



Bulletin Board Rules

or

“How to maintain a constructive environment”

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Prepared by:
Stephen Frost
Frostbyte Consulting Pty Ltd
stephen.frost@frostbyte.com.au

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1 Introduction

1.1 About the Bulletin Board

The Unwired Bulletin Board is a service funded by Unwired but which is managed by non-Unwired people. The reason for this is that Unwired wish to provide an environment where customers can discuss Unwired and its product/services and obtain independent advice and technical support.

By doing this the company provides all of us with an important additional channel for obtaining assistance and information. Its also a place where customers can “vent” and where Unwired can get unequivocal feedback on their performance.

The bulletin board is hosted by WebCentral (not at Unwired) and runs the commonly-used freeware discussion software phpBB.

Disclaimer

Readers should note that information on the Unwired Bulletin Board is neither provided nor endorsed by Unwired Australia.

1.2 Acknowledgements

These rules were originally sourced and then adapted from the Whirlpool Bulletin Board rules (www.whirlpool.net.au).

1.3 About the Rules

Revision History

v1.00 22/12/2006 Initial version.

2 Rules Overview

2.1 The Basics

By maintaining an account and posting on the Unwired Bulletin Board, you hereby agree to abide by these rules.

Breaching these rules can result in post or thread deletion, and continued breaches can result in your bulletin board account being either suspended temporarily or banned permanently.

2.2 Scope

The rules apply to all content posted on the Unwired Bulletin Board, including, but not limited to:

- thread titles
- post contents (including quoting of others' post contents)
- web links to inappropriate content on other websites (including personal pages)
- usernames and personal signatures
- email addresses

2.3 What are the Rules?

- no abuse, insults or personal attacks
- no foul language
- no trolling
- no inappropriate or illegal material
- no personal or business advertising
- no cross-posting
- no spamming
- no "religious" debates
- no defamatory or libellous comments
- no threats of legal action against another user, moderator or system administrator
- no public complaints about moderation
 - you can complain by sending a private message or email to either the moderator or to the system administrator

2.4 General Netiquette

The following general guidelines were originally adapted from Netiquette; and the One to Many Communications section of RFC 1855: Netiquette Guidelines.

- Please read and search before posting your question – it may have been answered already in either another post (e.g. in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Forum)
- Thread titles should be meaningful to other users, both now and in the future. Thread titles are how you make a first impression on other users. A vague or meaningless thread title may result in users deliberately ignoring your thread. Use a title that summarises your situation, without being melodramatic or insulting. Also note that meaningful thread titles make searching the forums much easier for others
- Be aware that a large audience may see your post and your words may come back to haunt you. This audience may potentially include past, present and future employers, staff at your place of study, friends, family, etc. Unlike the spoken word, your written posts will exist on the Unwired Bulletin Board for a long time
- If you are responding to someone else's comments, try to include a brief quote or summary of their post, to provide context to other readers
- We prefer it if you do not post personal messages (such as personal greetings, etc) into a thread – send a Private Message or an email instead
- Do not attack other people, attack their argument - and this does not mean changing "you are an idiot" into "your comments are idiotic". If you take issue with someone else's position, try to explain why you disagree with them in a polite and professional manner, providing suitable supporting evidence as required
- Do not start or perpetuate flame wars. If someone insults or attacks you, do not respond in kind – "they started it" is an incredibly lame argument when your post lands you in hot water with a moderator or the system administrator!
- Do not shout. EXCESSIVE USE OF CAPITALISATION and exclamation points!!!! is considered shouting and shows that you are unable to adequately express yourself through the use of normal language. Small amounts of capitalisation, when used to emphasise a particular point, is considered acceptable - although please note that the board offers other ways to add emphasis, such as through the use of **bold** and *italics* in your posts
- Try to avoid making multiple consecutive posts. If you are responding to several different posts, please try to consolidate your response into one post (e.g. by copying and pasting your response between browser windows)

2.5 Zero Tolerance Policy

Our moderators may employ a policy of zero tolerance" for certain kinds user behaviour. Rules which can attract an immediate zero tolerance response are identified with the phrase:

Breaching this rule [will / may] attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

Repeated breaches of any rule by an individual can also attract a zero tolerance response. In cases where such breaches occur, one or more of the following actions will be taken (at the moderators discretion):

- the post or thread will be removed, regardless of whether or not the rest of the post or thread is "valid"
 - note: copies of removed posts/threads are often retained by moderators in case they need to be produced as evidence at a later time
- the user's bulletin board account may be banned for a period of time, ranging from 24 hours up to a permanent ban
- if the breach is particularly serious, Unwired Australia's legal counsel may be notified and further action taken

2.6 The Golden Rule

When in doubt, or when something is not quite clear, keep this one simple rule in mind:

MODERATORS RULE

They have the power to edit and delete your posts, the power to ban you, and the power to refer you to Unwired and its legal counsel for further action.

