



Of Forums and Archives And CB Radios

I don't read letters from magazine editors that begin with a phrase like "There are big doings afoot at ..." I know (and the comic-strip character Dilbert would back me up on this) that most of those announcements are about some event or feature of dubious value.

So, it is with some hesitation that I say, "There are big doings afoot at *Professional Deck Builder*." Actually, the big doings aren't so much at the magazine as at our Web site, www.deckmagazine.com. Until now, there hasn't been much going on there. But that is no longer true.

Most of the time when I'm told a Web site has been improved, I think, "Great. Some unmarriageable 30-year-old techno-geek who lives in his mother's basement just designed a flashy, unnavigable site with 600 options that will crash my computer."

However, our Web programmer is a pretty normal guy, which may be why the new *Professional Deck Builder* site is lean and easy to get around on. My two favorite features are the archives and the forums. To view the archives, simply click on "Past Issues." You'll see thumbnails of the magazine covers beginning with last January's issue. Click on one, and you'll get a table of contents. Every article is available online. Free.

I'm an online-forum junkie — I'm embarrassed to admit how many I belong to. If magazines like *Professional Deck Builder* are a conversation — the authors are deck builders like you who share their knowledge, and you talk back to them through letters to the editor or by writing your own article — then online forums are the ultimate magazine.

Online forums let you communicate in a way that's never been possible in print media. You can find answers nearly immediately from someone who's already solved the particular problem you face. The cost? Answer others' questions when you can. It's Internet karma.

Starting a forum is tricky, though. It needs a few pioneers to log on, post questions, and most importantly, answer questions. The more of you who show up and post, the better the community will become. You don't even have to post under your own name — you can invent a handle, just like back in the CB-radio craze of the 1970s. However you sign on, I'll be there, posting under my own name. Stop by and say hi, good buddy. Catch you on the flip side.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Engel".

Andy Engel
Editor

Built a great deck?

We want to see it.

E-mail photos to: prodeck@hanleywood.com

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