C H A P T E R   1 5

The Microsoft Network

Microsoft is driven by a vision of creating a world of "Information at Your Fingertips." Online services play a significant role in this vision since they offer "any time" access to the rapidly expanding world of electronic information and communication. Microsoft's goal is to bring these online benefits to mainstream PC users for the first time, not just to the early adapters of technology who already use online services. To achieve this goal, Microsoft has created a new online service, The Microsoft Network, and has included worldwide access to The Microsoft Network as a feature of Windows 95.

The Microsoft Network (MSN) will bring all Windows 95 customers affordable and easy-to-use access to:

- **Electronic mail,** for sending messages to and receiving them from other MSN members, or anyone with an electronic mailbox on the Internet.

- **Bulletin boards,** for in-depth discussions on a variety of topics, such as hardware or software support from computer companies.

- **Chat rooms,** for online conversations and special events with celebrities or business personalities.

- **File Libraries,** for easy access to images, add-ins, utilities, and programs that can be copied to the user's PC.

- **The Internet,** for e-mail and "newsgroup" bulletin boards.

In addition, The Microsoft Network offers advanced features such as Shortcuts, multitasking, and advanced e-mail services, all presented in an engaging, highly graphical format. Microsoft Windows 95 customers worldwide will be able to access MSN with a local phone call. The Microsoft Network will offer a wide range of online information and services, and in particular, Microsoft customers will find MSN the single best place to go to get information and support for Microsoft products.

Easy To Get Started

Access to The Microsoft Network is a feature of Windows 95. The customer doesn't need to install any software, and Windows 95's Plug and Play feature automatically sets the modem up correctly. To get started, all Windows 95 customers have to do is run the Windows 95 online registration and accept the MSN trial offer that follows.
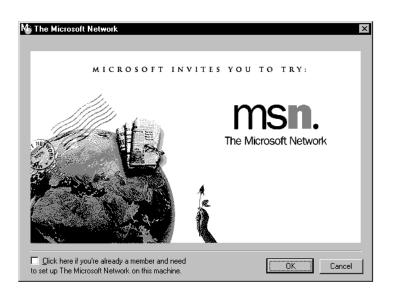
Figure 106. The Microsoft Network signup screen

Easy To Use and Understand

The Microsoft Network is tightly integrated into Windows 95 in terms of both functionality and look and feel. Because of the consistent interface, Windows 95 customers will immediately feel comfortable navigating around the MSN service. The Microsoft Network's integration is so complete that experienced customers can also use the more powerful Windows 95 Explorer navigation tool to move around MSN. To customers familiar with Windows 95, The Microsoft Network is as familiar as their local system, with no new commands or concepts to learn.

The Microsoft Network Highlights

Shortcuts

Shortcuts (OLE links to services on The Microsoft Network) are a way to go immediately to specific areas within MSN. When MSN members double-click a Shortcut, they'll be brought directly to the appropriate area on MSN. If the member is not logged on to MSN, the Shortcut will start MSN and prompt the member to log on before executing the Shortcut. Members can create Shortcuts to anything on MSN: any folder, forum, bulletin board, or even a particular file in a File Library. The most-used Shortcuts can be stored in a MSN Favorite Places folder, or anywhere on the member's own system. And because Shortcuts are OLE objects, they can be moved around easily as files. For example, to share a favorite "find" a member could send a friend a Shortcut by e-mail, or even post it on a bulletin board.

Electronic Mail

In line with close integration of MSN with Windows 95, MSN uses the Microsoft Exchange client (the universal e-mail client included with Windows 95). MSN e-mail messages will appear in the same mailbox as other e-mail (such as LAN e-mail) in the Exchange. Because MSN uses the Microsoft Exchange to manage its e-mail, there is only one e-mail application to learn how to use. The Microsoft Network's e-mail supports file

attachments, so members can attach spreadsheets, graphics files, word processing documents, or almost any other kind of electronic file.

Multitasking

The Microsoft Network takes advantage of the multitasking provided by Windows 95 with a multi-threaded design. This means that several different MSN tasks can run at the same time. This is particularly useful when downloading files: while the file is being downloaded, the member can still browse around, read e-mail, participate in a chat room, or do anything else on MSN without waiting.

World Wide Access

The Microsoft Network will be available around the world at launch. Local dial-up access will be available in over 40 countries, and the MSN application will be localized into many different languages.

How To Get Started

- The Microsoft Network is not part of the "typical" or "laptop", or "compact" Windows 95 installations. This means that in order to use The Microsoft Network, you will need to either select the "custom" option during your Windows 95 installation, or add the software later using the "Add/Remove Programs" applet in the Control Panel (go to the Windows Setup tab).

- In either case, you should add support for MSN by clicking in the check box next to "The Microsoft Network Online Service." After you have added the MSN software, you can start using MSN using any of the three methods described below.

1. In the Welcome to Windows 95 dialog box, there is an Online Registration button that gives you the opportunity to register Windows 95 electronically. After you have filled out your registration information, you will be asked if you would like to learn more about The Microsoft Network. Choose "Yes" to begin MSN Signup.(If your modem isn't already configured automatically by Windows 95's Plug and Play feature, you will be prompted to install one at this point.)

2. If you have disabled the Welcome to Windows dialog box, you can still run Online Registration from the Start menu (Online Registration is located in the Accessories program folder on the Programs submenu.) As with the steps above, when you have finished supplying your registration information, run MSN Signup by choosing "Yes" at the end of Online Registration.

- If you would prefer not to register Windows 95 electronically, you can obtain an MSN account by simply double-clicking the new MSN icon on your desktop.