

BUSINESS

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DOLLAR EXCHANGE RATES

JAPANESE YEN 112.78 BRITISH POUND \$1.9922 CANADIAN DOLLAR .09814
EURO \$1.4714 SWISS FRANC 1.1263 MEXICAN PESO 10.8976

Life support to end Feb. 1 on Netscape Web browser

By ANICK JESDANUN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Netscape Navigator, the world's first commercial Web browser and the launch pad of the Internet boom, will be pulled off life support Feb. 1 after a 13-year run.

Its current caretakers, Time Warner Inc.'s AOL, decided to kill further development and technical support to focus on growing the company as an advertising business. Netscape's usage dwindled

with Microsoft Corp.'s entry into the browser business, and Netscape all but faded away following the birth of its open-source cousin, Firefox.

"While internal groups within AOL have invested a great deal of time and energy in attempting to revive Netscape Navigator, these efforts have not been successful in gaining market share from Microsoft's Internet Explorer," Netscape Director Tom Drapeau wrote in a blog entry Friday.

In recent years, Netscape

has been little more than a repackaged version of the more popular Firefox, which commands about 10 percent of the Web browser market, with almost all of the rest going to Internet Explorer.

People will still be able to download and use the Netscape browser indefinitely, but AOL will stop releasing security and other updates on Feb. 1. Drapeau recommended that the small pool of Netscape users download Firefox instead.

A separate Netscape Web

portal, which has had several incarnations in recent years, will continue to operate.

The World Wide Web was but a few years old when in April 1993 a team at the University of Illinois' National Center for Supercomputing Applications released Mosaic, the first Web browser to integrate images and sound with words. Before Mosaic, access to the Internet and the Web was largely limited to text, with any graphics displayed in separate windows.

Marc Andreessen and

many of his university colleagues soon left to form a company tasked with commercializing the browser. The first version of Netscape came out in late 1994.

Netscape fed the gold-rush atmosphere with a landmark initial public offering of stock in August 1995. Netscape's stock carried a then-steep IPO price of \$28 per share, a price that doubled on opening day to give the startup a \$2 billion market value even though it had only \$20 million in sales.

But Netscape's success also drew the attention of Microsoft, which quickly won market share by giving away its Internet Explorer browser for free with its flagship Windows operating system. The bundling prompted a Justice Department antitrust lawsuit and later a settlement with Microsoft.

Netscape eventually dropped fees for the software, but it was too late. Undone by IE, Netscape sold itself to AOL in a \$10 billion deal completed in early 1999.



Mike McCoy/Daily Republic

Steve Lessler is the owner of The Lessler Group, a business consulting firm in Suisun City.

Ten questions

Consultant looks to improve business community

By INES BEBEA
DAILY REPUBLIC

1. Why did you feel there was a need for your type of consulting company in Solano County?

There was a need to open doors for local service providers that are competing against larger Bay Area businesses. We are the resource that brings them together, and it has proved to be a success.

2. What was your sense of the business community?

Solano County has a very healthy business community. And although I see a steady increase in the number and sophistication of businesses here, there is not enough emphasis placed on "doing business locally." This can actually slow our local business community down when dollars leave the area.

3. What challenges did you face to get started?

The only challenge was defining my own niche. After that, it has been well received by both clients and customers.

At a glance

Name: Steve Lessler
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Web site: www.lessler-group.com
Opened: April 2001

4. What strategy did you use to attract clients?

I had spent many years in public service and the name recognition and reputation helped. I have always been active in the local chambers of commerce, as well as Solano Economic Development Corp., and these associations brought very positive responses from potential clients as well.

5. How did your professional background prepare you for The Lessler Group?

I worked for 22 years in

the field of logistics and have an MBA with that emphasis. From that, and roles in public office, introduced me to the business community and opened communications regarding potential business needs.

6. Why did you choose Suisun City as the base for your company?

The "live/work" community established in the newly redeveloped downtown was the draw. It allowed me to work close to home to say the least, and it is central to the rest of Solano County. I drive to the customers' locations for almost all meetings, so this was critical in the location of an office.

7. Share an experience that has surprised you as a business owner.

I'm always surprised when customers do not understand the value of using local service providers. Money is multiplied many times when generated locally and then re-circulated again and again in our region through payroll, goods and services. If money

leaves the region, it generally does not return.

8. Do you have plans to expand or add staff?

I have no staffing plans presently but have considered expansion. Time will tell how this plays out, but no matter what happens, our commitment is and will remain in Solano County.

9. Where do you see your company in five years?

I wish I had that crystal ball. The Lessler Group will definitely continue in its present form and most emphatically strengthen our reputation as the premier "business to business" development company in Solano County.

