

# Are Internet Freebies On The Way Out?

By Robert Taylor

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We have ridden a long wave of Internet freebies. Free ISPs, free e-books, free ezines, free email accounts, free software programs; you name it, and it has been on the Internet as some type of freebie.

We have all taken advantage of these freebies, some of us more than others. Many of these came with a small price tag such as providing your email address or other personal information and/or agreeing to accept a certain amount of advertising in exchange for the freebie.

Some freebies were not worth the time it took to download and install them, and others were literally worth their weight in gold. Some of us went into a freebie frenzy, downloading everything that we found for free. We wound up with so many ebooks and programs we didn't have time to read or use them and they wound up simply taking space on our computers.

More and more Internet businesses are finding it fruitless to give away freebies which do not produce buying customers. Making a profit is the bottom line for any business. Where there is no profit motive it is a hobby and not a business.

Recent events indicate a strong movement toward less freebies. The search engines are a leading indicator. Some of the largest search engines have gone from free to paid listings. There is a growing trend of ezine publishers switching to a paid subscription model from the old free model. Other ezines which provided valuable information and services have simply stopped publishing.

One of the larger free email providers has recently started

charging a minimal fee for its services. Will this spread to the other free email providers?

Look around the Internet and you will find more web sites closing. Many of these sites provided valuable services and products, however they could not continue in business without showing a profit. It is very difficult to compete with free. The current line of thinking seems to be to settle for the lesser free service or product rather than pay for quality products and services.

We have grown to consider these freebies as a right rather than a privilege and therefore resent losing them. This is unjust because we expect to be properly paid for our own efforts. Most of us cannot afford to work for free, yet we expect others to do just that.

Our entire civilization is based on trading what we produce for what others produce. It is a very simple concept. Produce nothing and get nothing in return. Yet many of us expect something for nothing.

Time and effort translate into money, and it takes time and effort to produce and distribute freebies. Without a profitable return on the freebies there is little or no reason to provide them.

What happens to the Internet when the for-profit businesses are forced out of existence by freebies? Will we still have freebies? And if so, what quality of service or product can we expect?

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