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## How to Attract Online Christmas Shoppers!

It's that time of Year again, time for the bustle and spending associated with Holiday shopping. Now is the time to think about your Christmas web offerings. The peak online customer purchases occur two weeks before Christmas. So now is the time to make your site and shopping carts spiffy and inviting. Though the trend for online shopping has gone up and down like a rollercoaster, experts predict that a large proportion of buyers will purchase their gifts on the internet. Even with the economic crisis, surveyed respondents said they plan to spend an average \$417 on Christmas presents online. Across the globe, more and more shoppers are turning to online offerings first. The American Research Group, Inc. reported that this is the first year that respondents will spend almost 50% more online when compared to the amount they will spend purchasing gifts through traditional store catalogs. They reported that "In telephone interviews with a random sample of 1,100 adults nationwide conducted November 17 through 20, 2009, the average planned spending of \$417 for 2009 is down about 3% from planned spending in the 2008 survey" ([American Research Group](#)). Millions of web shoppers are expected to be cruising the web, looking for good buys from the comfort of their own computer desk.



Savvy merchants are aware and ready - and the message on the business front is "Give them what they want: quality and top-notch service!" Shoppers want to sit comfortably in their home wearing PJs while they go through their list. But that's where the casualness stops. They still expect - no - demand respect and efficient service. No cutting corners. No shoddy merchantise. Guarantees, fast secure transactions and delivery are a must. Even if consumers don't actually buy online, many check for deals, prices, comparison shopping, product reviews and reports, and checking for local availabilities.

## Fine tune Your Infrastructure

Think about your favorite real-time store. What makes it your favorite? Is it the merchandise? The service? The atmosphere? All three? Chances are, it is all of these key factors. As you set up shop online, remember your own criteria for quality shopping. Apply your own high standards to your store or company online. This is the first crucial step in attracting your share of holiday shopper traffic. Make sure you make their experience on your site pleasant, rewarding and seamless. No second guessing. Design your site to make it easy for them to spend their money on your products or service. Set up feedback and inquiry forms that work - ones that get answered within 24 hours. Keep your prices reasonable, including shipping and handling fees. Give your customers an iron-clad guarantee



and stick to it, reinforced with a generous and tolerant return policy. Foremost, make sure all financial transactions are safe and secure - especially credit card or bank number handling. If you are looking for lots of customers, make sure your hosting site can take it! Give yourself ample space to handle all that prospective traffic!

## **Make it Easy to Buy**

When you go shopping in a store, do you enjoy walking down each aisle looking for one or more items. Let's say the aisles have no labels or signs and the store is laid out in a haphazard way. How long would it take before you felt frustrated? Not long, right? The same applies to online shopping. If your potential customer has to wade through screens of introductory pages and forms, they are going to hit that "Back" button within a few minutes. If you are lucky - it could be a few seconds! Remember - keep it simple. Top online merchants strive for a "One Click" setup on their catalogue pages. Leave no room for doubt or exasperation. Usher your viewers into your showroom graciously, and bend over backwards to make their shopping time count. Keep in mind that the best customers keep coming back. So, make them feel at home.



It takes 4.6 clicks to satisfy a customer, according to a survey from the E-tailing Group, Inc. that examined the average response and fulfillment times of 100 online merchants in 15 consumer categories. The survey found that the average shopping time was 3.67 minutes, and items took 4.4 days to be delivered - results that fell comfortably within the e-tailing group's criteria. Shopping time improved from the fourth quarter of 2002, when customers took 4.08 minutes to complete their spending spree, while delivery time remained the same. The point is, let visitors know right away what you can do for them. Make it clear what you are selling and that you are there to meet their Christmas shopping needs. It's important to assure them that they will receive their merchandise by Christmas, so stay on top of shipping times and cutoff dates (on an international level).

## **Reach for Recruitment, Retention and Referrals**

Attracting buyers to your site is one thing, giving them a reason to come back, again and again, is a whole different ball of wax. This requires the strategy of attraction and cultivation. Treat your customers like royalty and they will give you their loyalty. People enjoy finding vendors and businesses who meet their needs in a timely and gracious way. They prefer sites where they can duck in quickly, tend to their business and leave feeling satisfied and taken care of. Get to know your customers, reward them for repeat business and offer them value for their dollar. Satisfied customers not only stick with you, but they also draw a crowd. Referrals are a necessary bonus of cultivating a loyal set of clients. If they like you, they're going to spread the word. So, give them something to talk about! You can have your share of the Holiday spending - you just have to catch that special business magic Spirit.

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