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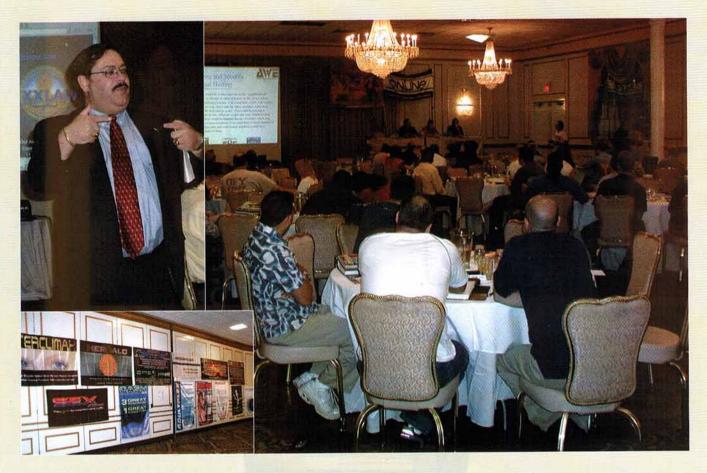On Friday, Sept. 6, I found myself speeding down the turnpike on my way to the Philadelphia installment of the Adult Webmaster Events (*www.adult-webmaster-events.com*). The event promised *"WE PROVIDE YOU WITH EVERYTHING EXCEPT TRANSPORTATION AND LODGING!"* I have to admit, when I read that, I went with a preconceived notion that it was going to be a sales seminar about how to buy the sponsors' goods and services. As the saying goes, "there is no such thing as a free lunch." Well, as I will tell you, I couldn't have been more wrong.

I was greeted at the Hilton with a smile, a coupon for a free breakfast, and a room key, just about the time the Friday evening mixer was getting underway. I dropped my bags in my room and headed for the Polo Lounge, where I found 50 or so people milling around, drinks in hand, talking and laughing. As I mingled with the crowd, I found veterans and newbies in the industry. Most people were there to see what they could learn, or to network. After several hours of lively conversation, small groups started disappearing, announcing trips to various bars and clubs in the area. After a little evening adventure, we got prepared for the next day's conference.

Saturday morning began with a trip to the dining room for the free breakfast. I expected a glass of orange juice and a Danish. Instead, I was treated to a full buffet, and a chef that cooked omelets and waffles to order.

We were greeted at the door to the conference with a 235-page, three-ring binder packed with information and contact lists. I was surprised to see not only ads for the various sponsors, but pages and pages of helpful instruction on Website design, graphic format and placement, and tips on running a business and configuring your computer for optimal performance in Website design and implementation. I think a newbie could design and publish a profitable Website completely from the free manual. I would estimate the value of this material to be $500 alone.
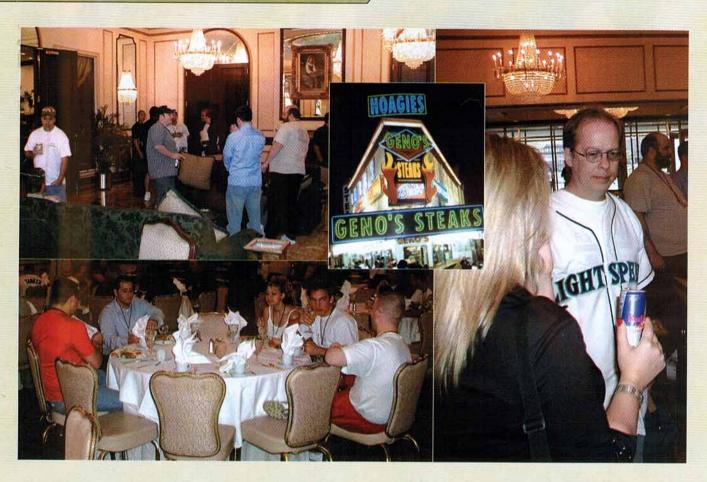
We were greeted by the emcee, Dokk, from WebmasterLive.com. Throughout the event, he guided the proceedings, and helped interpret the questions and answers to keep the seminar running smoothly. He was also a very funny guy, and kept everyone in the best of spirits. Everyone went around the room and introduced him- or herself. While many knew each other, the vast majority of people, about 100-125, were new Webmasters or people wanting to set up a Website.

