

Internet businessman shares secrets of his success

Business can be a very tricky undertaking, even when it is handled by experts. On the Internet, however, business can be an even more complicated matter, especially when you are dealing with people who often do not know what they are doing and people who you never meet except through a computer screen.

When I first got onto the Internet, I was content to read newsgroups, peruse bulletin boards and correspond with my friends instead of calling them long distance. But after spending some time in a particular group, which just happened to be a marketplace, I decided to take my Internet use to another level.

I spend much of my free time playing a card game known as Magic: The Gathering. This game involves using cards, many different cards, to play a role-play style game. Now, to get certain cards, you have to trade because they are no longer available or are difficult to get. This is where the Internet came in.

There are many newsgroups on the Internet that are related to card games, and Magic is no exception. There are groups for strategy, rules clarification, trading and, best of all, sale groups.

The most popular sale group is marketplace (rec.games.deckmaster.marketplace) where any number of cards can be found. When I started seeing the prices peo-



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ple were asking, and getting, for cards, I decided I could actually make some money from my cards.

My first sale was rather small since I was unsure what I was doing and had little experience with net transactions. It was, to my astonishment, successful and profitable. I told some of my friends about it and they asked me to sell some of their cards. Thus began my newfound business.

Selling on the Internet is a very simple thing to do. Just go to the newsgroup, post a message to it and wait for responses. When you get a response, reply to it, maybe negotiate a little and complete the transaction. Simple.

There is just one catch. Since most of the things I am selling are small, I can send them through the mail. There is a certain amount of trust involved with receiving money and then sending cards to some far-off place. I am pleased to announce that I have had no problems, well almost no problems, with receiving payment and sending cards.

The only problem I ever had was a guy who never received his card. I got back to him and sent him the address I had

sent it to. The address was wrong, due to poor handwriting on the envelope, and he did not receive the card. Of course, it never came back to me at the return address, and I haven't heard from him recently, either.

I do try to protect myself and my customer in the easiest ways possible. Transactions are run in a standard format. After you receive the message, reply to it and work out the particulars of the sale, the buyer sends the money. Upon receipt of the money, the seller sends the cards.

This system works well. In my sales, I insist on money orders. The funds are guaranteed and the order is guaranteed (usually by American Express). My customers are protected because they can recall the money order, and I have guaranteed funds.

As far as buying and selling on the Net in general, I would do it and do. Go through any computer related magazine, especially *Wired*, and you can find tons of ads about the shopping malls you can reach from your home.

From my standpoint, I am happy to say that the Internet is "a happy place to buy." If you want just about anything that can be sent through the mail, and even some stuff that can't be put in the mail, the Internet is the place to shop. And if you have any cards you want to sell, let me know and we can work something out.

Gladstone accounts link students to future

A few quick keystrokes and a couple clicks with the mouse and the front page of *Grand Royale*, the Beastie Boys fanzine, appears on the screen.

"This is the wave of the future," said Herschel Brown, a student consultant at the Computing Center. "There are all kinds of magazines online now."

Brown said the entertainment and educational possibilities available on the Internet are growing everyday. With free Internet access for students through Gladstone, the University's undergraduate Internet system server, more students are discovering those possibilities.

Bob Jones, senior systems programmer for the Computing Center, said there are currently more than 7,000 users registered on Gladstone. According to Computing Center data, students are opening new Gladstone accounts at a rate of about seven per day. Unfortunately, this means that the system is being worked harder.

Jones said the biggest problem with Gladstone at the moment is the lack of disk space. The Computing Center is acquiring more disks to accommodate the growing number of users.

"We're told (Gladstone) can handle having every student at the University registered on it," Jones said.

Jones also said that the system is occasionally brought to its knees by heavy traffic from the current number of users, but this is common for any large computer system. Jones said the increasing number of people using applications that take up a lot of disk space is the reason Gladstone is slower at times.

Netscape, which can be accessed through Gladstone, is one of the applications which takes up a lot of space. Netscape is also one of the most popular applications because it features several major online publications, such as *Grand Royale* and *Playboy*.

