

# Automakers on the muscle over rival Web sites



MIKE WENDLAND

**PC MIKE**  
Detroit's automakers are warning their dealers across the country to do nothing to do with independent Web sites that are selling new cars directly to consumers. Ford, General Motors and DaimlerChrysler have sent warning letters to their dealers. The reason: Online brokerage sites like CarDirect.com and CarOrder.com.

The Big Three carmakers are telling their dealers that if they sell vehicles to car brokers who bypass traditional dealerships, they will be in violation of long-standing franchise agreements.

Other online car sites like Autobytel generate leads via the Internet but then refer buyers directly to dealerships.

The heavy-handed warnings

reflect the tight competition in the automobile industry and the growing strength of the Internet as a marketing medium that squeezes out the middleman.

**Broadband is taking its time**

It is taking much longer than anyone expected but, slowly, the world is being wired to broadband. Fast e-mail or DSL service, soon to be augmented by broadband satellite and wireless Internet, will be used by 35 million people in the U.S. by 2005.

Prices will plummet, too, thanks to competition. All this according to a new report by Forward Services. But keep that in perspective.

With 135 million estimated Internet users in the United States, the vast majority, for some time to come, still will be stuck with dial-up modem access. With 50 percent of the households in most urban areas now wired to the Internet, expect a growing clamor for

broadband to be rolled out a lot faster than it is.

**Wary over wireless**

The Information Technology community is warily eyeing all the hype over wireless computer networks because of warnings about overloaded bandwidth.

Wireless networks - called LANs for Local Area Networks - use radio signals instead of cables to electronically hook up computers in office buildings. But so many people are embracing wireless LANs that available frequencies in many urbanized areas around the country are starting to get clogged.

One IT director for a Detroit-based Fortune 100-sized company told me his company just cancelled a multimillion contract for wireless because new studies showed the equipment would be obsolete in four years.

Already, the FCC is getting complaints about wireless LAN interference in some cities ... which could be even more disruptive than a hack attack

**Microsoft virus patch has holes**

Although Microsoft has admitted its Outlook e-mail program is vulnerable to computer virus attacks, the security patch the company has hurriedly made available for free download is being criticized as too little, too late. The patch causes synchronization problems with users of the Palm handheld organizer, which is as common as a wireless phone for many Detroit area road warriors. Same difficulties with the Pocket PC.

And it is an all-or-nothing solution, meaning it cannot be uninstalled without wiping clean the entire Microsoft Office suite and starting from scratch. Several IT execs and Net techs have e-mailed me to say they would rather take their chance with a virus than install the patch. They plan to wait for a completely new version of Outlook expected later this year or to switch to

another e-mail program not as susceptible to viruses

**A new community gathers online**

Detroit's Heidi VanArmen was disabled at the age of 16 when she was shot in the neck. But through an upbeat "I can" philosophy that has seen her mentor and inspire other disabled people to live powerfully impactful lives, VanArmen is turning to the Internet with a new Web site aimed at the one major group that has yet to find a central community online to call home.

Her new Web site called - you guessed it - Icanonline.net is a place where people affected by disabilities can take advantage of the community - building power of the Internet. A one-stop resource for information, guidance, conversation and companionship, ICan Online brings together content, community and resources in one easy-to-navigate place. The Web site is exactly what the Internet is all

**PC Mike Seminar**

My PC Mile "Internet 101 Seminar" is next weekend, Saturday, June 3, from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Sponsored by TalkRadio 1270, WXYT, the free seminar will teach you what you need to know to use the Internet successfully. It will be at The Community House, 380 S. Bates, in Birmingham. The seminar is totally free, but you need to get a reservation. Call (248) 456-7343.

**Mike Wendland reports about computers and the Internet for NBC television stations coast-to-coast. His "Net News Daily" Internet reports are on WWJ, NewsRadio 950 Monday-Friday at 6:26 p.m. His "PC Talk" call-in radio show is heard every weekend on TalkRadio 1270, WXYT. You can reach Mike through his Web site at www.pcmike.com**

## BUSINESS CALENDAR

Items from the Observersland area for the Business Calendar can be sent to Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 attention: Renee Skoglund. Call (734) 953-2128.

### TUES, MAY 30

**BUSINESS SEMINAR**  
The Ann Arbor IT Zone will present "Cultural Shock: Strategic Organizational Change," a human resource management program with Dr. Frank Petroski of General Systems Consulting 5 p.m. at the IT Zone Launch Pad, 80 E. Liberty in downtown Ann Arbor. Members, free; public, \$25; students, \$5. Call (734) 623-8286.