We respectfully suggest that if you respect the moderators, their actions and their opinions, you won't go far wrong.

3 Rules in Detail

3.1 Personal Attacks

Abuse, insults and personal attacks directed at other people are unacceptable.

If you disagree with someone on some point, please do not resort to name calling or personal attacks, rather you should argue with them on the merits of their points. This includes attacking people you perceive to be "trolls" or "flame baiters". If you have a problem with someone's behaviour, please let a moderator know via PM

Abuse which is directed against any person, group or company which is deemed by the moderators to be likely to land our web hosting company, our system administrator, or any of the moderators in legal trouble, is also prohibited. This includes severe abuse directed at Unwired and their employees.

We do however recognise that occasionally people can get hot under the collar and need to vent about some particular bad experience they may have suffered as an Unwired customer. In these circumstances the moderators may show some leniency.

In all other circumstances, breaching this rule may attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

Personal Attacks via a Private Message

Please note: Moderators cannot access your private messages.

If you receive a private message you find insulting or inappropriate, contact one of the moderators with details of the message and the sender.

If it is deemed necessary, the system administrator can verify the details by looking at the phpBB database directly.

3.2 Defamation and Libel

Please be aware that content posted on the Unwired Bulletin Board can be considered libellous, if a reasonable person believes that the posted content could damage the reputation of an individual or company.

Defamation has been traditionally divided into two separate categories – libel and slander. The major practical difference between them is that in an action for libel, the plaintiff does not need to show that they have suffered a financial loss (www.mds.rmit.edu.au/law/node6.html)

The tort of defamation prevents publication of material which “tends to injure the personal, professional, trade or business reputation of an individual or a company, to expose them to ridicule or to cause people to avoid them”. The essence of a defamation action is damage to reputation, not that the publication was untrue, or that it infringed on the privacy of the plaintiff (www.mds.rmit.edu.au/law/node5.html).

3.3 Racism, Sexism, Ageism and Religious Intolerance

The board is open to people from any race, gender, physical or mental condition, sexual preference/orientation, IQ, age or religion. Intolerance of other people's beliefs, culture, IQ, gender, physical or mental conditions, sexual preference/orientation or age is therefore unacceptable.

This includes using "gay" or "ghey" to mean "bad" (such as "this game is gay", etc.); using "zionist" to mean "killing arabs or taking over the world"; using "Indian call centre" to mean "incompetent, ill-informed call centre"; etc.

Breaching this rule is likely to attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

3.4 Foul Language (Swearing)

The Unwired Bulletin Board is a website open to all ages and the team want it to stay that way. The use of foul language is unacceptable.

In order to prevent casual swearing, the board filters some common swear words, replacing them with *****.

Intentionally trying to bypass the swear word filter is likely attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

"Hidden" Swearing

Swearing which is contextually understandable (e.g. removing a letter, replacing letters with an asterisk (*) or another character, or changing the spelling slightly, will also be moderated.

Using fsck as an example, this is acceptable in the context of using the UNIX utility of the same name (e.g. "FSCK helped me repair my file system") but is unacceptable when used as a swear word (e.g. "FSCK you!". Context is important.

Swearing in another language is also unacceptable – regardless of how many people you think might understand it.

Moderation of Foul Language

The following points outline the basic moderation policy regarding foul language:

- Content containing "heavyweight" swear words, specifically the F & C words, are completely inappropriate. All content containing such words – hidden or not – will be removed
- Content containing lesser swear words will not normally be moderated, provided the words are used sparingly (e.g. once in a post), and the content is otherwise on topic and useful. Use of such words in reoccurring content (usernames, personal signatures, etc) is always unacceptable
- Content with swear words that are used in the context of a personal attack/insult will be removed, not necessarily because of the foul language, but

for being a personal attack. This may also apply to non-swear word insults like "fool", "idiot", etc

- Words like "crap", "damn", etc, are not considered swear words

3.5 Trolling

"Trolling" is considered unacceptable on most Internet sites, and this includes here! Content posted by serial offenders will be removed immediately, and repeated offences may attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

What is "Trolling"?

