Written by Bob Baldwin, Editor
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Commenting on the Internet's World Wide Web last month in this space, I said: "it gets better and better."

Now, after spending a month exploring the World Wide Web over a high-speed Internet connection, I'm beginning to wonder. Not wonder about the viability of the Web, but about the thought processes of the suppliers of maintenance technologies and services who have a presence on the Web.

I continue to be delighted by my finds in many areas of the Web, but I'm disappointed by the lack of helpful content on the sites of companies that regularly contribute articles and purchase advertising space in this and other technical business magazines.

With the greater bandwidth of my new connection, it is easy for me to bore down into a site to see what it offers. I'm not finding much--only two really helpful sites so far out of the dozens I've visited.

As expected, every site has lots of stuff about the company's products. Some of the stuff is truly impressive, but it's just brochureware, a fancy Web version of a capabilities brochure or short form catalog. Some sites go on to provide a complete company history, post all the press releases they have published since the site went up, list all the trade shows at which they exhibit (some long past), and list job openings at their plant. There is usually a "contact us" link that pops up an e-mail form that often asks you to fill out a couple pages of life history before you get to the spot where you can write your message.

Where is the good stuff--the information that can help you understand technology or business issues related to the company's product offerings? A few sites provides some crumbs by posting their company newsletter and application stories from customers, but that's about all.

Where are the white papers, maintenance tips, rules of thumb, glossaries, do's and don'ts, frequently asked questions, and installation check lists?

The lack of good maintenance stuff on supplier Web sites reminds me of that delightful 1984 television commercial in which Clara Peller looked up at the server behind the fast food counter and asked: "Where's the Beef?" **MT**

Thanks for stopping by,