Memoirs of a dial-up generation

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Getting onto the internet was once a privilege, and it was sometimes hard earned. Sometimes, you'd wait an entire day to get online, just to be told that your mum was waiting for an important call. The moment your mum put down the phone, you would race to the family computer to turn it on and start up the internet. I say it like that because it's reminiscent of starting up an old generator. It doesn't just work. You had to go through an entire process just so you could load your home page, which usually turned out to be Internet Explorer.

It started by removing the RJ11 cable from the telephone. After crawling around on hands and knees trying to find it (and narrowing missing those sharp edges of the large communal desk on which the large, off white computer monitor was carefully placed), you'd then have to find the right slot in your modem to slip it into.

Since computers were so reliant on that RJ11 cable, this meant they had to be situated close to the phone, wherever that was. Navigating these sometimes tiny spaces was anything but easy. By the time you were done, you'd narrowly missed the corners twice, hit your head once and you were already thinking a board game might be a better way to spend the afternoon.

Then your troubles began.

After clicking all the right boxes, you would usually hear the familiar whirr of the handshake process. Anyone who has lived through this era knows this sound. In fact, some can screech along to it. Strangely enough, this wasn't an annoying sound to this generation. It was the sound of endless possibility.

The moment the screeching stopped, you knew you were in. The world was your oyster. You could look up a broad range of topics. Not everything, just a broad range, and it was getting broader by the day. Problem was, it took a while for just about anything to load. This meant you might distract yourself with something like a quick game of minesweeper while the picture was loading or in my case learn how to do some web design. Minesweeper seemed to come standard with every computer ever built up to this point.

All this might seem frustrating, but it was somehow worth it. It was so worth it, in fact, that some people spent decades stuck in their mother's basements, trying to figure out how to make it even better. Back then, people used to call them nerds. Today, we call them billionaires.

The 90's generation is one that learned patience and determination under the tutelage of the dial-up connection and while it might now seem like an old and outdated way to access information at lightning speeds, in the words of Mr. Miyagi, "First learn stand, then learn fly."

To read the original post on The Evil Owl Digital blog click here.

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