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The Killer App

Paul:

the number of people 65 or older is increasing

This is a subject dear to me because, with the help of my cardiologist, I plan to increase that class by one in just over 16 months time!

I retired early and took up investing as my second (or was that the 3rd career?) twelve years ago. With the current market bust I'm going back to business once again -- or rather, to self employed. I will be developing and operating web sites for customers in Venezuela. My first commercial effort involves two sites:

<http://bahiaedonda.com/> and

<http://puerto-la-cruz.com/>

Depending on how things work out I might wind up running an Internet café at the marina. During the two weeks I spent in Puerto La Cruz I found several people interested in having a web presence: a boat and breakfast business, a marine paint store, an inflatable dinghy dealer and a clown.

From an investing point of view, what is very interesting is the growth of free, open source, software. During the last 20 years I worked with user friendly Macintosh stuff. But after doing my numbers, I had to turn to a UNIX server running FreeBSD (UNIX OS), free MySQL database and free php open source server side scripting. Compared to the best Macintosh offer that I found, I'm saving 65% in money while getting to host four domains instead of one, an unlimited number of POP mail boxes instead of 10, an unlimited number of database tables instead of four, unlimited storage and incredibly fast access.

The second interesting thing is that as servers get more powerful and access becomes faster, I need less processing power in my own machine. To develop my web stuff all I really need is a text editor, a browser and an ftp program. Since the manuals are huge (php is 1935 pages) it is much more convenient to have a

digital copy in your machine than a paper one on your book shelf. The 4th piece of important software is the Adobe Acrobat to index those huge manuals to make them searchable.

Over the last few months I have discovered huge amounts of stuff on the web: online tutorials, free software and discussion groups being the most useful ones. All in all, between searching, learning, uploading my web stuff and testing it, I spend the better part of the working day on line. With the flat fee DSL line which is on 24/7 it is economically feasible to do so.

I don't think we need a killer app. I think the killer app is the fact that there is so much useful stuff on the web and that there are so many of us who need to access the stuff. The killer app that we need is more connectivity to the web.

What does all that have to do with being over 65? Beats me! :-))

Actually what I'm discovering as I get back into a productive life style is that the cost structure is changing radically. Some costs have increased while others are disappearing. Medical expenses are up. Commuting costs are down because I work at home. Connectivity costs are down with always on DSL. Software is down with open source freeware. Web hosting is down. Reference material is down (on line instead of books).

If my case is at all typical, the Internet will have huge effects on the way we live and spend. I bought my first 300 BAUD modem 20 years ago and I used it three or four times a year. Now I spend several hours a day connected to the Internet. The killer app is connectivity!

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