There are many sites which discuss what "trolling" is and, by extension, what a "troll" is. Some examples include:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_troll
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slashdot_trolling_phenomena
- <http://www.urban75.com/Mag/troll.html>
- <http://redwing.hutman.net/%7Emreed/warriorshtm/troller.htm>

For purposes of defining trolling on the Unwired Bulletin Board, we will use the following definition:

A post in a thread or news comment that is solely intended to incite controversy or conflict or cause annoyance or offence is considered "trolling"

Just because a post inadvertently causes strife (e.g. "collateral damage") does not necessarily make it the work of a troll.

The content of a "troll posting" generally falls into several areas. It may consist of an apparently foolish contradiction of common knowledge, a deliberately offensive insult to the readers of a forum / thread / news story, or a broad request for trivial follow-up postings.

There are three main reasons why people troll forums:

- to get attention;
- to disrupt threads; or
- just to make trouble

Career trolls tend for the latter two, whilst the former is the mark of someone who is clueless and should generally just be ignored.

Why is "Trolling" bad?

The main goal of "trolling" is to incite an emotional or knee-jerk response from other posters. This response is typically in the form of:

- a personal attack;

- a repeat of previous points/posts; or
- an emotional outburst

Such posts, and the responses they generate, tend to undermine the friendly atmosphere of the board and may result in long-running feuds between “factions” loyal to one view or the other.

Commercial Trolling

When someone closely associated with a commercial venture (a relative, a past or present shareholder, etc), comments negatively on another commercial venture, it is considered "commercial trolling".

The goal of such posts may be to spread "fear, uncertainty and doubt" (a.k.a. FUD), often with no factual basis for the comments. This type of "trolling" could result in commercial damage and may be potentially defamatory.

Such posts will attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

Note: a negative comment is not automatically "trolling", nor is the expression of an honestly held personal opinion.

3.6 Inappropriate Content

Inappropriate content is anything that would be unacceptable dinner time conversation when your grandma is over. This includes (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- Sex and sexual acts;
- Violence and acts of cruelty to other humans or animals;
- Extreme, dangerous or illegal behaviour

Breaching this rule may attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

Note: moderator discretion applies to the context of posts containing such content (e.g. the context might be discussing a news story).

3.7 Offensive Websites

Links to websites containing offensive or unacceptable material, such as foul language, inappropriate images (images of a violent or pornographic nature), racial vilification (hate sites), warez links, etc, are completely unacceptable.

If in the context of a post you must include a link to a website which contains a justifiable amount of bad language or other material – but which is otherwise appropriate – you should attach a note clearly stating that the link contains such material.

Any posts made without such warning will be deleted without question.

Breaching this rule may attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

3.8 Illegal Content and Activities

Discussion about obtaining illegal software, music, movies, TV shows, etc, is unacceptable. This includes discussions about where to get it, links to sites that have it, when it is available, and discussions about how much of it you might have.

Discussion of illegal activities – be they criminal or civil – is unacceptable. This includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Evading police (traffic related, or otherwise)
- Bypassing toll and/or phone restrictions (fixed or mobile)
- Infringing copyright
- Bypassing copy protection (including publication of keys or activation codes)

Discussion of acts which may breach ISP or telecommunications Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) or education/employment contracts to which you have agreed, is also considered inappropriate. This includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Bypassing security restrictions on your home, school or work network
- Bypassing speed caps on internet access plans
- Hacking locked modems or phones

Breaching these rules may attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

3.9 Inciting Denial of Service Attacks

It is unacceptable to post a URL, IP address, email address or other contact details for an entity (an individual, association or company), with the intention of inciting others to attack the entity's website or network through any means (DOS, DDOS, etc).

Breaching this rule will attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

3.10 Personal Details

The posting of someone else's personal details is not permitted under any circumstances. This includes posting personal information about ISP staff, bulletin board users that have wronged you, public figures such as politicians, etc.

It is also inappropriate to post company contact details which aren't available publicly on their website. Examples of this might be a company employee's direct phone number, or details about a priority/escalation support line.

If these details have been previously published by the employee or the company, then it's probably okay. But if the details were provided to you as a customer because you have an unusual or critical issue, it's inappropriate to post it in the forums.

