



The Gigaphone

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The Shouting Ground Newsletter

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From the Cubicle of the President:

Welcome to another installment of the Gigaphone! Things, as usual, have been hopping and there's much to discuss. 2000 is going to be an exciting year!

Enchanted Melody

First we would like to wish a warm welcome to our new employee, Melody Ensinger! She started in mid-February as our new office assistant and receptionist. Things were getting a little messy and disorganized around the office, so we have brought her on board to help us with all the detail-oriented tasks of running the office. Chances are when you call our office, you will be greeted by her friendly voice!

Chicago Update

The dialups are in! Boy is that exciting, and we are already signing people up. Thanks to all of our beta-testers who helped us work through the kinks. If you are interested, we have both 56k analog dialups, and ISDN 64kbps & 128kbps. Dialup coverage includes all of the following area codes: 312, 630, 773, 708, 815, and 847. Note that these area codes cover not just Chicago, but a large chunk of the outlying area. Our coverage now extends as far North as the Wisconsin border, as far South as Kankakee and Watseka, and as far West as LaSalle. We are also in the process of adding T-1 and DSL services, so stay tuned for those developments. It is also worth noting that we have recently added an incoming toll-free voice number for those not in the local area. Our new toll-free number is 877-337-4688 (33-SHOUT). If you are not in the local area, feel free to use that number. Otherwise, 217-351-7921 is still our main number.

Server Upgrades

We are in the process of two major server upgrades to keep up with our growth. The new News Server is behind schedule, but we are approaching the final testing phases. This new server will be much better equipped to handle the more than 11-14 GB of new news-articles we receive each day! We are also in the process of building a new server to accommodate the growth in E-mail. Duracef will continue to be our primary web- and shell-server, and the yet-to-be-named mail-server will handle all inbound and outbound E-mail. Most customers will not have to change any of their software settings if they are using the original mail-server defaults (mailhost.shout.net for SMTP connections, pop.shout.net for POP3 connections, and imap.shout.net for IMAP connections.) We will be making announcements as to when the transition will occur so that all of our customers stay informed about the switchover.

Thanks again for choosing Shouting Ground Technologies as your Internet Service Provider!



Who Put the "Win" in "WinModem"?

As the price of the PC declined in the past three years, manufacturers looked for ways to maintain their profits without losing their competitive edge. Features like display adapters and sound boards were integrated into the motherboard, or even combined with other unrelated functions, like network adapters and disk controllers. The modem became a standard feature rather than an add-on for the technically sophisticated. The competition for the cheapest

modem closed with the introduction of the “WinModem”. The ubiquitous WinModem is the most common modem bundled with new computers.

What is a modem?

A modem decodes audio tones over the phone line and converts them to a digital data stream. It takes a digital data stream and converts it to tones that it can send over a phone line. The name comes from its two functions, modulator-demodulator.

What makes some modem better than others?

Early modems worked at very slow speeds (45.45 baud – 110 baud) and were fairly simple. They used four audio tones, two for transmit (to reflect binary one and zero) and two for receive. The tones were picked so that they fell neatly into the bandwidth the phone line was capable of, and so that they didn’t produce harmonics that would interfere. The stability of the modem tones and decoder varied according to design under a range of temperature, voltage, and especially phone line conditions. A well-crafted modem with high quality filters would work better, especially on a noisy phone line, than a cheaper modem. With the increase in modem speeds, the complexity of the signalling increased as well, making the modem circuitry that much more critical.

What have you got against the WinModem?

A typical modem has an analog section that interfaces with the phone line, a digital output to interface to the computer, and some electronics, usually including a microprocessor, to tie all the functions together. The WinModem eliminates the electronics that ties everything together, and relies on your computer to take over those functions. This can be very effective, but it rarely works without a lot of adjustments.

- Your computer’s CPU runs some of the modem functions, so your computer has to be sufficiently fast (A Pentium-133 MHz or faster is recommended).
- The extra task will slow down your computer somewhat.
- A WinModem requires special software drivers. You should use the most up to date drivers available, which are rarely included with the WinModem.
- The special drivers are operating system dependent. Your WinModem that works under Windows 95 might not work under Windows 2000. WinModem

drivers are not available for most operating systems other than Microsoft Windows.

- WinModems are only made as internal modems. An external modem is far more flexible, and usually easier to troubleshoot when there are problems. WinModems need to be power-cycled to reset, which means powering down the whole computer to reset the modem.

Under ideal conditions, WinModems can work fairly well. Since every manufacturer makes their WinModems and drivers a little differently, there is no single way to improve the reliability or performance. However, here are some web sites that will help:

<http://808hi.com/56k>

<http://www.56k.com>

<http://www.west.com/~jay/modem>

Up to date drivers are available for many products at:

<http://www.driverguide.com>



Understanding Your Billing

As a customer of Shouting Ground Technologies, every month you will receive an INVOICE from us detailing your services for that particular month. The word INVOICE will be visible in the upper right hand corner. The Invoice number will be in a box right below that. The due date will be in a box half-way down the page, and the total for that month’s services will be listed in the bottom right hand corner.

If you have over-paid us (intentionally or otherwise) or have neglected to pay us, you will also receive a STATEMENT from us, as well as an Invoice. The STATEMENT (noted in bold in the upper right hand corner) is a listing of your account’s recent activity (usually six months’ worth). The STATEMENT will show all Invoices and payments for that period. At the bottom right hand corner will be the total you actually owe. If the number is negative, that means you have overpaid and have credit with us. The STATEMENT is on light blue paper. When in doubt, pay the amount on the STATEMENT.

If you ever have any questions about your INVOICE or STATEMENT, feel free to call us at 217-351-7921 and ask for Jeff or e-mail <billing@shout.net>.

