



Online Merchandising (2 of 2) Involvers that Engage Customers

February 22, 2010

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commentary

Results of the e-tailing group *12th Annual Mystery Shopping Study* show monumental increases in adoption of social media over last year. Together with established merchandising, merchants are using these tactics to position for growth as the economy improves. Making websites easier and more efficient to use, differentiating oneself from the competition, and engaging customers all are strategically essential initiatives to achieve bottom-line growth.

The initial e-tail detail in this series of two, highlighted findings and showcased examples of efficiencies for ease of use and differentiators to drive conversion; this edition focuses on **involvers to engage customers**.

Here we take a look at best-in-class key pages that achieve this objective via ratings and reviews, top rated products, blogs, sharing, and mobile commerce.

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12th Annual Mystery
Shopping Study Report

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trends

Merchants are Seeking Engaging Ways to Foster eCommerce via Community and Social Media

Stalwart in this arena, **ratings and reviews** with a 28% increase in presence (74% vs. 58%) demonstrate that customers want to know they are making the right buying decision and seek confirmation from their peers to help validate purchases. **Top rated products** share this astounding ascent as 49% of merchants identify them vs. 24% last year; a 104% increase.

Ratings, Reviews, Top Sellers

This product page from **Bass Pro Shops** uses reviews, recommendations, and top sellers to sell suggestively along with informative content and tools.

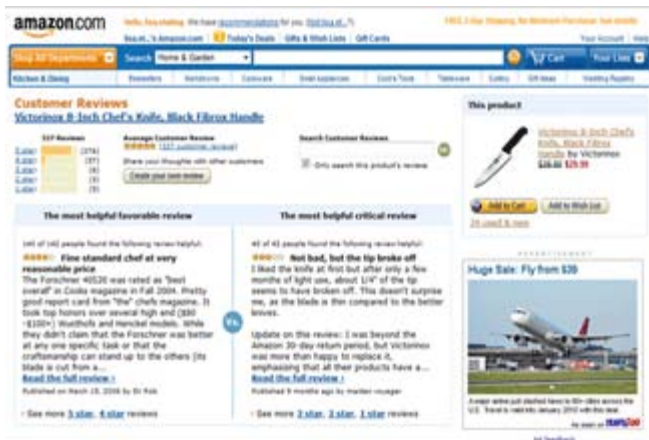
- A tabbed presentation includes customer reviews, Q&A, and the product description



- The customer reviews tab goes beyond ratings to include an excerpt with a quote, a gifting recommendation, requests for feedback, and social links to share
- Recommendations based on what those who viewed this item ultimately purchased
- Top sellers round out the page

Customer Reviews

Amazon takes reviews a step further with a complete page of information gleaned from customer feedback. Although the actual product presentation is minimized one can still add to cart or wish list without further navigation.



- Bar chart summarizes rankings for the total number of reviews on a 5-star scale
- Average customer review score highlighted
- Most helpful favorable and critical reviews are shown in detail with links to more info and similar reviews
- Search reviews with option for limiting search to the product shown
- Prompt for shoppers to create their own review
- A non-related, revenue generating advertisement takes about 1/6th of the page with a link for ad feedback

Blogs realize a 38% increase over last year (36% vs. 26%) as people become more comfortable with "sharing" information/experiences and merchants leverage SEO benefits.

eBags' Blog enables shoppers to "Get the Scoop on eBags and the Products We Sell" with an array of involving techniques.

- The featured post on Laptop Bags links to an interactive bag finder and a category presentation
- A category list provides quick links to other products
- A "live" calendar and a list of featured posts both enable viewing blog archives



- A text box is provided to add posts and comments
- The navigation menu creatively includes: Home, Shop Bags, Bag Glossary, About, Meet the Authors, and Contact Us

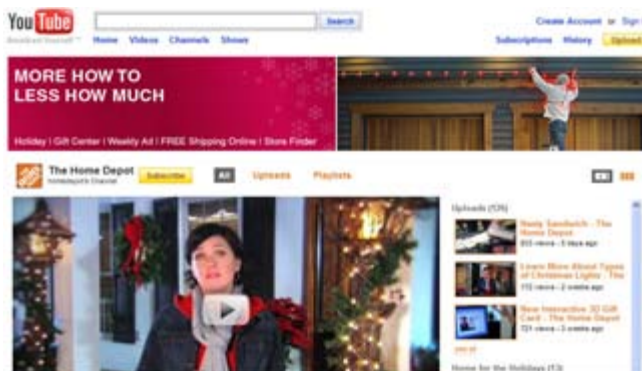
Among the EG100, **sharing** increased exponentially by 139% over last year (67% vs. 28%) and we believe this is just the beginning as merchants look to further understand the power and viral effects of community.



Links to Social Media

These effective tactics mobilize brand advocates and influencers to spread the word about products/services. Leading merchants are now including them in key locations throughout their sites.

- On their home page **Sur La Table** invites shoppers to "Share your Passion for Cooking" via links to Twitter and Facebook



The **Home Depot** seeks greater customer involvement with their own "channel" on YouTube where viewers can choose from a library of streaming videos supporting their branding theme: "More How To, Less How Much."