Moderators have the final say on whether this is or isn't acceptable in a specific case.

3.11 Private Conversations

The posting of private correspondence (PMs, emails, etc) or transcripts of private conversations (phone calls, face-to-face discussions) are not permitted, for two major reasons:

1. There is no way to verify the validity of the text; and
2. There may be copyright implications arising from the publication of private communications in a public forum when the permission of both parties has not been sought

Public announcements (such as ISP mass emails, etc) are considered already in public view and can therefore be re-posted. In cases where such an announcement is made on a company website, posting the URL is preferred to posting the complete text.

3.12 Posts for Personal or Financial Gain

For Sale and Wanted to Buy

For Sale ads and Wanted To Buy ads are not encouraged, however we recognise that people do want to sell second-hand equipment such as modems, routers, and so on.

We suggest that you use an online auction site like eBay (www.ebay.com.au).

If anyone asks us "Where can we buy such-and-such?" we are going to refer them there anyway.

Commercial Advertising

The Unwired Bulletin Board is a community forum. It is not a tool for you to use to advertise your business, however it is normal practice for some people to identify themselves in relation to their work or business. The following guidelines should help.

What is "acceptable" business advertising?

- You can use the "Website" field in your user profile to link to your website
- You can use the "Signature" field in your user profile to add a company name or website name
- You are free to respond to any direct questions others may ask you regarding the products and services you offer provided they specifically mention your company or your unique product/service
- If a user wishes to contact you, or requests you to contact them, then do so

What is "unacceptable" business advertising?

- Creating threads or posts that serve solely to promote your business
- Posting prices, product descriptions, phone numbers, website addresses or other contact information for your business (including in the signature you chose to add to your posts)

- Sending unsolicited advertising material to bulletin board users via email or PM
- Advertising other ISPs is inappropriate and all such posts will be removed

Unsolicited Use of Personal Information

The gathering and/or use of any Unwired Bulletin Board users' personal information (email addresses, ISP usernames, website URLs, etc) for unsolicited marketing purposes (via email, telemarketing, private messaging, etc) is unacceptable.

It should be noted that such behaviour may also constitute a breach of the Australian Privacy Legislation and could result in civil and criminal penalties.

Any user found to be involved in such activities will be permanently banned.

Non-Commercial Advertising

Using the bulletin board to advertise other sites (be it your own site, or that of a friend or acquaintance), is not acceptable. But we recognise that there is a fine line to be walked here between advertising a site and simply making people aware of a site because it is relevant to a particular topic being discussed.

It is up to the discretion of the moderators to determine whether a post constitutes advertising of a site, or is merely the provision of useful information.

Group Buys

Unless it is authorised and approved by Unwired first, all such posts will be removed.

Referrals

Commercial organisations (e.g. Unwired, other ISPs, retailers, etc) sometimes offer financial or other bonuses to existing customers when new customers are referred to them.

In the interests of encouraging a helpful and active forum, whilst avoiding the problems of having unwanted commercial spam appear in threads and in people's private message inboxes, the following rules detail what is and is not acceptable behaviour with respect to referrals.

Breaching any rules in this section may attract a Zero Tolerance response from the moderators.

Requests for Referral Credit – requesting that other users list you as their referrer is not allowed. This is not open to discussion. If someone explicitly PMs you and asks for your details, so they can refer you because you helped them, that's fine.

Offering Referral Credit – if you are a new user and wish to list someone as your referrer, you are specifically encouraged to send your helper a PM and ask if they would like you to list them as having referred you. Do not post any "first person to reply gets a free referral" type posts. If you wish to give your referral away, make the decision on who you will offer it to and contact them privately.

Referral Links – do not post referral links, regardless of the type of site concerned.

Referral Spam – from time to time various companies and websites try to increase customer awareness through referral schemes, such as:

- Competitions where entrants win extra entries by spamming their referrer link
- Viral marketing of products or brand names
- Offering incentives to users that can bring in new business

The Unwired Bulletin Board is sometimes spammed by people thinking it would be a good plan to use the board as a platform for these activities. Anyone caught sending such items will have their bulletin board account banned for at a minimum of 24 hours (it might be longer, depending on the seriousness of the offence).

If people create new accounts to spam, then they will be banned permanently – along with any ghost accounts we find.

