

# Virtual



# Inc.

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A NEWSLETTER FOR THE ONLINE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

## It's a Web, Web, Web, WebWorld

BY JEFFREY COHEN

**M**ore than 400 industry professionals gathered in Orlando, Florida, in early February for the inaugural WebWorld. The convention, arranged by DCI, centered on Internet business issues. Telecommuters looking to set up their own Web sites were among the attendees who received a 3-day education on Internet-related topics.

Dr. Jay Weber, Director of Enterprise Integration Technologies for DCI, gave the event chair address. Apparently, this convention was thrown together rather quickly. Everyone from DCI uses the euphemism "quantify the magnitude" to describe the attendance. It seems they got twice the registration they expected.

"Since the launch of Mosaic, the first recognized graphical Web browser, there are estimated to be 12 million licensed browsers," Weber said. In fact, it was only November 1994 when http surpassed e-mail (smtp) over the NSF backbone as the most common protocol.

Weber showed a chart breaking down Web access. E-mail is high on the list, and so is access to Web pages. But File Transfer Protocol is the most common, although that includes browser access to FTP. "Newer applications that browse the Web include the ability to FTP, Gopher, Veronica, and other features," he said.

Weber is against companies limiting Internet access, or restricting certain privileges. "Intel did a study and determined that although most staff members spend a sizable amount of time when they are initially given access, the time spent drops off dramatically after the first few days," Weber explained. Intel determined that Web surfing is actually a self-training exercise that becomes very intensive and instructive. The more access people are given, the faster they

### Feature

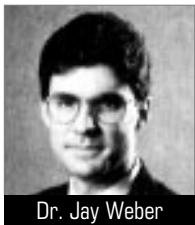
become adept and are able to instruct others as well as put together suitable materials for the Internet.

Gregory Giagnocavo of Wentworth Worldwide Media stressed a couple of key points, such as infobots. "If you're going to have an 'info' or a 'service' ID at your domain, then it should immediately send back information and not wait in a mailbox for days on end," Gregory explained. "For instance, a company may set up an 'info@' ID, but there may be hundreds of messages waiting for someone to sift through them. Setting up an infobot is the way around that, and it can explain who to specifically send requests to."

The most remarkable thing about the Internet, according to Gregory, is that since the World Wide Web Mosaic/graphic interface technology has only been around for 2 years, requirements of 5 to 8 years job experience are meaningless. "Everyone in this room is on the cutting edge because of that," Gregory said, eliciting rowdy applause and many huzzahs.

His success checklist stressed the following: Put your best graphic foot forward, and make it easy to use and navigate around. Giving things away will entice more visitors, and you *must* consider your audience. While an "OK" symbol is accepted in the United States, overseas it is seen as "zero." Gregory explained, "You have to think globally about these things. A Web server is not just seen by the United States."

*continued on page 3*



Dr. Jay Weber

## Virtual Fusion Reorganizes

BY VIRTUAL INC. STAFF WRITERS

**V**irtual Fusion Inc., the virtual corporation that publishes *Virtual Inc.*, has reorganized as an association for online professionals. As part of the restructuring, changes have also been made in the company's management roster.

Michael Daconta, Virtual Fusion's founder, has stepped down from his position as president. Mr. Daconta remains a member of Virtual Fusion's board, and will act as the organization's senior advisor. Ari M. Weinstein, Virtual Fusion's vice president, has assumed the role of president.



Ari M. Weinstein

### News

"Virtual Fusion is now an association, rather than a corporation," said Mr. Weinstein. "We welcome individuals and businesses as members. If you work online in any capacity, membership in Virtual Fusion can help you with your telecommuting." Quoting Virtual Fusion's founder, Mr. Weinstein cited "Creativity, Connectivity [and], Productivity" as the guiding principles behind Virtual Fusion.

In other changes, Eric W. Hunter was named Vice President, filling Mr. Weinstein's former position. Mr. Hunter was Virtual Fusion's director of membership services. ■

**Read InFUSION, page 2**

# InFUSION

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF VIRTUAL FUSION

Welcome to a new column – InFusion. Read it each month for information on the internal activities of Virtual Fusion, helpful hints, reminders, and additions to the list of Virtual Fusion's benefits and services.

