phones with short messaging service (SMS) features. This does away with the need for customers to upgrade their phones for content access. For details, visit http://mizone1.bplmobile.com/mobile/index.html

books on hand and the payment options are cool in the sense that you pay cash on delivery, so it gives you a chance to also check out the condition of the secondhand books.

www.saranam.com

Saranam.com is an e-temple site, which means that through this site you can pay obeisance (*pooja*) in a number of temples spread across India. Once the service is performed in the temples, the offerings are shipped back to you. The site also features a store

which deals in the sale of religious items, books, cassettes, compact discs and other accessories such as bells and plates. And if you want to increase your general knowledge on religion, it also has an FAQ on various subjects related to worship.