

Retailers worry about Internet, e-commerce



**PC
WENDLAND**
The e-commerce shopping season officially starts Friday, right along with the regular retail season. But already, signs are strong that this year, shopping on line will actually start to put a dent in some traditional store shopping. "You owe a loyalty to your local retailer," read an e-mail I received this past week from a merchant whose store in an Oakland County suburb "downtown" is fairly well known. "Every time you promote shopping online, you're shooting it in the back and causing prices to rise."

"I'm not promoting anything. But I'd sure be remiss if I didn't point out what's happening out there in cyberspace."

For the past two weeks, so many people have logged onto the huge Toy R Us Web site (www.toysrus.com) that, if you do get through, you're greeted with this message:

"...we have been getting millions of visitors to our Web site over the last few days. Right now, we are processing thousands of new orders every hour. Because of the high demand, we are at full guest capacity and are therefore currently unable to process your request to enter our site right now."

And the real season has yet to start.

Last week, according to a survey commissioned by the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs, Internet shoppers spent \$222 million. Just last week. That's up \$21 million over the week before. And, according to the survey, the vast majority of those who bought online said their spending had nothing to do with holiday shopping. That, they said, was yet to come.

Last year, some \$3.1 billion was spent online during the holiday season. This year, estimates range from \$10 billion to \$12 billion.

Cameron Meieroefer is an online analyst for PC Data Online. He told Cnet News (www.cnet.com) that the data doesn't suggest that brick and mortar retail stores will be com-

pletely neglected. Indeed, while 90 percent of those online shoppers polled said they immensely enjoy Internet shopping, 60 percent of them still intend to buy their gifts from real stores.

But the trend is clear. Retailers will feel the competition from e-commerce. "Each week (Internet shoppers) spend a little more time online," Meieroefer says.

"Books, CDs, and computer sales are still the drivers, but apparel is the fastest growing segment," says Brett Azuma, vice president for electronic business at DataQuest, a unit of Gartner Group (www.infoedge.com/gartner.htm).

Shop till you drop

Azuma says the growth rate simply shows no sign of tapering off. "This is not a niche market, this is not an emerging market; this has become a mainstream market," he contends.

Jupiter Communications (www.jup.com) is another online marketing firm that is trying to chart this trend. Jupiter predicts that there will be 10 million new online buyers this holiday season. Those shoppers will be spending more — from \$412 per person last year to \$919 in 2003.

Allen Weiner, a vice president for Nielsen/Net Ratings, says his company has started a special Internet holiday e-commerce index. "We anticipated that shopping would start earlier this year, but not this early."

Convenience is cited over and over as the main reason folks buy online. People like clicking a mouse instead of hoofing it through a mall.

And the so-called "dot-com" folks are also undoubtedly helped along by a blitz of advertising. I watched the Lions game the other day on TV and was amazed to note that during one commercial break, literally every advertiser was an Internet shopping site. This coming Tuesday, I'll be in New York doing a coast-to-coast satellite TV tour, reporting for more than a dozen stations from California to New York about the coming online shopping season.

Everyone, it seems is ecstatic over e-commerce.

Except most retailers. And the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Governors' Association.

Last week leaders from both

groups called for taxes to be collected on all those billions being spent online. All the paranoia and hand wringing is going to increase as the Net becomes still more pervasive. The smart retailers, of course, will realize that there is still a need to physically inspect the things we buy, to try them on, kick the tires, smell the perfume, look at the jewelry sparkle. And they'll figure out how the Internet can be used to turn Net surfers into face-to-face buyers.

So the smart ones will open up their own Web sites to showcase their wares and attract the eyeballs of Net surfers. A good example: The Toy Soldier and Doll Hospital in Berkley (www.Toy-shoppe.com).

Jack Zagrodzki, vice president of marketing, has put together a very creative and compelling Web site that showcases the store's emphasis on non-violent, old fashioned toys, classic playthings and learning aids.

"We decided to move forward with technology," Zagrodzki wrote me in an e-mail. "The Internet is not going away."

Instead of finding the Internet a threat, Zagrodzki has found it to be a great opportunity. While his store's Web site builds loyalty and strong relations with local customers, it opens up the store to a worldwide audience, who never would have heard of the place were it not online. And online, it's of course open 7-by-24.

This shopping season will be pivotal, I predict, in the Internet's evolution. Online shopping will truly mainstream this year.

And, I also predict, the response of retailers to this trend ... as a threat or an opportunity ... will seal their fates within a few years.

What do you think? How has the Internet impacted your shopping habits? E-mail your response to me. And also send along Web sites from local retailers you think have done a good job using the Internet to draw people to their bricks and mortar stores.

Mike Wendland reports about computers and the Internet for NBC-television stations coast-to-coast. His radio show is heard every weekend on TalkRadio 1270, WXYT. You can reach Mike through his Web site at www.pcmiike.com.

Medicare Blue offers great benefits!

The Medicare Blue Enhanced Basic option includes prescription, vision and hearing care:

- Prescription drug coverage: small copayments for prescription drugs or refills (50% or \$10 generic, \$20 brand name). \$400 annual maximum (\$100 per quarter)
- Vision Care: an annual eye exam for a \$10 copayment plus an annual discount on frames and lenses for glasses
- Hearing Care: an annual hearing exam with a \$10 copayment

Medicare Blue covers everything Medicare does — and more — for no monthly premium!

