

# You're nobody without a Web cam and an audience

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(<http://>)

Techwit

Got a Web cam? No? Then I'm sorry, but you're officially a nobody. Not having a Web cam is worse than not having tri-color holographic business cards. It's even worse than not having clean underwear on if you're in an accident. Besides, setting up a Web cam is so simple there's no excuse not to have one. Just plug your video camera into your computer, hop on the Internet and start waving at all the people who are



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so bored they'd rather watch you than do something useful, like set up their own Web cam so you can watch them.

The evolution of civilization goes like this: fire, the wheel, cheap beer, Web cams. There are thousands of people out there who let you watch them live their day-to-day lives via the Internet. There are thousands more who do truly bizarre things. One of the more popular Web cams is "the subservient chicken" (<http://www.subservientchicken.com/>). Some guy in a chicken costume stands in his living room and waits for you to type in instructions telling him what to do. Then he actually does it. No wonder Earth hasn't been contacted by an advanced civilization from another galaxy.

Even Santa has a Web cam. In fact, he has lots of them. I tried to look at a few of them today, but none of them were working. So I asked a 10-year-old if that was Digital Age proof that Santa wasn't real. I was hoping he would say something full of childlike Christmassy magic, like, "He'll be back online after he's done feeding his reindeer." Alas, the kid laughed at me and said the reason I couldn't see Santa was because I had "insufficient broadband connectivity to sustain a video signal." He told me to get a decent Internet connection and stop blaming Santa Claus for my problems. He assured me Santa Claus was real, and he could show me the Web sites to prove it. It felt like a one-two punch to my Walt Disney chakra.

I think the kid is right. I'm going to need a good Internet connection if I want to be part of Christmas future because the future of Santa Claus is online, not down your chimney. Just put yourself in Santa's boots. Isn't it about time for an upgrade? With world population out of control, the pokey reindeer sleigh can't get presents to everyone. There aren't even SUVs big enough to hold presents for the whole world. I say we just leave the whole present delivery thing to the post office and Fed Ex and put Santa on the information highway. Sooner or later some fringe animal rights group is going to sue him for forcing his reindeer to travel the globe in a single evening anyway. So, let's go digital and get it over with.

It's easy enough to do. Just click on a Santa cam and tell St. Nick what you want. You can even pick out the kind of Santa you want to talk to. Want a skinny, clean-shaven Santa without the same old beyond-retro red suit? Or a pro-Republican Santa selling war bonds? Thanks to the Internet, we can make sure our kids only sit on the virtual laps of the Santas who promote our family values. And the new digital Santas will be part shrink. They'll listen to you talk about how depressed you are during the holidays and then prescribe that universal remedy that Christmas provides: stuff. When you think about it, most of the

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truly unhappy people in the world - especially in developing countries - have one thing in common: They just don't have enough stuff. With personalized Santa cams connecting them to all the stuff they could ever want, social equality and peace on earth are just around the corner.

On the first day of Christmas

My true love gave to me

A Santa cam and broadband connectivity.

Have a cool yule.

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