

Your Front Door to the Web

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Where is your front door to cyberspace? When you select "home" on your web browser, where does it lead you? Beware! This is a trick question designed to elicit responses that identify you as a member of a particular psychographic group.

Actually, our real-time agent technology ("RAT") has already snatched that information and much more from your browser preferences file. We now know everything about you and your information needs.

Based upon extensive research made possible by RAT into the information needs of the global Internet community, my new firm, Front Doors Incorporated ("FDI") has determined that today's leaders of the Internet information industry are knocking on the wrong door, so to speak.

The perspective of industry leaders as clearly demonstrated by their products is that all Internet users fall neatly into one of two categories: circles and squares. The following is an excerpt from a market analysis report secretly obtained from one of these industry leaders.

-----begin top secret market analysis report-----

Circles

Circles revel in their own individuality. Their home on the web is an elaborate personal home page. Circles spend millions of hours carefully crafting these shrines to their self-hood. Eventually, most circles do tire of cycling through their own images and information, and reluctantly venture out into cyberspace.

Of course, circles always fashion their own, unique front doors to cyberspace, often entitled "My Links" or "My Internet Resources." Circles firmly believe that

they alone are best suited to organize the Internet for themselves and that despite the enormous time requirements, it is well worth the effort. Circles are nice people who are always kind enough to **share** their unique views of the world with others.

Fortunately for the global economy, circles are relatively scarce. A search on "my links" in Alta Vista only turns up 7,000 hits. In a universe of 30 million pages, that's not a lot of circles.

Squares

Squares, on the other hand, are practical people who just want to get the job done in an efficient and effective manner. Squares have little need for personality and they don't like to rock the boat. They never waste time creating personal home pages like those "silly circles."

Squares are utterly and perfectly satisfied with the mass-market front doors to cyberspace such as those designed by Alta Vista and InfoSeek. Since all squares have similar if not identical information needs and searching skills, these one-size-fits-all approaches work just fine.

Evidence suggests that the vast majority of Internet users are squares. For example, Alta Vista is accessed "over 20 million times per weekday." After subjecting this data to the standard web-based extrapolation and analysis algorithm employed by most Internet entrepreneurs and media professionals, we have concluded that this popular mass-market portal to cyberspace satisfies the information needs of more than 100 million squares per week. That's a lot of satisfied squares!

Conclusion

Given this bi-modal audience segmentation, we have decided to aggressively pursue a generic approach to Internet information retrieval that will meet the needs of squares. We have based this decision upon the overwhelming predominance of squares in the market and the opportunity presented by the

homogenous nature of the square population to create one front door to cyberspace that meets all needs, thereby attaining tremendous economies of scale. We feel comfortable with our decision, particularly given the engineering difficulties involved in creating round doors.

-----end top secret market analysis report-----

Front Doors Incorporated

At Front Doors Incorporated, we think that these industry leaders are sillier than circles! Our RAT-based research has uncovered the real truth which we believe will change the very shape of the industry. Our research shows that **all squares possess some element of circularity!**

People who look like squares from a distance actually have round (even wiggly) edges. Their personal and professional interests vary from person to person. They may not have home pages, but they do have browser-based "bookmarks" or "favorites." Each square actually uses multiple information retrieval tools depending upon their particular information needs at any given time. And perhaps most importantly, these folk are sick and tired of squeezing their round information needs through square front doors.

We at FDI have developed a long range strategic plan to capitalize upon the unmet information needs of these circular squares. While I can't fill you in on all the details (well I could, but then RAT would have to kill you) I can provide an overview of our battle plan.

Building the Super-Library

Information has traditionally been fragmented in all sorts of ways; by format, media, product, service, location, and more. On any given day, a researcher may need to visit one or more libraries, review several books and journals, and search multiple online services and databases. The process of tracking down these fugitive information resources is, politely speaking, a real pain.

At FDI, we will begin our pursuit of global domination by building a super-library that provides access to all information through a single interface or front door. We will strike deals with online content providers. We will pursue dynamic information and static information, abstracts and full texts, business reports and comic strips. We won't require or desire legal or physical ownership of the information. That would involve too much work and expense. We simply want to provide access to the widest range of information possible, for free or by fee.

We will not limit our super-library to any one technology. It will integrate all appropriate technologies and leverage each of their strengths. We will seek out ways to intelligently employ profiling services and software agents and collaborative filtering technologies. We will create prototypes and run tests and collect data and analyze results.

Building the super-library may sound like a lot of work, but fortunately FDI has a great deal of help. In fact the entire global Internet community is hard at work building the super-library for us. Content providers are rushing to digitize their information, and technology vendors are subjecting their information retrieval and management products to exhaustive testing.

All we need do is sit back and wait for the super-library to grow around us. And of course, RAT will continue to gather important information about the available content and technologies and the personal lives of the people who own them. After all, knowledge is power and a skeleton in our files is worth ten in the closet.

A Thousand Doors to Cyberspace

At Front Doors Incorporated, we envision a thousand doors to cyberspace. We believe that building the super-library is not the tough part. The real work is in breaking it down again.

And that's exactly why we plan to establish relationships with entrepreneurial digital librarians around the world who will segment the vast amounts of information in our super-library into audience-specific information products.

These "door builders" will add value to information through a meticulous process that

involves the identification, selection, description, evaluation, organization, and presentation of resources of potential interest to that audience. Each audience-specific information product will be the single best source of dynamic and static content available anywhere.

And we at Front Doors Incorporated will, of course, hold the keys to those audience-specific information views. Millions of circular squares will pay for entry and sponsors will pay to reach to reach them. And, no promises yet, but FDI may choose to return a small portion of revenues to the entrepreneurial door builders as payment and incentive.

Help Wanted!

We're looking for a few good door builders. Well actually we'd prefer thousands. Unfortunately, we're not in a position to pay our door builders just yet. But we do promise (maybe) great riches in the not-so-distant future.

If you're not cut out to be a door builder, we're also looking for investors and will always be happy to accept generous donations. If you're interested in contributing, please send messages and money to [Front Doors Incorporated](#).

And if you don't, we'll simply have our RAT siphon money from your online bank account.