Even Virtual Fusion cannot escape the reorganization craze that is rushing through the worlds of business and government today. As many of you already know, Virtual Fusion is undergoing its own reorganization. I wanted to take a few minutes to share the details of these exciting and beneficial changes.

Michael Daconta, our revered leader, has stepped down from the position of President. Mike remains closely tied to the organization as our senior advisor. Former Vice President Ari Weinstein has been appointed President of Virtual Fusion. And finally, I, former Director of Membership Services, have been appointed Vice President of Virtual Fusion.

Ari and I, along with Terry Armstrong, Jim Roberts, and Jon Volquardsen, have been hard at work reinventing Virtual Fusion to better serve our members. We have made the decision to change the direction of Virtual Fusion: It is now an association of creative people. Our goal is to foster creativity and productivity among our members through online connectivity and interaction.

Our new organization is best understood through our Membership Prospectus. Below is the text of this revised document. It will give you a good idea of how we plan to function, and of some of the services we are offering. Send your feedback to me, (ehunter@one.net), Ari Weinstein (ariw@aol.com), or our main address (vfusion@aol.com). Keep in touch!

*Eric Hunter*  
VP, Virtual Fusion

## About Virtual Fusion

The global information revolution is changing the way we work. Many of us now work from home, collaborating with others over the growing data highways. Virtual Fusion is an association for professionals who work or do business online. Both individuals and companies – from software developers and telecommuters to freelance artists and consultants – can join Virtual Fusion.

Virtual Fusion is one of the first organizations of its kind. We:

- maintain a comprehensive database of members and their skills
- offer Internet services for the exchange of ideas and files

• publish Virtual Inc., a monthly newsletter that serves the entire online business community.

Above all, Virtual Fusion fosters creativity, connectivity, and productivity among its members. In helping members collaborate, Virtual Fusion contributes to their financial success and professional growth.

## The Virtual Fusion Advantage

Virtual Fusion's members are mostly working professionals. Here are just a few of things you can accomplish by collaborating with them through our organization:

- Discover a network of programmers, artists, consultants, and other skilled individuals who share common goals
- Form your own product development team
- Market and distribute your publications and training materials
- Get expert advice about everything from software interface design to trademarks and patents

- Explore various "income avenues" and business opportunities for virtual entrepreneurs.
- Learn how to make the most of working online

## Membership Benefits and Services

Members of Virtual Fusion are entitled to all of the services and benefits our association has to offer. Here is a partial list of benefits; more are being added all the time:

- The Membership Database: a comprehensive record of our members, their contact information and their professional skills.
  - Virtual Inc.: a full-color monthly electronic newsletter covering online businesses and telecommuting, with news, informative interviews and profiles of leading developers, features, book reviews, and commentary.
  - ListServ: an e-mail service that allows you to receive general announcements from – and conduct discussions with – all Virtual Fusion members.
  - FTP: an Internet service that will allow you to download files and information, including back issues of Virtual Inc.
- Virtual Fusion offers addition services at a nominal fee:
- Editorial services
  - Resume writing assistance

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# Carry the Banner Forward

BY MICHAEL DACONTA

One of my favorite scenes in the movie *Glory* is the one in which Matthew Broderick (who plays the commander of a colored Regiment) turns to his troops before the final battle and says, "if I should fall, who shall take the flag and carry on?"

That scene embodies the rallying cry for humanity: "Who will carry the banner forward?" Don't ask "What flag?" or "Who's banner?" Those questions are irrelevant because they are merely the target of a process. The process itself is the key! The process of improvement, striving, and doing what is right. The process of solving problems, gaining ground, and building a better tomorrow.

I believe it is this striving that brings us closest to divinity. It is perfection via successive approximation. The yearning of the human race to create the "perfect" state of being. Some call it progress. I treat it as a form of "divine emulation." Just as my son wants to be like his Dad, I strive to be like my heavenly Father. Striving is therefore akin to growth.

