



The Gigaphone

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The Shouting Ground Newsletter

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From the Cubicle of the President up north ...

It didn't exactly make mainstream news, but it definitely raised eyebrows for everyone in the Internet community.

On October 5th, 2005, Level 3 Communications, a Tier 1 ISP, shut off a direct link to one of its peers, Cogent Communications. This left many customers of both companies unable to reach certain websites or E-mail people who used the other company's network. Although, peering was restored a few days later, it was a sobering reminder that the Internet is ostensibly a non-deterministic collection of private companies all willing to talk amongst themselves for our benefit. There is no governmental enforcement of these peering arrangements. You can get a feel for the fun little party here:

<http://www.internetpulse.net>

What you see is a grid showing average latency (ms) between any two Tier 1 ISPs. Back when Cogent and Level3 were having their little tiff, one would see a BIG RED BOX illustrating the contempt each side had for the other. You get the idea. Shouting Ground multi-homes with both SBC and Level 3, which is good for us because if and when squabbles like this occur, customers have multiple paths into our networks.

Tier 1 ISPs make these peering arrangements primarily for their customers' benefit. They don't make money off of them; it's just a way of giving their customers faster transit to other networks. However, there are typically contractual agreements to ensure that both peers are sharing approximately the same amount of traffic. Level 3's beef with Cogent was that the latter was transiting much more traffic across the former's. After apparently giving Cogent warning, Level 3 simply shut down the peering point interface.

Everything is back to normal, but it's no surprise that consumer advocates have called for protections against this type of outage. Although I am pleased with the current state of deregulation, rest assured there will continue to be heated discussion on the subject. In closing, I find it ironic that the Internet was designed to withstand nuclear wars and natural disasters, but not billing disputes.

*Bryan Holloway,
President*



Hear My Train A Comin'

Lucky son of a gun. You're taking a vacation to some super-fun exotic place and leaving all the hustle-bustle of your normal life on hold until you regain your inner peace and sanity. Whether you are travelling to Steamboat, Colorado or Ocho Rios, Jamaica - you can rest assured that the folks you leave behind will know all about it with an automated reply message set up on your Shouting Ground provided E-mail address. It's the perfect way to inform your friends and spammers alike that you are climbing a big rock wall or sitting on a beach drinking a frosty beverage with a paper umbrella. You are also sure to invoke extreme jealousy in all the overworked (yet extremely vigilant) staffers here at Shouting Ground Technologies.

An automated E-mail responder is set up by your ever so patient and friendly technicians here at our cluttered downtown Champaign office. Just send a message to admin@shout.net with the dates you would like the responder to begin and end. Also include a subject line and the text of the message you would like to be sent to anyone who sends you E-mail during the responder's

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You Can't Take it With You - Or Maybe You Can

Staying connected to the Internet is something many of us take for granted. Wi-fi hotspots are available in coffee shops everywhere and most hotels offer some kind of access, most frequently Wi-fi.

But when you're away from your base of operation, and need a connection to the Internet, there are a couple of options. Of course you could use dialup, but there might not be a phone line available, or it might not pass modem connections very well.

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Hear My Train... (continued)

effective period. The subject should be short and simple like, "Away from my E-mail" or, "I'm having fun and you are stuck at work - nah-ne-nah-ne-boo-boo." This will ensure a professional way to let people know you are away and when you'll be back.

"But wait!" you say, "I'm a nerd and want to set up the responder message myself." That's fine if you have a full shell account and can SSH into *duracef.shout.net*. To enable a responder you'll need to create a couple files in your home directory, *.vacation.msg* and *.forward*. The *.vacation.msg* file should begin with the E-mail's subject line header, for example "Subject: Away from my E-mail." The message body is then filled out under the subject header, but be sure to place a carriage return between the subject and the body for good formatting. The *.forward* file should consist of a single line like this:

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username@shout.net, "| /usr/bin/vacation username"
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Once this has been set up, send yourself a message and you should quickly receive a response from yourself with the text you keyed in for the body in the *.vacation.msg* file. Please note that the responder will only send one reply the first time anyone sends an E-mail to your address. After that it will stop making automated replies so the original sender doesn't get spammed with a response for every message they send while you are away, a feature they are sure to appreciate. Upon your return, simply rename the *.forward* file to *.noforward* (or anything other than *.forward*) and the vacation message will cease to send. Also delete the *.vacation.db* file that is created in your home directory so that the responder forgets who it sent messages to on your last getaway.

