Don't Be A Bandwidth Hog

by Charles Rubin

"So much information, so little time," laments today's Netizen.   We all have a bandwidth problem with the Net as we try to absorb   hundreds of information bits a day through what's usually a very   narrow pipeline. It's depressing enough trying to maintain legitimate   contacts and keep up with useful information without having to   spend some of our precious online time dealing with garbage. When   we want information, we want it now, and we form impressions about   new Net contacts based solely on information content and presentation.   Good information, presented logically and concisely, implies a   professional approach to business. Bad information implies just   the opposite. It behooves the astute guerrilla marketer to put   his or her best foot forward at all times. To wit:

  - **Watch that signature.** Sure, you should include your name, company   name, and contact information in an e-mail or discussion group   signature, but skip the space-hogging (and frequently indecipherable)   graphics, quotations from notable people, long-winded mission   statements or expressions of personal philosophies. Most mailing   lists and discussion groups frown on any signature longer than   four lines; some lists now delete any signature longer than four   lines. And demonstrating your reverence for Ayn Rand or James   Madison probably won't help you win business.
  - **Don't rant.** If you can't make your point in one or two screens,   then either your writing skills need work, you're overly enamored   of your own opinions, or you're not focusing properly on the topic.   I've gotten to the point in some discussion groups where I no   longer read posts by certain individuals--not because they don't   have something useful to say, but because they waste too much   of my reading time saying it.
  - **Don't post lengthy articles.** If you find an information resource   that will be useful to a discussion group or mailing list, post   a short excerpt of it and tell people where to get the rest.   Otherwise,   you're wasting a lot of time for people who aren't interested   in it: it takes time to download, time to scroll past, and even   time to ignore. If you're participating in a forum on an online   service, upload the article to a forum library and point people   to it in a message board posting.
  - **Use a good subject line.** Describe each message you send or post   by using an effective subject line. Nothing ticks me off more   than opening a message with no subject or a vague subject only   to find out it's something I don't want to read. If you believe   your message or post is useful, then you shouldn't be afraid to   announce it with a good subject line.
  - **Skip the kid and dog photos.** Personal Web pages are sprouting   like kudzu, but I am not impressed with the professionalism of   someone who includes a photo of the family pet or kids. Your regular   customers may come to know you well enough to care about your   personal life, but if you force everyone to endure a 50K GIF file   of Little Scratchy when they access your Web page, nine out of   ten of them will be so turned off that they'll never become your   customers at all.

Show respect for your customers' and potential customers' time,   and they'll reward you with respect in kind.