

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

A Better Place

By Douglas E. Welch

A few weeks ago, I wondered aloud how some of our high-tech peers could allow themselves to become involved in annoying, abusive and even illegal behavior based around their high-tech careers. Keeping with this week's theme, I want to focus on some of the ways high-tech careerists can help make the world a better place.

Volunteer

I know I have said this before, but it bears repeating. Helping others with their computers, or better yet, teaching others how to use computers, is one of the most rewarding things you can do. It not only helps you to expand your computer skills, it helps to develop a growing contingent of computer users who know the difference between right and wrong. The Internet can only benefit from people who understand what a virus is and how to avoid it, why you don't send spam, and how to back up their computer so they don't lose all their work.

We can't solve all the problems of the Internet this way, but we can certainly make it a better place. Volunteering allows you to take all those broad-minded ideas you have and begin to put them to work. If you want to improve the world, volunteering is a great place to start.

Arts and Culture

Do you know of an artist or musician who is struggling to get his work known? How about a writer who wants to share her work? Is there a community group that needs to expand its membership? You can help. Assisting artists and others can be a great way to expand the culture of the Internet and the world. Help someone set up a free Web site showcasing her paintings, or encode a few MP3 files for your songwriting buddy.

Art is an important part of the world. Call me naïve, but I believe that anything that makes more art available to more people is a great thing. The next time you find an artist whom you really like, ask him if he needs help starting a Web site. You never know—you could be helping the next big star in the art world. It could happen.

Community

Use your computer skills to make the world immediately around you—your neighborhood—a better place. Set up an e-mail list for the Neighborhood Watch group. Help them manage their meeting and patrol schedules. Gather information from your council people, representatives, senators, etc. that affects your neighborhood. Share that information with your neighbors, friends, and whoever needs it. Become a font of information for those around you, especially if they don't know how to find it themselves. Better yet, teach them how to find the information themselves.

You can also be an important part of online communities. Play an active role in any community you join. Don't just be a lurker, watching from the sidelines. If you have something you can offer to others in the community, say it. Everyone benefits when everyone participates. You can even start up a community of your own, if you wish. Easy-to-use community tools exist in several places on the Web. You can have your community up and running in a matter of minutes.

Web Logs (Blogs)

If you have information to share, you can also start up a Web log, or blog. Blogger.com (www.blogger.com) is just one of the tools available to start publishing your own online journal. I recently started my own Web log, and I use it to pass along information about all my interests—books, computers, events, art, and a lot more. My Web log provides me with a place to pass on the little tidbits of information I gather during my day. Much of this information would never be of use to anyone else if I didn't have some way of sharing it. Don't be afraid—share what you know.

It is possible to make the world around you a better place. In fact, in some ways, it is very, very easy. All it takes is a little time and a little desire. It is important to remember that there is always something you can give, always something you can share. You just need to take that first step . . . and technology has made that sharing too easy to resist. □

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