So what are you waiting for? Get those bags packed and hit the road. And don't forget to send me a postcard to hang up on my cubby wall. That way we can steal the glory and pretend we went on that wild excursion!

*Bill Cline,
Technical Support Associate*



You Can't Take it With You... (continued)

For the past few years, many cellphones could be connected to your computer to use like a modem. More recently, wireless phone providers have supplied products that give you a much faster connection than was previously possible.

If switching your laptop back and forth from one kind of network to another doesn't appeal, consider one of the new Cellular Routers available from companies like Kyocera and Junxion. For around \$500 and up, plus the cost of the PC card and monthly service from the phone provider, you can create an instant Wi-Fi Hot Spot where ever you have wireless phone service. You can even use it while mobile! These routers make your network connectivity transparent while you're on the road and allow your cellular connection to be shared by multiple users. The initial cost may

seem steep, but you have to ability to literally drop a Wi-Fi Hot Spot virtually anywhere in just a minute. That's taking it with you!

If you're interested in learning more about Cellular Routers or cell phone Internet access, please contact us.

*Mike Berger,
Director of Engineering*



Technically Snacking

We at Shouting Ground are a dedicated bunch – keeping our nose to the grindstone from pre-dawn until the wee hours of the morning, day in, day out. All this dedication requires quality nutrition, and as a result snacks are usually in abundance at the office. We have among us the cornnut nuts, a dedicated chocoholic of the first order, and of course those that thrive on the big 'O's – Cheetos, Fritos, & Doritos. But when times call for serious snacking, we bring in the big guns. Three of Shouting Ground's favorite big gun snacky treats are toasted bagels with cream cheese, Jim's Hot Dates and Pickle Snacks. We thought we would share the recipes for the Hot Dates and Pickle Snacks with you. (We're sure you can figure out the toasted bagels with cream cheese yourself.) They are, of course, totally healthy – chock full of vitamins and minerals with no fat, no sugar, no carbs, and no calories. (Right. And if you believe that...) But we really like them anyway and hope you do too.

Jim's Hot Dates

- ◆ Whole pitted dates
- ◆ Whole almonds, dry roasted
- ◆ Bacon, cut into halves

Shove one almond inside one date. (You know, where the pit used to be.) Wrap the stuffed date in one of the half slices of bacon. Secure with a wooden toothpick. Repeat until you run out of something or have enough. Arrange these in a baking dish or jelly roll pan and bake in a pre-heated 375 degree oven for 20 minutes or until the bacon just starts to turn brown. (If you wait until the bacon is crispy, the dates will break your teeth.) Remove from baking dish and let drain. Serve warm.

Pickle Snacks

- ◆ Kosher Dill pickle spears (the brand that is found in the refrigerated section is our favorite to use for this.)
- ◆ Cream cheese (we prefer regular softened, but whipped will work)
- ◆ Corned beef, sliced thin, (pieces should be *approximately* 2 inches x 6 inches. If you want to make the deli personnel think you're nuts, request they measure and square it off for you.)

Cut the pickle spears lengthwise in half, then cut those halves into half crosswise, so that you have four pieces from each spear. Spread about 2 teaspoons of the softened cream cheese evenly on a piece of the corned beef, being careful not to tear it. Place a piece of the pickle on a short edge of the meat and roll up. Secure with a toothpick. Repeat until you run out of something or have enough. Chill for at least an hour to let the flavors mingle. Serving chilled is best.