THE WEB

Digitally Direct

By William Powell

I can count on one hand the number of times in the past year that I let my fingers do the walking for a phone number. And no, it's not because I have every Chinese restaurant in my neighborhood on speed dial. I just don't have a need for the Yellow Pages any longer, or, I should say, I don't have a need for two pounds of Goldenrod newsprint.

A few years ago, I started using online services such as WhitePages.com ◁ᵈ **whitepages.com** and Anywho.com

◁ᵈ **anywho.com** at work to track down addresses or retrieve contact information for companies. But then sites such as Switchboard.com ◁ᵈ **switchboard.com** began to increase their offerings, and so did my dependence.

I'm clearly not alone in relying on online directories. More and more Web users are choosing to surf instead of walk for phone numbers, as well as email addresses, restaurant listings, driving directions, and local news. Cur-

rently, there are more than a dozen online directories attracting a significant group of Web users.

The Kelsey Group ◁ഄ **kelseygroup. com,** a research and strategic analysis company, projects that online directories will gobble up an ever-larger piece of the Yellow Page pie, increasing from 2.4 percent in 2002 to 24 percent in 2008. More telling is the success of directories such as Verizon's Superpages.com ◁ഄ **superpages.com.** According to Nielsen/NetRatings, the online directory had more than 7.6 million unique visitors in May. In comparison, Yellowpages.com accounted for only 1.6 million unique visitors.

It's hard to account for the disparity between such sites, but I've found one feature at Superpages.com that's indispensable. It lets users perform a map-based search in which they enter their address to generate a detailed map of the surrounding area. They can then search by category or business name and have the results appear as push pins on the map. Mousing over the push pins reveals contact information, as well as distance from the entered address. Double-clicking creates a detailed listing. The interface is so enjoyable and easy to use that each of my visits has resulted in multiple searches, many of which I've saved to my personal directory. It's definitely a site worth checking out, as are these online directories:

● Yahoo! Get Local ◁ഄ **http://local.ya-hoo.com**

● Citysearch ◁ഄ **citysearch.com**

● SMARTpages ◁ഄ **smartpages.com**

● Government Guide ◁ഄ **government-guide.com.**

Not-So-Friendly Skies

During a recent flight from Cleveland to Orlando, I guiltily watched bits and pieces of *The Matrix* as it played on someone's Apple Powerbook. The size

Site Seeing

Anyone who has ever collected a paycheck has a story to tell about a manager, co-worker, or report that, despite their best efforts, drove them up the wall. And when you're experiencing it, you think you're the only one it's happening to, or that what you're experiencing is worse than what everyone else is going through. After visiting WorkingWounded.com ◁ഄ **www.workingwounded.com** I can say with near certainty that what you're facing might be bad, but you're not alone.

The site centers around author Bob Rosner's syndicated column, which can be found at ABCNews.com ◁ഄ **abcnews.com**, and his book *Working Wounded: Advice That Adds Insight to Injury.*

Though Rosner does take his column and workplace issues seriously, the site is infused with a good dose of humor. There are interviews with the likes of *Dilbert* creator Scott Adams and plenty of fun distractions, such as links to office Webcams and goofy downloadable diplomas.

But the real highlights of the Website are the message boards. For anyone who has wondered, "Is it me?" (and it just might be), check out the WorkingWounded advice board or confess your workplace sins in the online confessional. Sure, some posts read like bad daytime TV, but there's a lot to learn, too. Fellow visitors eagerly share their insights and experience and serve up generous amounts of sympathy, as well as tough love.

Should you like what you see, you can opt in to receive a weekly email newsletter with Rosner's column and up-to-date workplace news.
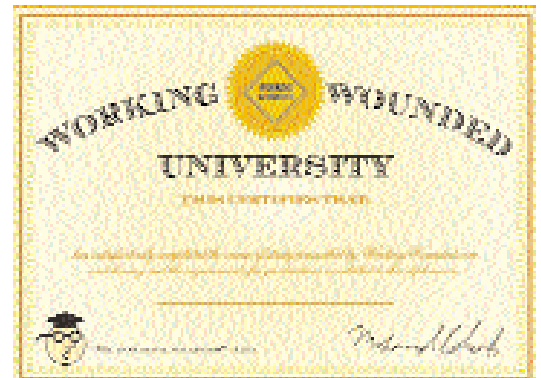
of the display and its picture quality were impressive, and that, more than the movie itself, kept me peeking over the owner's shoulder. But had it been an Excel spreadsheet or company memo, well, I would have had an eyeful of that, too.

Laptop usage, as well as other portable devices such as PDAs, is increasing aboard flights. With the introduction of Wi-Fi, it's set to, ahem, take off.

Airplane manufacturer Boeing is already anticipating the possibility of on-board espionage as it begins to roll out

Connexion, its online Wi-Fi system. But the company's concern isn't with tech-savvy users piggybacking onto the network, which Boeing is going to great lengths to secure, but much simpler—someone like me shoulder surfing, peering over people's shoulders as they view Webpages, read email, and work on network-accessible files.

Obviously, this isn't a concern that should be limited to users on airplanes. Look around the terminal: It's common to see dozens of people working away

on their laptops. Fortunately, there's an easy way to discourage prying eyes no matter where you are. For a modest price, laptop owners can purchase a screen or film that attaches to the computer's display and distorts the image from any other angle than the user's own. They're relatively inexpensive, easy to install, and a must-have accessory if frequent computer usage is an inevitable part of your travels. Finding one, however, might not be easy.

In searching for sources for screens, I stumbled upon a 1998 article written by travel commentator Christopher Elliot ◄ʷ **http://elliot.org,** which covers his bizarre and difficult attempts at locating manufacturers. The two sources that Elliot listed are out of date, but a little more hunting led me to 3M,

which seems to have cornered the market on filters for laptop screens. Its version is available online and can be had for under US$100. Just do a search for "laptop privacy filters." Finding screens from other manufacturers was a bust, but I'm told they exist.

Shoulder surfing isn't something to fret about, but it is something to be aware of on your next trip. A poll conducted by Harris Interactive for 3M's Optical Systems Division determined that more than a third of passengers admit to peering at someone else's computer screen; many cite security concerns. But let's face it: Human nature urges us to look. And though etiquette teaches us to look away, some people won't. In any case, you'll be prepared.

The Domains
in Spain

An interest in education and employment is leading an Internet usage surge in Spain, reports a Nielsen/NetRatings study. In fact, usage has increased more than 8 percent from 2002. In addition, the report states that 30 percent of surfers visit an education or career site monthly. That figure is up an impressive 10 percent from May 2002.

Quick TIP

I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation for why Microsoft Internet Explorer's windows occasionally open in odd sizes, obscuring the page at hand. But does anyone care? Most of us just want to make it stop. And, thankfully, there's an easy way to do just that.

To begin, open Internet Explorer, then right-click over an existing link on the page. In the list of options that appears, select Open in New Window.

Once the new window opens, you can then size the window to your preference. That's done as you would size any window: Move the mouse pointer to the edge of the window until it turns into a double arrow, left-click and hold, then drag the edge to your desired dimension. You can then place the window by clicking and holding on the title bar and dragging the window where you want it.

To save your adjustments, hold down the Shift key and close the window by clicking the X in the upper right-hand corner. Next time you open IE, the window will be the size you selected.

William Powell *is learning technologies editor of* T+D; *wpowell@astd.org.*