First up was hosting and security. The speakers

Run

Good Times, Good Food, and Good Advice at the Philadelphia Adult Webmaster Event

by Eric J. White

were Jim Keilson of LightningFree.com, Mike Gall from Online Media Productions (*www.ompinc.com*), and Mike Bertrand from CECash.com. Keilson began by explaining how Lightning Free could provide free hosting, free content, and traffic in as little as two days for the Webmaster just starting out. The value of Thumbnail Gallery Post sites (TGPs) was covered, and how they can be used to direct traffic to your pay site. It was noted that TheHun.com was probably the largest and best known TGP Website. If you could get placement there, you would have an instant flow of traffic. Gall and Bertrand covered areas of security, the dangers of password stealing, and using special references to get good placement on search engines. Another concern was cautioning Webmasters to watch out for people stealing their bandwidth, and ways to prevent it.
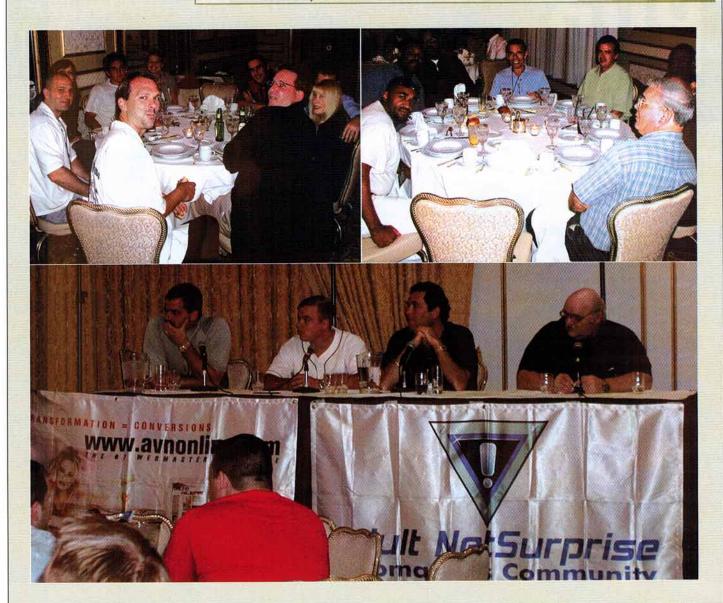
The second panel featured content companies, and where and what to get for your site. It was hosted by Steve Jones of Lightspeed Cash.com, and "Virtumike" from Virtucon.net. They explained how a content session was shot, what to look for in your subjects, and how to run a smooth shoot. They also covered the various rates they pay subjects. While some studios may charge as little as $100 for a session with a model, they find that paying a premium amount, as much as $1,000 for a full day, can yield better results. If you want to shoot your own content and sell it, one technique to market it is to go to the newsgroups and talk it up. This is how many content companies get their start. Various equipment was also discussed. They also explained the different methods for acquiring content for your sites. There is "bought" content, which can be expensive but gives you exclusives

and rights to use the content as you see fit; "custom" content is very expensive, and is usually for niche or specialty sites; and "leased" content, which can yield good results at a reasonable price. By leasing content, you can maximize your library, which is usually a good way to get a Website started on a budget. "Free" content is usually used on TGP sites to lead or "funnel" clients to your pay site.

The third panel for the day included the speakers from the second panel, and added PythonPays.com's Danny Lee, and Mike Bertrand from Cybererotica.com. This panel was entitled "Sponsorships/Sales," and was a crash course in what to pay for – and not pay for – to get traffic to your sites. First, the formula most successful sites use in valuing traffic was explained. We were told that the average value of a sign-up (a person

who buys a membership on your site) was $35-36 dollars. The average time for retaining a member was about three months. The quality of traffic is also important, especially if you are paying for exit traffic or links. It's hard to judge the value of the traffic, which can be as low as one sign-up in 5-6 days after 10,000 clicks. It's very important to watch where your paying traffic is coming from, and where you're getting little value for your effort. Reviewing the server logs regularly is crucial in determining this.