You may be thinking, "Mike, if all this is true,

## Editor's Word

then why are there so many whiners, bums, criminals, deviants, and losers?" The answer is that those are people who have given up. They have stopped striving. This is very close to physically stunting your growth and putting one foot in the grave. Some people go as far as to move on a "crash course" with death and get involved with drugs, violence, and other perversions. These are people who feel worthless and with nothing to offer the world. What they don't

understand is that they are making a voluntary decision. If you decide you are worthless, then you are. You can just as easily decide that you are valuable and begin striving to prove it. Once

people give up, they cross a line from truly living to merely existing.

Virtual Inc. has carried the banner of online computing. It believes in the power of the electronic community to change the world. As we move into our second year of publication, the staff of Virtual Inc. is proud once again to take up this flag and carry on! ■

# It's a Web, Web, Web, WebWorld *continued*

The most important point Giagnocavo made concerned the actual design of the server. "Your designers might have state-of-the-art Power Macs with 21-inch monitors and ISDN direct lines to the Web," Gregory said. "Just remember, your customers probably don't. And when they can't access all the graphics and files on your server, they'll blame it on you and won't come back." He urged graphics under 50K, and icons under 7K.

While the majority of the Web surfers today are dedicated information searchers, with Prodigy launching its WWW interface, and America Online and CompuServe about to follow, "the great unwashed are about to come aboard," Gregory said. "These are people who may not have put their life savings into their computers. So the simpler your Web server is to access, the more they will visit."

Mark Andreessen is a co-creator of Mosaic. At 23, the Vice President of Netscape Communications Corp. is also the youngest speaker I've seen at this, or any, convention.



Mark Andreessen

Come to think of it, even the guys at the old Creation Comic Book Conventions were older than 23.... Anyway, he is now one of the founding partners of Netscape Communications, who produce (obviously) Netscape, an Internet browser. At 23, he has not given many talks. Mark opened by stating that he was completely changing his talk so it wouldn't be the one listed in the program. That really didn't matter, because he talks the way he thinks - 90 words per minute and not always into the microphone. His session was a challenge in more ways than one.

While Dr. Weber mentioned in his opening statement that there are 12 million licensed Mosaic users, Andreessen believes there are probably many more unlicensed ones who FTP'd versions of it or who got copies at work or from friends. The first time you launch a copy of Netscape, it takes you directly to a registration page at Netscape Communications so that they can get vital statistics on just who is using their product.

Next was Russ Jones of Digital Equipment Corporation. "Advertising adapts to the medium," he stated. While television advertising becomes more visually complex, Internet and Web advertising has to be simpler, and easier to locate. O'Reilly's Global Network Navigator was one of the first to accept advertising. If you want

more information about the sponsor of a particular page, you can double-click on their icon and launch into their product info. Even the prestigious and much-visited NCSA *What's New* page is now sponsored. Russ insisted that any company serious about letting people know about their Web site should try to get a 1-day sponsorship on this page, which is seen by thousands



of repeat viewers.

A key point in Russ' speech had to do with hyperlinks, and determining which were doing a company any good. "You can have 15 different links into the same home page," he affirmed. "All this proves is that your home page gets a lot of visitors." To help determine which link attracts the most visitors to a server, he suggested that each link be given a slightly different home page to launch to. Thus, a company would actually have several home pages, so they could eventually determine who is coming from where to view their information. And after people launch past those separate home pages, they would automatically be returned to the company's standard home page.

"You must proactively advertise your Web presence," Russ insisted. "Get on as many lists, registration vehicles, and other sites as possible." A "SIG" is also very important. Every time someone sends e-mail or responds to a customer query, there must be a "SIG" or signature, at the bottom of each e-mail document. There are many ways to distribute a product announcement, Russ said. They can be sent out via e-mail, posted into a newsgroup, placed in an FTP site, WAIS indexed, and hyperized and placed in a Web document.

Ira Goldstein of the OSF Research Institute gave an overview of the future of the WWW and Internet providers in his presentation "Whither Wander the Net." Ira is of the opinion that as Internet software develops, existing systems will vanish and everything will merge into one sort of giant Internet Happyland.

