

It Gets Better And Better

Written by Bob Baldwin, Editor
Thursday, 01 January 1998 21:20



I've been a proponent of the Internet as a maintenance tool since I began using it in the office and at home.

Looking back, it is hard for me to believe that I got along with a 2.4 Kbps connection to Compu-Serve and America Online. But it was fast enough for e-mail, receiving manuscripts from authors, obtaining information from discussion forums, and running other text-based applications.

The World Wide Web got started about the time we invested in new computers with built-in 14.4 Kbps modems. But I didn't get to know the Web until I got a local Internet service provider that charged a flat fee, allowing me to search the Web without an hourly charge or long-distance telephone call.

An upgrade to 28.8 Kbps made Web pages load faster and what used to be a 1 1/2 hr wait for a software download was cut to 45 min. But my frustration grew as Web sites began sporting more fancy graphics and animation, making them load slower and slower with my current modem. Time for an upgrade.

My cable television company came calling with a deal I couldn't pass up--a broadband gateway to the Web over my cable connection. I signed up and hit the jackpot. It was like moving from radio to color television overnight. Now Web pages seem to load immediately, as if they are already on my hard drive. The 45 min download now takes only 1 min. I'm cruising the information superhighway in the fast lane at 1,400 Kbps, 50 times faster than before.

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I've loaded up with browser plugins--Real Audio, Shockwave, Real Video, and more. It was easy because the software downloads in a flash. Games, videos, music, animation: they all work great.

This is what the World Wide Web was meant to be--immediate information with text, video, and sound. A mouse click on an embedded address link in your e-mail, word processor document, or database table brings the linked information to your monitor in a flash.

I'm more enthusiastic than ever over the potential of Web technology as a tool for maintenance technicians, engineers, planners, and managers. Think of it. Work orders, inventory records, job plans, parts catalogs, drawings, regulations, instructional videos, safety data sheets, troubleshooting guides, and more linked together and just a mouse click away over the network.

The technology is here. Now we have to wait for the content to catch up. While you are waiting, check out <http://www.mt-online.com> . It's safe at any speed. **MT**

Thanks for stopping by,

