

Direct Marketing Association, Inc.  
1120 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, New York 10036-6700  
Tel: 212.768.7277  
Fax: 212.768.4547

Direct Marketing Association, Inc.  
1111 19th Street NW, Suite 1100  
Washington, DC 20036-3603  
Tel: 202.955.5030  
Fax: 202.955.0085



# News & Information

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Amy Blankenship  
212.790.1523  
[ablanken@the-dma.org](mailto:ablanken@the-dma.org)

## **ONLINE CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVED IN 2001 HOLIDAY SEASON, ACCORDING TO NEW DIRECT MARKETING ASSOCIATION STUDY**

**NEW YORK, January 14, 2002** – Direct and interactive marketers are leveraging their customer service expertise and improved Web site infrastructures to maximize online marketing opportunities, according to a new mystery shopping study from the Direct Marketing Association (The DMA) in partnership with the e-tailing group, inc., a Chicago-based consultancy.

“Marketers are using time-tested direct marketing techniques on the Web to improve customer service and retention,” said H. Robert Wientzen, president & CEO, The DMA. “This study showed that during the recent holiday season, marketers did an impressive job of delivering excellent customer service and addressing factors that disappointed some consumers during the 2000 holiday season.”

“As the world of e-commerce matures, savvy multi-channel merchants know that exemplary customer service will be the backbone of this important channel, just as it is in all other shopping channels,” said Lauren Freedman, president, the e-tailing group.

Key findings of the study revealed that:

- Companies are making it easier for consumers to buy, with the average number of clicks to checkout reduced to 5.36 clicks from 8.76 clicks one year ago.
- 54 percent of sites offered real-time inventory status, compared to 42 percent a year ago.
- 46 percent of sites offered gift search features, compared to only 14 percent last year.
- Privacy is a priority, with 90 percent of sites linking to privacy policies directly from the home page.
- 80 percent of sites sent e-mail shipping confirmations, up from 54 percent in 2000.
- 79 percent of sites enabled customers to check their order status online.

- more -

## ONLINE CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVED IN 2001 HOLIDAY SEASON/2

- 99 percent of sites provided toll-free numbers for customer service.
- Orders were successful on the first attempt on 93 percent of sites, showing that merchants have improved infrastructure to meet growing demand.

The *Mystery Shopping Study* was conducted for The DMA by the e-tailing group, inc. During the fourth quarter of 2001, one product was purchased from each of 100 e-commerce sites in 16 product categories, including apparel, books/music, computers, consumer electronics, department stores, gifts, and home/garden. The research studied more than 100 factors across 13 tool sets that included customer service, gift services, promotional strategies, inventory/backorders, order processes and tracking, shipping, order confirmations, and post-order e-mail communications.

The study will be available for purchase in late February 2002 and can be ordered from The DMA Online Store ([www.the-dma.org](http://www.the-dma.org)). The price is \$195 for DMA members, and \$395 for non-members.

###

Editor's note: An executive summary of the report, along with a list of the 100 sites evaluated, can be obtained from Lauren Temmler, DMA Corporate & Marketing Communications, at 212.790.1589 or [ltemmler@the-dma.org](mailto:ltemmler@the-dma.org).