

BUDGET STRETCHING IDEAS

More Consumers Turn To Online Bill Payment For Convenient Way To Manage Finances

(NAPSA)—Paying bills online is the fast and easy way to go for a growing number of consumers these days. Consider the following statistics*:

- By the end of 2002, the number of households that bank online is expected to reach 24.3 million—nearly double the number of households as the end of 2000.

- By 2006, more than 50 million households will view bills online and 52 million households will pay at least one bill online.

Convenience is one of the main drivers of the increased number of people paying bills online. Using the Web to pay bills saves time and money and can be done from anywhere, not just at home or the office. With today's easy-to-use bill pay services, getting payments set up is a breeze, as is making sure the money gets there on time—sparing consumers late fees and hassles.

Consumers also can set up reminders to be notified when bills are due, as well as establish automatic, recurring bills.

“No longer do I have checks sitting in my mailbox for anyone to steal—nor do I face the alternative of having to run to a post office every time I want to mail a check,” said Liz Pulliam Weston, personal finance expert at MSN Money, in a recent article. “Most of all, I like the security and the certainty of online bill payment. That may surprise consumers who have never used it, since those who still pay by check often say they're concerned about security or glitches that could prevent their bills from being paid. But I've found online bill payment to be more secure and less glitch-prone than regular mail.”



Enjoy the convenience of online bill-paying without high fees. It's easy, fast and safe, say experts.

Furthermore, consumers are increasingly turning to financial portals, such as MSN Money, for bill pay, as they offer full-featured, “pay anyone” services, along with the ability to manage accounts from multiple financial institutions, set up and track a budget, and monitor spending habits—all in one place.

To try the convenience of online bill paying, Microsoft offers consumers three useful ways to get started:

- With the purchase of Microsoft Money Deluxe 2003 personal finance software, consumers get one year of free bill pay through MSN

- Subscribers to the new MSN 8 Internet Access service can use the MSN Money Plus personal finance service to pay bills with 950 merchants online for no additional cost

- MSN Money (money.msn.com) offers consumers three months of free bill pay, in addition to three plans to accommodate a variety of financial needs.