### WED, MAY 31

**BUSINESS NETWORK INTERNATIONAL**  
Laurel Park Chapter meets 7-8:30 a.m. at Archie's Restaurant, 30471 Plymouth Road, Livonia. Call the BNI regional office at (810) 323-3800.

### FRI, JUNE 2

**BUSINESS NETWORK INTERNATIONAL**  
Livonia Chapter meets 7-8:30 a.m. at the Residence Inn by Marriott, Fox Drive and Six Mile between I-275 and Haggerty. Call the BNI regional office at (810) 323-3800.

### TUES, JUNE 13

**CAREER WOMEN**  
The West Suburban Chapter of National Association of Career Women will meet 11:45 a.m. at Ernesto's Restaurant, 41661 Plymouth Road, Plymouth. Cost: \$18 for members and \$22 for non-members. For more information, call Tracey Huff (248) 347-3365.

**TUES, JUNE 13**  
**WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS**  
The National Association of Women Business Owners will hold their monthly breakfast meeting 8-9 a.m. Tuesday at Cleary College, 3601 Plymouth Road, Ann Arbor in the Student Lounge. The speaker is Leslie Rzeznik of Whimp Web Designs. No cost. Call (734) 424-9577.

### WED, JUNE 14

**WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS**  
The National Association of Women Business Owners will meet 7:45-9 a.m. at Border's, 34300 Woodward, Birmingham or networking and presentations by member businesses. No cost. Refreshments available for purchase. Call (248) 352-7368.

### THUR, JUNE 15

**BUSINESS WORKSHOP**  
The Service Corps of Retired Executives will offer a business plan workshop 8:45 a.m. to noon at the One Stop Capital Shop, 2051 Rosa Parks Blvd., Detroit. Call (313) 226-7947 weekdays.

## Schoolcraft offers international trade certificate program

Schoolcraft College will offer an international trade certificate program beginning June 6 to help area businesses become more competitive in the international market.

The program, through Schoolcraft's Business Development Center, provides real-world training and applications in courses and seminars taught by global trade experts. Sessions focus on developing entrepreneurs and translating international business strategy

into long-term goals.

Michigan's annual overseas exports have increased steadily and recently crossed the \$30 billion mark. According to statistics, nearly 97 percent of U.S. firms that export are small businesses, accounting for nearly 31 percent of total U.S. export sales.

To learn about the business potential for exporting, attend the following sessions:

- June 6 and 8, International Marketing
- June 13 and 15, International Finance
- June 20 and 22, International Logistics
- June 27, Cross Cultural Communications
- July 6, Foreign Government Sales
- July 11, Trade Agreements/Legal Aspects of Foreign Trade

All sessions are offered from 9 a.m. until noon. The program includes country-specific seminars for Canada/Mexico on June 29 and Poland on July 13.

Students may earn a certificate of achievement by attending all of the core seminars plus one of the country-specific electives. Registration for all core sessions plus one country-specific session is \$500. Registration for individual sessions is \$90.

For more information, call Vikram Mathur at (734) 462-4448, ext. 5572. Schoolcraft College is on Haggerty between Six and Seven Mile roads, just west of I-275.

## Tax issues seminar focuses on nonprofits

In an especially tight southeast Michigan labor market, area nonprofit organizations have to work harder than ever to attract and retain high-quality professional staff.

The Accounting Aid Society and Deloitte and Touche will present a seminar, "Critical Tax Issues and Becoming a Nonprofit Employer of Choice," 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 13, at Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road in Livonia.

Deloitte's professional staff will give presentations on the following topics: "2000 Tax Law," "IRS and Current State of Michigan Developments," "Competing for Employees," "Becoming an Employer of Choice," "Creative Tax Planning for Employment" and "Reporting and Controlling Compensation."

Lester Thompson, senior manager of Deloitte and Touche, will lead Deloitte's nonprofit professional team in reviewing key issues on nonprofit tax matters and employment.

"We look at issues that employers must consider in hiring

employees as well as ways to enhance the value of the compensation paid to employees in the nonprofit sector," he said. "We'll pay special attention to fringe benefit programs, payroll compliance considerations, deferred compensation and other tactics to

strengthen the nonprofit work force."

The seminar's cost, which includes a Continental breakfast, is \$35 for Accounting Aid Society members and \$45 for non-members. Preregistration is required. Call (313) 647-9620, Ext. 205.

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