10. Finish this sentence: With The Lessler Group businesses can...

Expect to receive professional and ethical service from all clients, maximum exposure with decision-makers and target customers throughout Solano County.

Reach Ines Bebea at 427-6934 or ibebea@dailyrepublic.net.

BUSINESS MATTERS

Minimum-wage increase won't be enough, experts say

By INES BEBEA
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — With the California minimum wage slated to increase Jan. 1, low-wage workers will earn more money in 2008 than they did in 2006, according to an economic think tank. The California Budget Project reported the increase amounts to an additional \$2,600 in annual earning in 2008 for full-time workers earning minimum wage. That will not be enough, however, to move some of those workers out of poverty.

The minimum wage will increase to \$8 as part of a two-step legislation approved in 2006.

2008 forecast is bright for businesses

FAIRFIELD — Business sellers and buyers will see more opportunities in 2008, according to a professional trade association. The California Association of Business Brokers is optimistic that the business climate will further the trends of 2007. More than 65 percent of small and medium-sized businesses are expected to change hands nationally over the next decade, thanks in part to aging baby boomers.

The number is expected to be similar in California, according to CABB. The association has more than 450 members who broker business mergers and acquisitions.

Chamber of Commerce to oppose Prop. 93

SACRAMENTO — The California Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors voted to oppose Proposition 93. If approved, Proposition 93 would reduce the total number of years that an individual would serve in the Legislature, from 14 years to 12. The measure would allow the elected officials to serve all 12 years in either the Assembly, the state Senate or a combination of both.

The measure will be on the Feb. 5 presidential primary ballot. The California Chamber of Commerce had hoped the legislature would deliver term limits reform and a redistricting plan.

High demand for accountants in 2008

MENLO PARK — The demand for accounting and finance professionals will increase in 2008, a management resources firm reported. In its 2008 Salary Guide, Robert Half International highlighted five positions that will experience growth in the new year. The guide is based on analysis of job placements by the U.S. offices of Robert Half International.

The in-demand positions will be for internal auditors, senior accountants, hedge fund accountants, financial analysts and public accountants.

Reach Ines Bebea at 427-6934 or ibebea@dailyrepublic.net.

Letterman returning to the air, complete with writers

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — "Late Show with David Letterman" and "Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson" will be back with their writers airing joke-filled new hours starting Wednesday, the shows' production company, Worldwide Pants, announced Friday.

An interim agreement between the Letterman-owned company and the Writers Guild of America will allow the full writing staffs for both shows to return to work, even

as the Hollywood writers strike continues to shutter much TV and movie production.

Both of those CBS late-night shows have been airing reruns since the strike began eight weeks ago.

"I am grateful to the WGA for granting us this agreement," Letterman said. "This is not a solution to the strike, which unfortunately continues to disrupt the lives of thousands. But I hope it will be seen as a step in the right direction."

BUSINESS NEWS

IN BRIEF

Housing market continues freefall

WASHINGTON — The housing market plunged deeper into despair last month, with sales of new homes plummeting to their lowest level in more than 12 years.

The slump worsened even more than most analysts expected, heightening fears that the country might be thrust into a recession.

New-home sales tumbled 9 percent in November from October to a seasonally ad-

justed annual sales pace of 647,000, the Commerce Department reported Friday. That was the worst sales pace since April 1995.

The housing picture turned out to be more grim than most anticipated. Many economists were predicting sales to decline by 1.8 percent to a pace of 715,000. In the West sales rose 4 percent.

Buffett forms bond insurance company

NEW YORK — Town governments, school districts and

other municipalities looking to borrow money got a new option Friday when trying to insure their bonds: billionaire investor Warren Buffett.

Buffett's formation of a bond insurance company provided some validation to an industry that has been battered by fears of collapse in recent weeks.

Though analysts said the move by Buffett provides a stamp of approval for the broader business model, which has recently come under fire, shares of Buffett's newest competitors were hammered Friday.

Gas prices top \$3 mark nationwide

NEW YORK — Gas prices rose back to \$3 a gallon at the pump Friday, following rising futures prices on concerns about tight inventories and potential supply disruptions.

But oil prices fell Friday, reversing earlier gains after weak figures on new home sales ignited fresh concerns about the economy.

That gave traders a green light to lock in profits from oil's recent rally.

— Daily Republic wire services

Market watch

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Stock information is also available over the phone at 1-800-555-TELL, the free call that connects you to the information you need every day. Just dial 1-800-555-TELL from any phone. Say a keyword, like "stocks." Say the name of the company's stock price you are looking for. You hear the stock price. It's that simple.

| December 28, 2007 | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
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| Nasdaq Composite | -2.33 2,674.46 |
| Standard & Poor's 500 | +2.22 1,478.49 |

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