Ira centered his presentation on four main waves: the Internet is convenient to access to

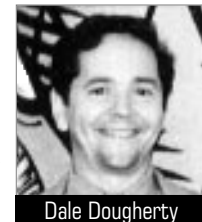
receive free information, to distribute advertising, and to transact commerce. Plus, there is a seamless Web which is simple and easy to learn. It is extensible to new objects, and fundamentally distributed. And it is a non-artificial artifact. Whatever you click on, comes to you. There are no hidden features. As a final bonus, Ira made his entire presentation available online at "http://www.osf.org." He programmed his entire presentation as an HTML document.

"Why the Internet?" queried Dale Dougherty, Director of O'Reilly & Associates' Digital Media Group. "The Internet is a general-purpose public network," he explained. "It has distributed, not centralized, resources, is hardware-independent, is designed for high bandwidth applications, and is bidirectional." Comparing the Internet to other media sources, Dale pointed out that others are largely local. "Radio started by boasting of signals reaching 500 miles. After a while, it became a local medium." On the other hand, the Information Superhighway promotes a global medium, with links that take you overseas with the touch of a finger.

When publishing materials on the Web, companies are mainly concerned with three facets - content, interfaces, and distribution. "Writers are really responsible for content," Dale said. "Companies basically hold the rights to and control what goes into an online publication. Interface deals with packaging and presentation, such as design questions." Sales and Marketing would handle the distribution ideally, he postulated.

Dale used a corollary from the Old West. "There was a town building a new jail in the 1880s," he recalled. "The city founders passed three simple conditions that were dug up by historians. First, the town resolved to build a new jail. Second, they would use materials from the old jail. Last, the old jail was to remain open until the new jail was completed." According to Dale, this is similar to what is happening now - companies are unable to give up their previous models while working on emerging technology. As an aside, at this point Dale mentioned that security issues will become a major concern "whether we're ready for them or not" at some point in 1995, out of industry necessity.

How do you create customers? Who will visit a Web site? "You have to provide service for



Dale Dougherty

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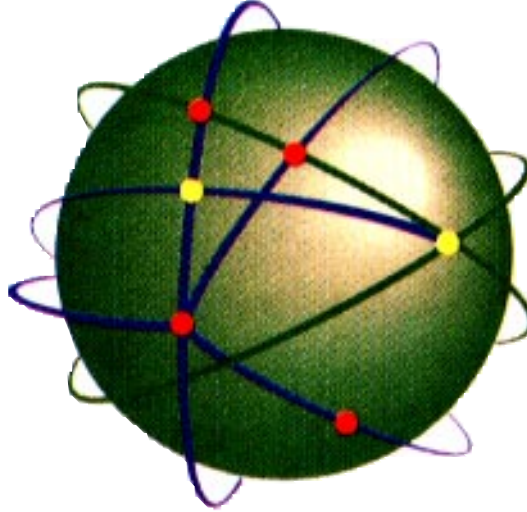
## WebWorld *continued*

online users, establish a brand identity they like with a reliable source of quality information," Dale said. "Develop original content and communicate with customers."

With respect to advertising Dale confessed, "Even I'm not fan of advertising but you have to analyze what customers are buying. A publication gives advertisers access to a particular audience. Advertising begins to make sense as a way to generate traffic at your site."

Jonathan Steuer of Cyborganic, who helped found HotWired, spoke on "Worldwide Web Publishing: Combining Content and Community." He talked at length about the pluses and minuses of Internet publishing versus commercial services. On the plus side, it's flexible in form, structure (within constraints), and billing. Internet pubs are financially independent and have unlimited growth potential. On the down side, the publisher must build and maintain its own infrastructure. Plus, the publishing tools are lame and arcane technologies are still a grim reality. There also are looming security issues.

"Online communities require substantial care and feeding to become and remain active and interesting," Jonathan said, echoing statements made by several other speakers. The predominant thrust was that once a Web site is estab-



lished, it must be updated on a constant basis. HotWired adds new pages every week, although not in the same sections. But the entire content is replaced every month.

