John McLaughlin: The Power of the Electronic Press - Unleashed

> "Right now the Internet is like a printing press with paper and ink next to it. Everybody's standing around saying what a great invention it is. OK, fair enough, but it's time we actually started printing."
>
> **John McLaughlin: Publisher of SunFlash**

Welcome to the first issue of Net Ventures, the journal about how people use the Internet to solve problems and create opportunities for themselves, their customers, and the organizations they work for.

Trying to learn about the Internet from reading books and attending conferences alone is bound to be a frustrating task. There are certain things you simply can't learn from books. Ask 100 Internet pros how they got their knowledge of the 'Net and invariably you'll get the same answer: someone personally showed them the ropes and they took it from there.

Without stepping on any regional toes, I think it's fair to say the biggest proportion of the world's Internet experts live right here in Northern California. And, if you wait long enough, you can count on the rest of them passing through here at one point or another.

It occurred to me one evening, while having dinner with an Internet friend, that, as an Internet-interested San Franciscan, I regularly enjoy what people in other parts of the world can only dream about: easy access to an incredible superabundance of Internet talent.

Then I played "What if?" What if instead of limiting my conversations to me and whoever else was in earshot, I taped them? And what if I found somebody to edit them so they made sense? Internet people are amongst the most free-handed people I know with their time and knowledge. Why not multiply the benefits of their generosity so that thousands of people can make progress together?

Let me reveal my prejudices up front. While I am excited about what the Internet can do, I am much more interested in what people do with it. I was

INTERVIEW

J: John McLaughlin   **K: Ken McCarthy**

K: We're here with John McLaughlin of Sun Microsystems. You work in the Florida office?

J: Right. I'm a Systems Engineer, and I also publish electronic newsletters.

K: And the name of the newsletter you publish is...?

J: ... it's called SunFlash, and I've been producing it for seventy-one months. See, it's seventy one months because they're numbered by volume. So, I'm just coming up on our sixth year.

K: What's your subscription base? How many people read your publication?

J: It's about 140 or 150,000. It's really broad.

K: How do you manage a subscription base that is so large?

J: The top level that I post has about 5,000 entries, of which at least 1,000 are aliases to other locations, either other Sun offices or our larger customer sites which have their own redistribution offices.

K: In other words, you send the 5,000 and at least 1,000 of those people, in turn, send it to ten, 100 or 1,000?

J: Exactly. I know of two or three locations that I've talked to over the years that have in the order of 1,000 individual subscribers.

K: Wow.

J: The reach is actually a little bit greater than that. I know of a number of sites, including some of my own local customers, that have about 1,000 workstations with only about 20 people subscribing and those 20 people are kind of the information technology gatekeepers. They forward the proper messages to the proper people. If it's related to networking they forward it to the networking group. That way the networking group doesn't have to monitor the 100