

THE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL SALES PROGRAM PRESENTS

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Ms. MICHELLE FORD
RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT MANAGER

Ms. Ford will discuss internship opportunities, UO graduate recruitment for Meier & Frank, and their executive training program.

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CYBERSPACE

Netcom to charge hourly rate

■ **RATES:** A leading Internet service provider moves away from unlimited access to alleviate busy signals

By Elizabeth Weise
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Time is running out for Internet users who go online under an unlimited, flat-rate plan.

The problem is that people are doing the computer equivalent of pulling their chairs up to the buffet table at an all-you-can-eat restaurant, costing Internet providers money, tying up phone lines and making it difficult for others to log in.

Netcom On-line Communications Service Inc. of San Jose, a pioneer of the flat-rate price, plans to announce a return to hourly rates next month. Other Internet providers, while still allowing unlimited usage, are charging double the going rate.

In the next few years, other companies are expected to discontinue flat rates and return to some

form of an hourly charge.

America Online, with 6.5 million members, started offering a flat \$19.95-a-month rate a few weeks ago, a step some blame for the current logjam.

"Like anything that's a great value, consumers are flocking to it," said David Gang, vice president of product marketing. He said the company is upgrading its systems to handle the crush.

Patsy Northcutt, who runs Northcutt Productions, a video and multimedia production company in Sausalito, uses America Online for her business. But she has gotten so frustrated with delays that she is planning to open a second account with an Internet-only provider.

"Sometimes I'll actually go into the setup and change the number I'm dialing in to get a better line. I can always get on, but it can take three or four tries," she said. "So far it's been inconvenient but never disastrous — but at the wrong time it could be horrible."

The average Internet user is online about 16 to 18 hours a month,

said Eric Paulak, an analyst at Gartner Group.

Flat-rate can easily be a money loser for online companies. At a cost of 90 cents to \$1.80 an hour to connect a user, Internet providers who charge no more than \$19.95 a month start losing money after as little as 11 hours.

Zilker Internet Park, an Austin, Texas-based Internet service provider, offers its customers a flat-rate monthly fee — at \$39.95 instead of \$19.95. But at that price, the company can insure customers get more than a busy signal.

"It's similar to those specialty airlines that only have first-class seats: You'll always have a few who will pay more for leg room," said president Smoot Carl-Mitchell.

A top executive at the Microsoft Network, which has about 2 million members, said he doesn't foresee MSN abandoning flat rates. "But that's as far as I can see and that's about a year," said Jeff Sanderson, marketing chief.

Web site creators moving into book publishing

■ **ONLINE:** Though Web enthusiasts poke fun at the print world, web publishers know books make money

By Elizabeth Weise
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Folks on the Wide World Web are apt to disdain the print world, deriding it as painfully slow and old-fashioned.

The reign of the dead tree is over, they chortle via e-mail. The printed page will fade away, we are assured, and all information-sharing will be instantaneous and two-way.

Case in point: HotWired, among the sharpest of all cutting-edge Web sites, which is the offspring of San Francisco-based Wired Ventures Inc., publisher of the online world's influential

Wired magazine.

"HotWired," says Michael Kinsley of Microsoft's own Web magazine, Slate. "Don't they all believe that the medium changes the nature of the message?"

Change it may, but not to anything unrecognizable to a 16th-century reader. For earlier this year, Wired launched that most tired of tired endeavors — a publishing house. For, you know, books.

And not only that, but every digerati worth his silicon is racing to get a book out.

Just some of those already out of the gate include Nicholas Negroponte of MIT's famed media lab (Knopf), Steven Johnson, editor of the Web magazine Feed (HarperEdge), HotWired columnist Jon Katz (HardWired) and "Cyber-pundit" David Shenk (HarperEdge).

All are writing words to be printed on leaves of dried wood pulp embossed with lampblack. Non-digital. Un-electronic. About as far from interactive as you can get.

So why are all these cyber-brights flocking to one of the oldest media? Someone asked Negroponte, "Mr. Digital Sensibility," that same question, noted Peter Rutten, publisher of HardWired, Wired's book division.

"His answer was, 'Because it's the interface that my audience has. It's still the prime interface that people consuming information have.'"

Writing a book is the mark of legitimacy. The only way to truly be a part of this country's intellectual give-and-take. And the hottest thing going.

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