Business Performance Advantage ALERT

The Business Performance Advantage is dedicated to ensuring your company operates at maximum performance. Sometimes, though, we include information about issues that could affect you personally.

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) has issued an alert *(http://www.occ.treas.gov/ftp/alert/2002-3.doc)* to banks, asking them to warn customers about a new fraud scheme that uses fictitious IRS forms and bank correspondence.

The scam involves a letter *(http://www.occ.treas.gov/ftp/alert/2002-3a.pdf)* outlining procedures to be followed to protect the recipient from unnecessary withholding taxes on his/her bank accounts and other financial dealings. The letter instructs the recipient to fill in the enclosed IRS Form W-9095 (http://www.occ.treas.gov/ftp/alert/2002-3b.pdf) and return it within seven days. According to the letter, anyone who doesn't file the form is subject to 31 percent withholding on interest paid to them. A fax number is provided for the recipient's convenience.

The IRS form is phony and is just another attempt at identity theft. Anyone who has filled in the form should immediately contact the fraud department of each of the three major credit bureaus and report that their identity has been stolen. Telephone numbers and addresses are provided in the alert, as well as additional advice to follow in case your account has been fraudulently accessed or opened. The OCC's advice includes filing a report with the local police department and contacting the IRS's hotline (1-800-829-0433).
Additional information about identity theft is available from the Web sites of the OCC *(http://www.occ.treas.gov/idtheft.pdf) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) (http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/victim.htm).*

Unleashing the Power of Google

In our last issue, we listed Google in our feature, "Web Sites for Busy Business Owners." This issue, we provide you with tips and tricks to get the most out of your search engine experience.

Change the preferences of the search engine. If you prefer to see 100 "hits" on a page at a time, go into Google preferences to ensure you don't have to change the number of pages viewed at a time from the "normal" default of 10 to 100 (www.Google.com/preferences?hl=en). You also can request that when you click on a "result" page, the browser opens up a new window. This can be VERY handy when searching the entire Internet and getting stuck on a Web site that won't let you get back to the Google results page.

Install a toolbar. Want to always have Google at your fingertips? Install the Google toolbar at toolbar.Google.com and your functionality will be greatly enhanced. After you use Google to search, you can use the toolbar buttons to further search the page you are viewing. It also brings to the front of the browser a handy little tool normally buried on the Internet Explorer toolbar. If you find a site with exactly the information you need, but want to know if there are others out there just like this site, click on "Page Info;" you now have the option to view similar pages.

Use the Advanced Search features. This feature is very handy when you think a topic should be on a specific site, but the regular "blanket" search of all the documents on the Web just isn't coming up with the right information (www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en). Place the key words you are searching for in boxes that will instruct the search engine to only find those words — in that particular order — on a site. You can further restrict the search by stating the domain name of the site for Google to search. For example, this comes in handy when trying to find specific troubleshooting information on the Microsoft site. Place your keywords in the "exact phrase" box, and then place "Microsoft.com" in the "only return results from the site or domain" box. This makes Google only look inside Microsoft.com. Of course, you can get a bit of "advanced searching" even without visiting this page if you merely place quotation marks around the phrase you are searching, forcing Google to look for that specific phrase.

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ALERT (cont.)

Use Google's restricted searching tools. Want to search only U.S. Government sites? Try www.google.com/unclesam.Only Linux topics? Try *www.google.com/linux*. Need information for Macintosh? Visit www.google.com/mac. College information? Try *www.google.com/options/universities.html*.

If at first you don't succeed, try another variation.
Google does not allow for wildcards (or *) in its searching, so if you are unsure whether you will get the information you need with the term Airline or Airlines, try it with both versions.

If at first you don't succeed, try it again with fewer words. If you don't receive the "hits" you need, use fewer words to widen the search. You always can search inside the results once you get in the right area.

Try going to the root page of a Web site. If at first your "hit" is a page that is a sub page under a site and it doesn't quite meet your needs, try going back to the site's root page and start clicking. Many times, you will find yourself with a page that is many layers deep under its main site. The information is useful, but not quite what you needed. Before you go back to the Search engine and try again, go up to the browser window and "strip" off the additional address to that sub page and go back to the main root page of the site.

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