"Organizers should come from the community," he added. "Peers are less disruptive to community behavior than authority figures." For instance, if I continue building Web pages, they would seem more acceptable than if the Sales Director added a "Corporate Sales" overview with his own picture.

By calling the phone company and having a direct line installed, anyone can establish their own Web presence, Jonathan pointed out. "For a couple of thousand dollars a year, you can be on the Web," he said. There is a popular home page called "Justin's Links to the WWW." Justin is a college student. His entire site is built into the university's server. The cost to him? Nothing – and he gets 10,000 hits per week!

Gary Bolles, editor in chief of *Inter@ctive Week*, discussed "The Next Wave of the Web." He described *Inter@ctive Week* as news and perspectives on emerging technologies. The magazine was launched late last year.

"There are vague but impressive numbers surrounding the Web," Gary cited. "NSFnet traffic increased 110% in 1994." This was a slower increase from 1993 over 1992 (443,931%) and *continued on page 5*

# How Much Communication Is Too Much?

COMPILED BY JEFFREY COHEN

**W**e recently queried some industry figures, offering the question, "Is there such a thing as too much communication? Do the new online and interactive choices pose a threat to users' free time away from the workplace?"

"Of course, there is always the possibility that people will let technology – or other people – control them," says Lawrence Magid, syndicated columnist and author of *Cruising Online*. "Over time, people will learn how to filter their electronic communications to fit into – rather than allowing it to rule – their lives."

"Media literacy means knowing how to use media to your advantage and how not to let the disadvantages of using media ruin your life and business," answered Howard Rheingold, author of *The Virtual Community*. "Although online addiction is often sensationalized, I do believe that users ought to be educated in the best ways to use e-mail and conferencing. I do not believe, however, that prohibiting unauthorized communication ever works out: Much of the informal shmoozing becomes a business asset later – as I wrote in my book."

Howard adds, "We need to learn how to use the new media to our advantage. We need to learn the pitfalls and how to avoid them. It's a matter of education, and of knowing what to

## *Virtual Query*

educate people about." Howard can be reached at URL <http://www.well.com/www/hlr/>.

"I've been online for 13 years. It's only within the past six months that I've found myself feeling a twinge of obligation when logging on at home," says Laurie Petersen, editor of *Cowles Report on Database Marketing*. "The key difference, is that now I have a 'duty' to track online

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***"Outside of work, we can simply choose to do other things than be online ..."***

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services for my work, as opposed to just enjoying them. I've also become a member of several mailing lists that relate to my job, and feel I have to read them or, God forbid, I might miss something. They're pretty active, so it's important to

skim them frequently to keep my mailbox under control.

"If I had no professional reason to be online, I suspect I would still feel as energized exploring at random and making online friends as I always did," Laurie continues. "I don't think hanging around online is any more demanding on your time than wasting it in front of the TV. And nine out of ten times, there's a surprise in store."

"The threat to time during work is more a concern," says Daniel Dern, author of *The Internet Guide for New Users*. "The quantity of e-mail and discussions often add a significant load, and yet it's hard to ignore them. Unless one checks almost every message, there's a chance that there's something urgent and important in there."

"I think that slowing down message replies for discussions would help reduce the overall volume," Daniel adds. "Outside of work, we can simply choose to do other things than be online or near the phone, etc."

John Levine, author of *The Internet for Dummies*, agrees with the example of videophones in the bathroom. As far as posing a threat to users' free time, he says, "Only if they let it. To the extent it replaces watching TV, it can't help but be an improvement." But then again, John notes that he has six computers and no TV. ■

## WebWorld *continued*

'94 over '93 (1,713%). But what do these numbers really mean? Internet provider services continued to spring up, and people signed up to join them. Those numbers and commercial/business sites make up the majority of the increases. But how many of those people regularly use – or understand – what they are viewing?

"The typical Web site today is designed for single or dual access, and is more like physical publishing, such as a newsletter, than electronic publishing," Gary said. "That means they're generally pretty lame. The use of graphics hasn't kicked in because of the fallback on traditional influences."

