Protecting Your Reputation in Cyberspace: Responsible Posting

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This series of articles looks at how we can use e-mail and other electronic communications responsibly and professionally. It is intended to provide useful information for corporate INFOSEC awareness programs.

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We have seen in a previous article that posting advertisements in USENET news groups is a poor idea. Although not all news groups are moderated, there are nonetheless written or unwritten rules about whether advertising is welcome in any given group.

In general, there are some straightforward principles for being a responsible and welcome participant in a news group or other discussion forum:

* Lurk before you leap: learn about the specific style in use in the USENET group you intend to join. Do participants use formal or informal language? Do they seem to value pointers to documents produced by companies and other organizations? Is it appropriate to refer to your own products in this particular forum?

* Remember that on the USENET, everything you write may be archived and available indefinitely. Keep that in mind at all times before posting anything.

* Don’t flame people (as discussed in a previous article).

* Avoid profanity, ethnic/religious slurs, and other offensive language.

* Stick to the forum/section subject area: don’t post materials that are irrelevant to the subject, no matter how interesting you think it ought to be to participants. For example, most people in, say, a Windows 2000 technical discussion group would find it offensive to be told about human-rights violations in, say, Kosovo, no matter how important the topic may be in a wider sense.

* Make messages concise. In most groups, netiquette proscribes quoting an entire message; generally it’s enough to quote just enough of a text to make it clear how your response is germane.

* Respect copyright laws: don’t publish someone’s comments elsewhere without asking for and receiving permission.

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his colleagues at AtomicTangerine would be delighted to deliver to your employees at your site and at your convenience. For information about AtomicTangerine, visit <http://www.atomictangerine.com>.

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