KEEPING THE BBS EXCITING

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When you first start, you should offer as many services and options as possible. This will get you a good user-base, because they will like what they see. If you can get 10 people at first who like the system, then they will get to know the system, and you might consider making them co-sysops. This will allow them more access, and then people can ask them questions as well. They will be online more, and they will help you reach people. If you start out with 10 people, and they tell 10 more people about your BBS, and they join, then you have 100 people. If each of those people tell 5 people about the BBS, and they join, then you already have 500 people. And it just keeps adding up.

Be considerate, especially to those who don't know the system very well. If they ask what is a "dumb" question, answer it; it is probably the same type of question you asked at one point in time.

You should be in touch with your users. They most likely will like you and your BBS if they are frequent users. You should quickly reply to mail and messages, and you should join conferences and talk to the people in them. You might consider sending a message to all users asking them how they like the system, and if they have any questions that you might answer for them.

You might want to have people who have obtained a high level of access get together at the local pizza joint or park and have a get-together.

To keep your BBS exciting, you might want to have a menu listing all of the new items on your BBS. You should always be finding new things to place on the BBS.

You should try to find things to offer on your BBS that other BBSes don't offer. If you have a service or file that someone can't find on other BBSes, you will have an endless number of calls. Check out other BBSes and see what they don't offer, and then try to get those files. You should be careful, though. If they don't have a certain file or program or feature, it may be because the public doesn't want those things. You can ask users what they would like to see you have on the BBS in the near future.

Lastly, you need to remember that your success is not measured by how many people DON'T use your BBS, but by how many people DO use your BBS.

LEGALITIES

Even if you do not use your BBS for commercial purposes, you still have to follow certain laws. YOU can be sued for slander if one user says something hateful about another user. This is why it is important for you to make sure that people use proper conduct when using your BBS. You can also be held accountable for credit card information given to you by a user. You will be sued for copyrights if you are caught with copyrighted material in your files.

To avoid these problems, you should make sure that your users are the best in the world. You should scan the messages to find out what the people are talking about, and you should review the uploaded files to make sure that they are all shareware or public domain. If this is too much for you to do on your own, then you can ask some of your trusted co-sysops to help out when they can.

If you are concerned about the legalities of BBSing, there are several books in print that go over all of the legal aspects of being a BBS sysop. They are pretty cheap when you look at how much you might pay if you break one of the laws presented in the books.

If you are going to make some changes, you should run them by your users first. See what they think of the changes. If they do not want anything changed, then you will want to keep the BBS the same.

When you are ready to make changes to your BBS, you should make a couple of copies of your BBS. NEVER make changes to your only copy of the BBS. After you have made copies, experiment with the changes and see how they work. After that, go back through and make sure that the BBS is still in working order, and that you haven't messed it up.

If you are happy with the changes, then you will need to test the security again. Make sure that it is as safe as it was before. Make another copy of the working BBS. At this point, save that program in the archives. This way, if the changes don't work out, you can just go back to the original BBS.

After that, you can install the chages to the BBS. You should then check the security again, just in case you make any changes in the way you installed it this time. If you don't test the BBS's security, your users will!

STOPPING BBS USE

If you are planning on shutting down your BBS, you should tell people ahead of time. You should post notices in all the computer stores, and try to let everybody who has ever used your BBS know of the cancellation. You should post a notice on your own BBS letting them know that you are sorry for the bad news, but they will survive. If you give them advanced notice, they will be thankful that you didn't just drop the BBS without notice. Give them a specific date and time that the BBS will no longer be in service.

After the date and time passes, and the BBS is no longer in service, you will need to tell the phone company to disconnect the phone line. You should inform them that they shouldn't give out that phone number for a least one year. BBS listings are sometimes distributed months after the BBS has been cancelled. If the phone company gives out that phone number while the phone number is listed as a BBS number, then it will get calls at all times of the night.