- The navigational menu brings viewers back to shopping via links to: Holiday, Gift Center, Weekly Ad, FREE Shipping Online, and Store Finder

Lastly, **mobile commerce** is just in its infancy with 13% of the EG100 participating, but we expect to see stronger numbers next year as smaller merchants follow early adopters. Throughout the 4Q '09 holiday season this channel was most frequently used to find a store or get competitive pricing.

Mobile Commerce and More

Sears wisely gives their customers a choice of how to "get connected" for up to the minute news of sales and special promotions then wraps up this informative page with a link to view this



week's ad.

- Cell Phone/PDA text alerts
- Email for weekly ads, exclusive discounts, and other offers including a \$10 coupon for immediate signup
- Desktop alerts via an app that sends real-time news
- iGoogle ad alert gadget sends news to one's customized igoogle home page
- Yahoo! widget downloaded to the desktop delivers desired info
- Add RRS feeds
- Add Sears to web browser favorites

Community/Social Metrics	e-tailing 100 4Q 2009	e-tailing 100 4Q 2008
Ratings/ Reviews	74%	58%
Top Rated Products	49%*	24%
Share	67%	28%
Link to Social Networking Site	60%	N/A
Blog	36%	26%
Mobile Commerce	13%	N/A
<i>Source: the e-tailing group 12th Annual Mystery Shopping Study, 4Q '09</i>		
<i>*Subset of survey</i>		

checklist

1. Respond to the needs of customers with an intriguing assortment and the "right" mix of best-in-class features and functionality
2. Involve customers via ratings and reviews then parlay their feedback into content that gives other shoppers the confidence to buy
3. Showcase top rated products to further sell suggestively
4. Evaluate your community agenda to embrace social media and consumer passion for new technology
5. Deploy blogs that communicate your branding socially but enable quickly linking back to shopping
6. Test mobile commerce applications judiciously
7. Prioritize a merchandising roadmap that is evaluated frequently to ensure the right feature set

who we are

About the e-tailing group, inc.

The e-tailing group, inc. serves as the multi-channel merchant's eye, bringing a merchant's sensibility to evolving the multi-channel shopping experience. A Chicago-based consultancy, they provide practical strategic perspectives and actionable merchandising solutions to merchants selling online as well as to enabling technology firms.

For more background about this research study, including a list of merchants surveyed or for additional information on the e-tailing group, inc. please contact Lauren Freedman at LF@e-tailing.com or visit the e-tailing group's "new" website www.e-tailing.com.



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**Looking to get a handle on which merchandising tactics are essential?
Wondering if your customer service makes the grade?
Want the inside scoop about the features we found on 100 B2C websites?**

This study benchmarks over 280 features on 100 B2C merchants that were mystery shopped in 4Q '09. Our extensive summary highlights key metrics and trends from both a service and selling perspective. Throughout, the presence of each element is presented via a series of 14 categories including an industry-at-large perspective.

- Stellar merchants are identified from a merchandising and customer service perspective
- A comprehensive index of those features and their penetration are included for at-a-glance viewing.
- Execution checklists wrap up the report with a goal of elevating features to differentiate and drive dollars

**Purchase the downloadable report for \$395 via this link to PayPal
or by contacting [Lauren Freedman](#) for credit card payment
(phone 773-975-7280)**



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the e-tailing 100 Merchants 2009

1-800 Flowers	Clinique	Giggle	New Egg	Sony Style
Aeropostale	Coach	Godiva	Nordstrom	Staples
Amazon.com	Cooking.com	Golfsmith	Office Depot	Sundance
American Girl	Crate & Barrel	Green Mountain Coffee	Orvis	Target
Apple	Crutchfield	Harry & David	Overstock	The Avenue
Armani Exchange	Diapers.com	HP Home & Home Office	PetSmart	The Children's Place
Aveda	Dick's Sporting Goods	HSN	Polo	The Container Store
Bare Necessities	Discovery Channel	iRobot	Pottery Barn	The Home Depot
Barnes & Noble	Drs Foster & Smith	J. Crew	QVC	Things Remembered
Bass Pro	Drugstore.com	JCPenney	RadioShack	Toys 'R Us
Bath & Body Works	eBags.com	King Arthur Flour	RedEnvelope	Under Armour
Bed Bath & Beyond	EBGames	Kohl's	REI	Urban Outfitters
Best Buy	eToys	L.L. Bean	Road Runner Sports	Victoria's Secret
Blue Nile	Famous Footwear	Lamps Plus	Saks Fifth Avenue	Vitamin Shoppe
Bluefly	Forever 21	Lancome USA	Sears	Walgreen's
Borders	Frontgate	Lands' End	Sephora	Wal-Mart
Brooks Brothers	Gaiam	Lego	Shop NBC	Williams-Sonoma
Brookstone	Gap	Lowes	Shop PBS	Wine.com
Buy.com	Gardener's Supply	Macy's	Sketchers	Zales
Cabela's	Garnet Hill	MoMA	Solutions	Zappos

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