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I've been online almost from the beginning of the personal computer age. I was an early adapter to CompuServe, ran forums on AOL and MSN, haunted the bulletin boards from coast to coast in the night hours, and moved to the commercial Internet in the spring of '94.

That doesn't prove much except that I am older than dirt, cantankerous, suspicious and disinclined to get involved in a lot of the technological fads. And because of this, there are some things that I simply won't do over the Internet — 10 of them, to be exact.

Here's the list, and here are my reasons.

- 1. Public Wi-Fi.** How many ways can you say, "stolen data?" Public Wi-Fi services, be they at a coffee shop, a hotel lobby or an airport, are simply not secure enough to trust with a business computer. The jury's still out on the subject of Wi-MAX, the next evolution of wireless Internet.
- 2. Instant Messaging.** Most corporate IT departments ban the use of instant messaging over the Internet for the same reason. In recent months, detailed plans of the presidential helicopter Marine One were stolen from a company through a compromised IM client on an employee's laptop.
- 3. Twitter.** This new, hip, text-based mini-blogging service is all the rage, but it does not have a business model. That is, it is living off fast-burning venture capital. I don't ever participate in a service if I don't know how they make their money, because all too often the answer is that they make money by selling my information to people who should not have it.

**4. Plaxo, Linked-In, and all that.** There are two problems here, one of

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'Nuff said.

**6. Social networks.** Hard as it may seem, I have managed to live into 2009 without having a personal page on Facebook, MySpace or any of the other wildly popular ego services. It's not just that they are struggling financially (though that in and of itself should be a red flag), it's that I am concerned about who sees my personal information and what they do with it.

**7. America Online.** This venerable online service sank from the weight of its own hype in the late Nineties, and has struggled since. Almost back on its own again, it is no place for professionals to hang their hat. Having a business email address at "aol.com" is the online equivalent of having "loser" tattooed on your forehead.

**8. Forwarded email.** Any time you see an email that encourages you to "send this to everyone you know," do the world a favor and simply delete it. These are generally years-old virus warnings you no longer need, or viruses themselves. And just for the record, Microsoft does not issue virus alerts, though they do have an anti-virus service.

**9. Electronic Cards.** If you think enough of me to send a greeting card, why not just send a real one? The electronic ones seem to me to be mostly cheesy, and all too often are a virus or phishing site hoping someone will be dumb enough to click on the link. I don't bother opening any of them.

**10. Google anything.** Google is unabashed in its business model. They glean every scrap of information they can about you, then slice and dice it so their advertising department can send you an ever more targeted barrage of ads. They track you online. They lay claim to the contents of the email in

Google Mail accounts. They track your search queries. They track too

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laptop for good Internet connectivity on the road.

But privacy and security are critical issues for any accounting professional, and there are some things that you simply cannot do with a business computer. Or any computer on the same network as your business computer. Ever.

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