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Web sites take mystery out of high-tech bafflegab



DIGITAL SURVIVOR

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I received a media release recently that tells of a new, revolutionary, vertically integrated B2B2C portal that will use WAP technology to provide an effective carrier-grade, dimension-arrayed digital packet network to link together ASP providers with multichannel market partners.

The initiative will feature tight end-to-end digital signature encryption involving leading-edge embedded rich-media formats with XML content that allows for enabling of OLTP environments with instant user personalization in a multithreaded environment.

And hey, it's going to be scalable! Thank heavens for that — I was worried there for a moment.

Count me in — I want to be part of whatever you're doing. But do you think I understand a word of it?

Over the years, I've become convinced that most of the public relations professionals and computer professionals who produce media releases and documentation take some type of special drug that allows them to write their prose in obscure terms that are incomprehensible to the rest of the human race.

It's all part of the mystery of e-business and technology: a language so specialized that only high priests and priestesses with insight into the nature of the revolution can possibly decipher what it all means.

Of course, the computer industry has long been guilty of the invention of new words, acronyms and phrases. Many of us struggle to figure it out. Yet the situation has only become worse with the emergence of e-commerce.

Fortunately, there are lots of on-line sources that you can use to crack the code. You can find a "technical dictionary" at this newspaper's GlobeTechnology site, (**www.globetechnology.com/site/tech_encyclopedia.html**).

Type in the acronym, word or phrase that you want to understand and you'll get a translation. Or, you may access the Webopedia dictionary (**www.pcwebopaedia.com**), the Internet Dictionary (**www.ohno.com/define.html**) or the Computer User High Tech Dictionary (**www.computeruser.com/resources/dictionary/dictionary.html**).

But even comprehensive dictionaries such as these can barely keep up with the rapid pace of linguistic invention in the dot-com world. To help cope with that — and to have a bit of fun — you should visit Jargon Scout.

It's found at the Web site of Tasty Bits from the Technology Front (**www.tbtf.com/jargon-scout.html**). There, you can read about all the cool new terms being created in the on-line economy.

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You can also access a long list of short items called Lingowatch through the GlobeTechnology site.

Finally, you also should know about "smileys," the symbols that are used in the various e-mail messages that you receive. For example, :-) is a basic smiley, suggesting a joke or sarcastic remark. To deal with all that, invest some time in the Smiley Dictionary (**www.eff.org/papers/eegtti/eeg_286.html**).

So there — now you should be fully prepared for anything that the digital revolution may throw at you.

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