Current readers or "customers" are early adapters, he explained, reflecting a point made by other speakers. "These are people who found the Web on their own, using search tools they located," Gary said. But the barbarians are at the gate – when Prodigy and the other commercial services make the Web available to anyone with a home computer and a modem, the lowest common denominator is going to move lower. Companies should prepare for more hits, but from people who will probably come only once if they don't see something on the first page they look at that strikes their fancy.

And that is not necessarily a bad thing, Gary insisted. "Web sites should adopt content specifically for a micro-constituency. Present information that your customers want." Anyone else who visits is a welcome guest, and might turn into a customer if they like what they see. Finally, he reiterated that as bandwidth grows (e.g., with the ability to pull-down information from cable

## InFusion *continued*

- Electronic publishing services

### Your Membership Kit

Upon joining Virtual Fusion you will receive a membership kit so you can start enjoying our benefits and services right away. The kit includes:

- Adobe Acrobat Reader 2.0 – The cross-platform software needed to read Virtual Inc. and other documents published by Virtual Fusion
- The latest issue of Virtual Inc.
- The latest membership database information
- Instructions on using the Virtual Fusion ListServ and other online services
- Michael Daconta's 15-page paper: "How to Start Your Own Virtual Corporation: Riding the Information Highway!"

Virtual Fusion is a unique and active association serving today's increasingly technological business community. Whether you're a new or veteran member of this community, Virtual Fusion can help you make the most of your online resources. ■

boxes), the low end of the spectrum will come up to speed with the rest of the industry.

"The World Wide Web as a Corporate Information Utility," was the theme for Digital's Tim Horgan, Technical Director of Systems Team for Web Deployment. Tim pointed out the differences between current corporate environments and Web environments. "Although the current corporate sites are islands of information, difficult to share easily, with different capabilities per platform so that not everyone is able to access what they need, Web sites can access a wide range of information quickly, and share quickly, with a lot of tools available," he said.

"The Web used to threaten people in corporate structures," Tim recalled. "They saw it as a collection of toys run by a bunch of college kids." But as the Internet came more into the mainstream and started to receive more favorable media coverage, that attitude began to change. "The technology and the tools are still new and changing," he continued. "It's difficult to find experts, or even experienced people. Developers need to stay current, because it's tough to get ahead."

His major thrust was that there are no accepted methodologies for designing Web-based systems. "What you should do is develop a model for the mechanisms and services that will help your company most effectively use the Web as an information utility," Tim said. Web pages must be a set of links to the most-often used servers, with a rich set of navigation and usage tools. "This is not intended as *the* standard set of pages, but as *a* standard set to simplify usage," he added. They should contain categories of interest to a wide range of people, and follow good Web design. "There should be a consistent interface style with color and icons, rich navigation aids, feedback support, and a balance of text and graphics. And it must be logical and easy to understand," Tim said.

A Web archive (FTP or Gopher) must be set up to contain shared information of use to multiple groups, with appropriate distribution and security mechanisms. "This may be the most important shareable resource," Tim reported. "Implementing a system is not the challenge – keeping the information current will be."

There are few courses about effective use of Web technology. "Hands-on experience-based training is needed," Tim affirmed. "Developers and forums are an important way to share experiences and learn what's new." Companies need to teach people how to make the best use of core services, and teach the basics of the Web, such as what it is and how it can be used.

"The Web may be used by thousands of people," Tim said. Online tools are definitely needed to get people the specific help they need. Digital produced a 116-page guide to using the Internet for their own people. "The Web is the right framework for an information utility," Tim

concluded. "To use it effectively, we need to understand and appreciate the challenges it brings, and develop a model for sharing and integrating core Web tools." This includes directories to find information, page systems to simplify use, toolboxes to ease development tasks, infocenters to share tools, and archives to access shared information.

"The end result will be the core of your information utility," Tim said, "tools and services that support widespread information sharing."

*A second edition of WebWorld will be conducted April 19–21 at the Santa Clara Convention Center as part of E-mail World. For more information, contact DCI directly at (508) 470-3880, or access the World Wide Web at URL <http://www.ocm.com/dci/>. ■*

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