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is when people are employed to promote a company and its products under the guise of anonymous customers, not revealing their connection to the company and/or products. It's not illegal, but tends to result in feelings of angry deception by those who believed the "ordinary customers" (if they find out).

Viral marketing goes directly against the rules on Business Advertising (which includes "spamming").

It should be noted, however, that trying to "out" bulletin board members who you suspect of participating in such a scheme might be classified as a personal attack and, as such, is also against the rule (they might honestly like the product they just bought).

Naming a company suspected of using such a scheme could raise issues of defamation if the comments are not complimentary (please see the Defamation section to see why this is also against the rules).

If you suspect that bulletin board users or companies mentioned on the board are participating in viral marketing through these forums, please contact a moderator and refrain from making accusations against companies or individuals within the forums.

Note that posting occasional positive comments is quite normal and should not be considered problematic at all.

3.13 Posting Etiquette

Cross-Posting

Posting the same comments in more than one thread is considered cross-posting, and is not permitted. Please choose a single forum and a single thread in that forum in which your comments would be most relevant, then post them in that thread only.

Posting the same thread in more than one forum is not permitted. If you can't decide which forum to post it a particular thread in, just choose the one that most closely

matches and see how you go. If you don't think you are getting the right answers, ask a moderator to move the thread to a more appropriate forum at some later point.

Posting in multiple threads saying something like "Come look at my post <insert link here>" , or posting new threads in multiple forums saying "Come look at thread <insert link here>" is also cross-posting.

Duplicates

Sometimes minor glitches can result in a user's post appearing more than once in a thread. Duplicate posts are sometimes removed, but if a user notices that they have posted a duplicate, they should feel free to edit one of them to indicate that a double post occurred.

Threads which are on the same topic as an existing thread, will be either closed or deleted, and users directed to post in the existing thread.

Duplicate threads are removed in order to:

- Focus discussion in one thread
- Prevent forums being cluttered with multiple threads on the same topic
- Allow users to find questions more easily

Moderators will normally elect to retain the thread that was created first, except in the case where a subsequent thread contains more discussion.

If a thread contains substantial discussion (normally over a page's worth) it will normally be locked, rather than deleted, with a pointer back to the other thread.

Pointless Posting Sprees

Posting pointless comments solely to increase post count is not appreciated. First instances of this behaviour will generally result in a warning from a moderator. Further instances may result in a ban.

Posting pointless garbage into a thread, just because there is an expectation that it will be deleted, will more than likely result in an instant ban. If you know a thread will be removed due to being against the rules, do not post in it.

Going Off-Topic

All posts in a given thread should ideally have at least something to do with the topic of the thread. Having said that, some threads do have a natural discussion flow to them, which may move the discussion in different directions – while still maintaining a relationship to the topic.

Posting off topic comments in a thread may result in your post being removed, particularly if your post stands out as being off topic compared to the other posts in the thread, or if your post stands to interfere with a line of otherwise on-topic conversation within the thread (unless you can make the moderators laugh, in which case all beta are off).

It is also possible for a thread to be considered off-topic for the forum in which it has been posted (e.g. questions about your account in the Technical Support forum). In such cases the thread will normally be moved by a moderator to a more appropriate location.

Religious Debates

Please note that this section DOES NOT refer to debates about religion. "Religious debates" are so called because they have a lot in common with (but are not necessarily) discussions of religion and politics.

They consist largely of people expressing strongly held personal beliefs about things that can't be proven, supposedly in the interest of agreeing on the best way to do something important (whether it's attaining eternal peace, governing effectively, choosing an ISP, or deciding which gaming console is superior). Like most such debates, they rarely result in anyone involved changing his or her point of view.

Besides wasting time, these arguments can create tension and erode the value of this open discussion environment.

The Unwired Bulletin Board is an user support and technical support environment for Unwired's customers, first and foremost. "General Discussion" is provided as a suitable environment to take off-topic discussions from the Unwired-focused forums, but it should not be regarded as a "green light" to conduct free-for-all debates. There are plenty of other forums on the 'Net where you can do that.

Examples of Religious Topics

Whilst we try to allow as much latitude as possible, the following kinds of topics will draw the attention of the moderators and result in a speedy shutdown of discussion if things get out of hand:

- § Israel vs the Palestinians
- § God vs the Atheists
- § PCs vs Macs
- § Microsoft vs Linux

One common sign that things are ready to be shut down is when Nazi analogies are drawn (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Godwin's_law) so keep an eye out for that.