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**Online Valentine's Shopping at Work Could Cost Corporate America
\$38 Million This Month, Warns Pearl Software**

Cupid's Arrow Will Also Sap Corporate Networks

Philadelphia, PA – February 6, 2002 — Valentine's Day means big bucks for online florists, jewelers and other retailers but to corporate America, February could cost employers \$38 million in lost productivity by smitten employees who go online during office hours to shop for lingerie, flowers and even that special someone, according to Pearl Software, a Philadelphia software firm that manufactures software for businesses to manage employee Internet use.

"Online Casanovas can cost employers millions of dollars a year," said David A. Fertell, CEO of Pearl Software. "We estimate that online shopping for Valentine's Day, along with a jump in lonely hearts looking for relationships in cyberspace, account for millions of dollars in lost productivity costs during the month of February."

According to a survey by online dating site Match.com, 33% of their 2.5 million members visit the dating site during the workday, with traffic peaking around Valentine's Day, as members' thoughts turn to romance.

And there are many more singles out there looking for love. Last year, Jupiter Media Metrix reported that nearly 6 million people tapped into the Internet to find someone special. "If only half of these 6 million people are online, spending only one hour this month looking for a valentine during work hours, that represents almost \$38 million lost in productivity costs in February alone," noted Fertell.

"Long work days often mean missed social opportunities for many professional singles," said Trish McDermott, Vice President of Romance at Match.Com. "Since Match.Com's members tend to be college educated professionals, it isn't surprising that some of them first find us during a break

while they are in the workplace, where they are likely to turn to the Internet to get things done in their personal lives."

Cyber dating during the lunch hour provides a welcome break to overworked employees who spend long hours on the job. Problems arise, however, when online flirting robs companies of valuable network bandwidth or when workers visit dating web sites during unauthorized times, Fertell said, resulting in lost productivity. "With businesses fighting their way through this flat economy, the issue of employee productivity has taken on more urgency," he noted.

Many companies now use software tools to encourage proper use of the Internet during work hours. "Most of our clients don't mind if employees send personal email while at work – and probably wouldn't object to online dating or shopping – as long as it happens during authorized times when the network is slow," said Fertell. "With our Pearl Echo™ Internet management tool, companies can set up access to dating or shopping sites during lunchtime or after work."

Pearl Software strongly urges companies that purchase Pearl Echo to put an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in place, outlining to employees which non-work-related Internet activities are permissible during work hours. "Just as a company adopts a policy on dress code and behavior, companies need guidelines for acceptable Internet use," said Fertell.

David Fertell and Joe Field founded Pearl Software Inc. in 1996. The company provides network-enabled products to the growing Internet user community. Pearl Software's key, patent-pending products include Pearl Echo and Cyber Snoop™ Desktop, which allows parents and educators to monitor children's online activity. The company also offers browser control software, TakeMeHome™, and is commercializing an emergency chat response system, Chat911™. More information about Pearl Software is available at www.pearlsw.com

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