After an excellent lunch in the Hilton dining room, we headed back to the seminar hall for the star event of the day. Attorney J.D. Obenberger (*www.xxxlaw.net*) was slated to lecture us on the DOs and DON'Ts of the trade. Obenberger quickly launched into what he called the "Seven Circles of Content Hell": child pornography, teen model

sites, bestiality, escort sites, public exhibition, bondage or S/M, and incest (he has a clever song system to remember these). Obenberger said these seven subjects – some, though not all, of which are illegal – were "danger areas," to be avoided if possible. He covered the requirements for safe practice under the 2257 age verification statute, as well as the need to keep the records for at least five years. One point Obenberger hammered on was the proper use of the terms "partnership" and "affiliate." As an attorney, he said, you never use "partnership" in the adult business. Doing so can cause you to be liable both civilly and criminally for every action your "partner" takes. He made clear that the only term to use was "affiliate." Most relationships, he explained, *are* affiliate relationships, and should never be referred to as a "partnership."

Immediately after, we began a seminar on alternate revenue streams and credit card processing. This was a lively discussion of additional ways to generate revenues for Webmasters. Among the obvious discussions of affiliate programs, there was talk about non-competing revenue streams from adult toy stores and products like the Penis Pill (*www.penispill.com*) and the Virtual Sex Machine (*www.virtualsexmachine.com*).

One very interesting and confusing subject for American Webmasters was a discussion of dialers as payment for services. While not as popular in the U.S. as they are in Europe, Dave Knell from Coulomb (*www.coulomb.co.uk*) gave a very thorough explanation of the advantages of dialers. In Europe, people are very cautious about using credit cards, but they have little resistance to charging items to their telephones. There is a complete infra-

structure for this service, and it's common in many industries. Anyone interested in making their Website "Europe ready" would do well to look carefully into dialers.

The final seminar for the day was about traffic. This seminar covered the differences between "uniques," "impressions," and "raw clicks." It was explained how different programs regard each item and the values for each. Knowing how traffic is calculated gives the Webmaster an idea of its value, and a basis for making a decision about whether s/he may want to buy it. Also covered in some detail were ways to generate traffic for your site using things like TGPs, traffic trades, link lists, search engines, pay-per-click programs, and pic posts.

The day wrapped up a little behind schedule, but the evening festivities were just beginning. After a short break to freshen up, we were led into

the Hilton's banquet room for dinner. Here we were given a choice of fish, chicken, or prime rib complete with all the trimmings. Cooked to each person's preference, this was truly a meal to remember. After a leisurely dinner and conversation, we boarded tour buses and motored to Dave & Buster's Game Room. Much to our surprise, we were taken to the head of the line. On entry, we were all given unlimited play cards and drink coupons. For the next few hours, we were a bunch of big kids. There was constantly someone circulating among the attendees, making sure our play cards had credits and our drinks were full.

After this, I imagined the evening was winding down, but was again surprised. Upon boarding the buses, we were whisked across town to the Famous Geno's Steaks, where we were each presented with a coupon booklet for a free Philly

cheese steak, fries, and a beverage of our choice. This is known as the "midnight steak run."

The next day wrapped up the weekend with a session on building and maintaining a pay site, credit card processing, and affiliate programs.

I was quite surprised by this event. There was no pressure, and it was genuinely about learning and sharing experiences and ideas. All came away with a new understanding of the adult Web business, and great memories. It also proved two adages wrong: "There's no such thing as a free lunch," and "Nothing of value is free." I suggest everyone watch Adult-webmaster-events.com for the upcoming seminar in your area. It's well worth the trip. •

Eric J. White is the CEO for Virtual Reality Innovations, Inc. (www.vrinnovations.com).