"Netscape is one of the coolest things available on Gladstone," Brown said. "It's really cutting edge."

Netscape is a part of the World Wide Web and is capable of reproducing publications almost exactly like their paper counterparts. With full color photos and the identical layout, the only difference is that it is easier to carry a magazine around with you. Publications on Netscape and the World Wide Web can even include video in their pages and a user can click on certain words within a web document to get more

information about that word or phrase.

Lucy Lynch, the technology support coordinator for the microcomputer labs, believes it's this kind of multimedia capability that makes the Internet the most exciting entertainment and informational resource available. The Web gives students the opportunity to communicate with people around the globe. There are newsgroups, online publications and literally thousands of people who have registered a "homepage" with the system.

A homepage can include basically anything a user wants to put on it. There are homepages featuring everything from *Star Trek* to tropical plants. The student senate even has a homepage on the web, which has announcements of upcoming events and minutes from recent meetings. Anyone with access to the Web can easily create their own homepage and publish it on the Web.

"That's the great thing about the Web," Lynch said. "It's completely interactive."

Lynch said the ability to publish your own ideas and the ability for others to do the same, makes the Web a far greater information resource than a service like Lexis/Nexis/Medis.

"With something like Lexis/Nexis you only get the information offered to you," Lynch said. "With the web there are a lot of really diverse ideas out there."

Lynch said that students have a lot more freedom and more information to choose from on the Web.

"It's also a really cool research tool," Lynch said. Students can access online library services from around the world. There is also an online *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which Lynch said is the most underutilized research tool available to students. Gladstone gives students the resources to do research on nearly any topic imaginable and the ability to do it in a fast, efficient manner.

With online library services, academic journals, newspapers and magazines, Gladstone gives students instant access to these resources with the press of a button, rather than having to search through a library to find what they want.

Also, with resources from around the world, Gladstone gives students access to a wider variety of information than any library can offer. Many professors make use of the Internet services available to them at the University to do research.

DISTANCE

Continued from Page 1B

Students at the University are being exposed to computer operations that are quickly becoming common knowledge in the real world. They are, for example, sending and retrieving E-mail messages, "surfing the Internet," and exploring home pages.

As for the students taking these two journalism classes at other colleges, they are able to receive credit for classes not offered at their college while fulfilling a required course here should they decide to transfer later. Currently, the University is the only journalism degree-granting college in the state, so the opportunity to complete these classes through this method provides a rather unique opportunity for some.

Cherie Murray, a student at Eastern Oregon State College who is taking J201, said she feels that the technology behind all of this detracts too much from the traditional teacher-student interaction of regular classrooms.

"I find it real interesting, but I see real problems with it," Murray said. "The fact that we're disconnected from the professor and other students is a problem. I see it as a triangular response experience, and the feeling it leaves is one of being totally disconnected from everything."

For University student Dave Kline, he said the exposure to computer and distance educa-

tion technology is worth the student-teacher separation.

"I think it's a great class and I'm learning a lot about Internet," Kline said. "I don't see it as a disadvantage or being any different than any other classes, but if it was, I'd just go over to the IMC."

Thirty students from each class are allowed to attend class in the IMC each day, which enables them direct contact with the professors.

Stavitsky said although students are somewhat distanced, he tries to get students involved as much as possible.

"It is very different and very time-consuming as well," he said. "You have to be cognitive to the fact that you're talking on TV and avoid becoming just a talking head. That's why I'm always on the lookout for outside sources to add a little variety to the lectures."

Officials in the School of Journalism are planning to offer J204 Visual Communication through the network, with the possibility of Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario joining the University in its attempt to incorporate distance education into the curriculum.

"This is really a pilot program for us right now, but overall it's been a big plus," Gleason said. "The use of technology has added a whole new dimension to teaching and I think it's a viable way to offer courses on campuses that don't offer them. There's definitely potential here to make it part of the University's regular offerings."

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