

Medallion Fulfillment & Logistics

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eCommerce Trends to Watch for Holiday 2012 Selling

Though your business may still be feeling the heat of summer, the holiday season is just around the corner. The crush of shipping and delivery orders typical of November and December is going to place fresh demands on your resources. But you can make the most of the season by investigating some of the top trends in eCommerce. One or more may be the way customers will be doing their holiday shopping this year.

- **Independent Retailers.** Sites like Etsy, Artfire and Instructables have changed the perception of how "regular people" sell their wares online. No longer are small businesses tied to large commercial sites like eBay or Amazon; instead, they take their brands to sites that draw consumers already interested in browsing and buying. And it's not just arts and crafts taking this route. Some everyday commodities, like consumer electronics and household tools, are showing up on independent retailing sites.
- **DIY eCommerce.** For retailers who wish to bypass the competition on retail sites, services like Shopify allows them to build their own eCommerce store. Design services, secured shopping carts, unlimited bandwidth and other services impart a professional look and feel to these sites, allowing their owners to compete with Etsy and other large retailers.
- **Social Gifting.** The power of Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and other social networks for business has been well established. They facilitate brand awareness and credibility long before the transaction takes place. For 2012, the social media trend in eCommerce point to social gifting, which lets users purchase and send gifts via their social accounts. According to Daily Deal Media, retailers "are realizing that social gifting gives them the chance to engage targeted shoppers by paying peanuts as compared to conventional advertising methods."
- **Mom & Pop Sites.** The little shop on the corner has gone digital. Even as consumers are swamped with coupons and promotions tied to big-box stores and sites, the "mom & pop" effect of a small, personal company draws attention. Mom & pops can effectively target local consumers; use SEO to facilitate search results, and offer personalized service and flexibility on perks like free shipping and payment options.
- **Remarketing.** If you've ever researched a product or service -- only to find an ad for it popping up on a completely different site later on -- you've experienced remarketing. Thanks to tags on Google AdWords, this technology "follows" consumers around the

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Internet. Some people find remarketing a little creepy and "stalker"-like, but for other retailers, keeping a product top-of-mind represents a good investment.

- **Mobile.** Smartphones are improving, tablets are on fire, and everyone wants their shopping on-the-go. Just like last holiday season, this year's consumer traffic will be largely driven by mobile devices. Though the most common mobile activity is comparing prices and reviews, the trend toward purchasing from the phone means that retailers need to keep their virtual doors open around the clock. And while the technology allows for unprecedented access, the limitations of space on smartphone or even a tablet demands a simple, user-friendly interface that facilitates shopping.
- **"Touchpoint" Commerce.** Consumers expect to find what they want from a website, a mailed catalog, a brick-and-mortar store, a social site, an app, or any combination. The challenge for companies is to maintain a consistent look and feel for their eCommerce campaign across multiple channels, and to ensure that shoppers get a good experience from every touchpoint. For the upcoming holiday season, the touchpoint trend points to online maps that guide consumers to physical stores; and QR codes that enable purchases thorough interactive displays and ads.
- **Email, Texting and Chat.** Sometimes the established technology is the best option. Companies committed to customer relationships across the purchase cycle will continue to use traditional, familiar technology to stay in touch, promote special offers and thank shoppers for their business. Just as online marketing is eclipsing traditional methods like direct mail, Yellow Pages and radio spots, emerging ecommerce trends will continue to drive purchases as consumers become more mobile and more tech-savvy.

About the Author

Jan Stewart writes exclusively for Medallion Fulfillment & Logistics, a family owned fulfillment service business located in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. When you need simple or comprehensive assistance with warehousing, order processing, and shipping for your store or e-commerce business, consider Medallion first. Visit them at www.MedallionEnterprises.com.