

Setting Up Your Internet Trapline

COLUMN BY NATHAN UNGER

To augment his meager income, a certain man ran a trap line. He set up various traps based on the animal trails he observed, and would periodically check all the traps. Sometimes he saw evidence that the animals were using the trails, but were not getting caught in the snares. As a coyote would trot along an underbrush path, it might glance to the side, and its nose would miss the trap. Thus, maybe even without suspecting anything, it would escape being caught. To guide the animal's head into the trap, the trapper would often place a thin twig in the loop. The animal would see the twig, and move its head to the side to avoid the twig, and thus walk right into the noose.



With information collecting, I operate a sort of a trap line too. Different Web sites post new articles from time to time, and once in a while I pick up on something that I want to download or print. To “guide” information into my snare, I sometimes subscribe to a newsletter so that they e-mail the free info when it comes. I want to share some of my favorite “traps” with you. You may know of others—please contact me if you do.

Since we live in the information age, it is necessary to keep learning. If you keep reading, you will be much better informed, and will increase customer confidence. I try to share a little tidbit with a mechanic whenever I have a chance, and that is actually a form of advertising.

In order to find that much new material, you have to have some places to look. In the alternator/starter rebuilding industry, you won't find much in the magazine racks of your local drugstore, and probably not much new stuff in your local library, and so the Internet comes in really handy. Anybody who considers themselves up-to-date uses the Internet, and some companies are even willing to give out free information as bait for customers.

Hint: If you are looking on Google for

a particular item that uses more than one word to describe it, like “Jinma starter,” then use quotation marks. This one leads you to the Web site for the Chinese Tractor Association. Or if you type in “integrated active rectifier,” use the quotation marks and it should take you to the International Rectifier Web site. Click on news, and it will take you to an article about the new active rectifier designs (AIRR) for alternators.

Or just copy and paste the following into Google to get there directly:

<http://www.irf.com/whats-new/archive/nr021113.html>.

Before I share more of my favorite Web sites with you, I should pause to give you a brief warning...My wife's unfortunate uncle parked his old beater car at the top of a hill and went to check his trap line. When he got back a few hours later, the car was gone. He glanced around and there at the bottom of the ravine, he saw it had rolled to a stop. It seems that this 1970-something pea-green Austin Marina had a weakness with the automatic transmission shifter—it would slip out of park. The cost of recovering that car was more than it was worth, so it ‘rusted in peace’ there.

Why do I tell that story? I guess so those of us (like me) who like to spend time on the Internet don't get carried away searching our information trap lines and don't get our work done. He lost his car, and we lose time.

Here are some of my favorite information sources. Except for parts of the Electrical Rebuilder's Association (ERA) Web site, they are all free—although with some you might have to send in a credit application and open an account before they let you in, but that is usually not a big deal.

The following sites are worth investigating:

- Here is a good site if you need to download the bill of materials for different Nikko alternators and starters: <http://www.jnelectric.com>.
- <http://www.romaineelectric.com/order.html>—This doesn't have much in the way of technical articles, but if you have an account with them, their Web site is great for looking up and buying parts.
- This one is a newsletter that also doubles as a flyer for their products: <http://www.duboismarketing.com/pages/starternator.asp>.

- <http://apra.org/>—under newsroom, then Global Connection, click the month you want, and then read articles ‘All Things Technical’ (various authors), ‘Auto Electric Corner’ (by Mohammed Samii), and ‘Driving Quality’ (by Bill Bowman). They cycle these on a yearly basis so if you are reading November's issue, then November 2005 and previous are already overwritten.
- Tech tips and bulletins: <http://www.forparts.com/tech.htm>.
- Cargo: <http://www.hcdk.com/uk/start.html>—click downloads, and then technical updates. There are a few informative articles here. They don't add new ones very often though.
- To get the full benefits of the ERA Web site, you have to pay your dollars upfront, but boy oh boy, is it ever worth it. What is it now, some miniscule \$15 per month or something like that? <http://www.electricalrebuilders.org/forums>—Technical help, and info on where so and so can get such and such to fit this and that. You can sell or buy things there, and also just give your two bits worth.
- <http://www.electricalrebuilders.org/techlib/index.php>—for technical articles you can download. Read Joe Davis's tip for getting broken studs out. Read about how old generators and alternators work. There's stuff on Ford starter upchanges. Click away and download to your heart's content.
- <http://www.electricalrebuilders.org/eren/archive2.php>—for newspaper archives. You can read the current issue free, even if you are not a member. You type in whatever subject you would like to know more about and it will find it if there is an article written on it.
- <http://www.electricalrebuilders.org/supplier/s1.php>—Where to buy what for your rebuilding business. A useful sourcing tool.
- http://www.genco1.com/tech_tips.cfm—Here's one I heard about on the ERA forums. I haven't even read them all yet, but the article on RVC/SARVC systems is eye opening. I had a customer just the other day tell me that his volt gauge on his 2006 pickup is wandering from 12 to 15 volts. This article explains

how that is actually normal.

- <http://www.magnasystem.com/technical.html>—Various service bulletins.
- <http://www.nwreg.com>—If you need information about testing alternators and test leads.
- http://www.transpo-usa.com/tech_help.html—This gets you information on regulator and rectifier designs and how to tell them apart, etc. Download their test-instruction manual and it will show you the pinouts of the regulators. Very handy.
- <http://www.wai-wetherill.com/techups/techups.cfm>—Mostly older but useful tech tips on rebuilding units.
- <http://www.venselenterprises.com/techtipsfromdick.htm>—Dick Vensel's catalog is a useful study just to see how other people do things judging by what tools are used. Plus of course, you might want to buy some of the cool gadgets he sells...
- <http://www.picotech.com/auto/automotive-oscilloscope-guide/introduction.html>—Watch a series of free instructional videos on how

to use a scope to test cars.

- <http://www.picotech.com/auto/automotive-software.html>—Download the free software and browse through the procedures for various tests. If you scroll around the Web site, you will find a lot more free information goodies. I recently bought one of these automotive scopes, the 3223. I first heard about Picoscope from Samii. Incredible device!
- <http://www.autonerdz.com/clst.htm>—These guys have all sorts of free information, and also information you can buy, in the form of training videos, articles, and the like. You may even want to buy some for your shop and have all the technicians watch it, to avoid the higher cost of sending them to a seminar.
- Here's an interesting one—an online dictionary of automotive terms: <http://www.autoglossary.com>.

Also, when you find a Web site that you find useful, check out the links they connect with. This will lead you to a veritable world of “trappings.”

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