Or, choose the Premier option and for \$30 a month* you get increased prescription coverage and an annual vision allowance.

If you live in Michigan,* and are eligible for Medicare, then Blue Care Network Medicare Blue is the health care plan for you! Medicare Blue's network of carefully screened medical professionals in your community includes more than 4,000 doctors and 41 hospitals. Chances are your doctor's already part of the plan!

To learn more about Medicare Blue, come to one of our free educational seminars. Call us to reserve your space:

**1-888-333-3129 ext. 600
(toll free)**

**TDD 1-800-257-9980
(for hearing disabled)**

Medicare Blue Educational Seminars

Birmingham
Tuesday, November 23
2:30 p.m.
at Pancake House
33703 S. Woodward

Madison Heights
Friday, December 3
9:30 a.m.
at Big Boy
31270 John R Rd.

Bloomfield
Thursday, December 2
2 p.m.
at Bill Knapp's
3900 Telegraph Rd.

Rochester Hills
Wednesday, December 1
2 p.m.
at Bill Knapp's
3010 W. Walton

Clarkston
Tuesday, November 23
9:30 a.m.
at Big Boy
6440 Dixie Hwy.

Royal Oak
Monday, November 22
Friday, December 3
2 p.m.
At Royal Oak Library
222 East 11 Mile Rd.

Lake Orion
Wednesday, December 1
10 a.m.
at Lake Orion Library
825 Joslyn Rd.



Blue Care Network Medicare Blue

*To become a Medicare Blue member, you must live in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb or Washtenaw County. You must be eligible for Medicare Parts A and B and continue to pay your Medicare Part B premium. You must receive your care from a Medicare Blue provider, except for emergency or certain urgently needed care.

Blue Care Network of Michigan is a non-profit corporation and an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Healing Touch from page D4

of chemotherapy and radiation, pre and post surgical procedures, rehabilitation and maintaining wellness.

Welcer says among the many benefits of HT is that "any one can perform the work," whether you are a trained professional or a layman. She offers informational sessions to patients, family members and staff once a week on how it can be used in concert with medical treatments.

"Because this is heart-centered work you have to want to do this and not everyone does," said Welcer. "Not all the nurses on this unit are interested or comfortable with Healing Touch."

To date though, Welcer has offered basic Healing and Therapeutic Touch classes to staff members since July. Approximately one dozen employees have participated in the training

and future classes are being planned. While two of the staff members have completed the basic I class and possess the basic skills to provide Healing Touch, Welcer said she will continue to collaboratively practice HT with staff members until they are fully comfortable working alone.

Healing and Therapeutic Touch also meet the intrinsic need humans have to be touched. The skin-to-skin contact has been shown to provide comfort, warmth and solace for an individual whether they are ailing or in good health.

Bertha Miller, a 79-year-old Wayne resident and patient at Oakwood Hospital, received a Healing Touch treatment while on the third floor unit where she was being treated for cancer.

"It was beautiful," said Miller.

"It was peaceful and it felt so good," Miller said she would recommend it to others both for the healing and calming effect the therapy provided. The Wayne senior, who was about to be transferred to Arbor Hospice in Washtenaw County, was hoping the therapy would be provided at the Ann Arbor hospice as part of her care.

"I would really like that. I loved it," said Miller.

Barb Welcer, RN, BSN and certified Healing Touch practitioner, can be reached for Healing Touch sessions at her in-studio home by calling (248) 348-7271. On special request she will provide treatments at the hospital or at your home. A reduced rate is offered to seniors.

Healing and Therapeutic Touch also meet the intrinsic need humans have to be touched. The skin-to-skin contact has been shown to provide comfort, warmth and solace for an individual whether they are ailing or in good health.

People want to gain control of their lives and are tired of feeling bad and living with pain. We offer natural healing options for them to shed all the emotional and physical baggage many of us carry around," said Krajovic.

"We encourage people to come in and see what's here. Some people just stop in and spend a few minutes here because they say they feel better after they leave."

BodyWorks from page D4

py, cranio sacral therapy, reflexology, and Reiki. His clients range from individuals suffering from a variety of ailments and injuries including trauma from a blow to the head, fall or accident; lower back pain, postural distortion, migraines, TMJ, and fibromyalgia to people seeking to maintain overall health and wellness.

West says he also receives referrals from St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor primarily treating head and neck injury victims.

When treating chronic pain patients, West says it's a matter of treating not just the afflicted area but the "whole neurological system," in order to correct the distortion. "Muscles have memory," said West. The BodyWorks therapist says he and his clients will work toward strengthening the injured muscle — not just manipulating the tissues and

muscles.

Initially a complete history of the patient is taken including cranial measurements, past medical conditions, active diseases, prescription medication, prior injuries and symptoms. Then West and Krajovic work with their client toward addressing the physical and emotional issues they hope to resolve, and focus on helping the body learn to heal itself through their guidance.

"People want to gain control of their lives and are tired of feeling bad and living with pain. We offer natural healing options for them to shed all the emotional and physical baggage many of us carry around," said Krajovic.

"We encourage people to come in and see what's here. Some people just stop in and spend a few minutes here because they say they feel better after they leave."