

Holiday Hints

Get Your Site Set For Happy Holidays

(NAPSA)—With more shoppers spending time online this holiday season instead of waiting on line, many companies have realized the value of developing an Internet sales presence.

According to a recent survey from Forrester Research and Shop.org, online sales are expected to increase 22 percent over a year ago, reaching \$172.4 billion.

To help small businesses venture into e-commerce, Lisa Schneegans, a small business technology consultant, e-Commerce expert and president of Praxis Software, has developed a 10-point checklist. These tips help retailers leverage online sales technology and reinforce their business operations for a new year of higher revenues:

Ten Ways to Optimize Your Web Site for the Holiday Boom

1. Test your site early and often. Plan ahead to make sure your site can handle the holiday shopping frenzy.

2. Test the integrity of your content. Check for misspelled words, broken links, busted pictures, etc. A nonprofessional appearance may lead to a bad customer experience.

3. Make sure images load quickly. A slow-loading page may simply drive customers to click on to the next site. You want to minimize page download time.

4. Make sure you're up to snuff on patches. Install, verify, test and lock down all patches and upgrades now, before the season gets too busy.

5. "Load test" your site. You're expecting (or at least hoping for) a rush of customers. So it's a good idea to determine how much traffic your Web site can support.

6. Create sample transactions.



E-commerce lets companies open their target market to the millions of consumers who purchase online.

These can simulate expected customer traffic and Web transactions. By running "synthetic" transactions periodically—say, every five to 15 minutes—you know, before your customers do, if there is a problem.

7. Check the performance of your network provider. You can do this by looking at a site that is similar to yours in your area but connected to another network. In a fiercely competitive business, every second matters.

8. Add cross-sell and up-sell opportunities throughout your site. This means, for example, suggesting table linens on the dinnerware, silverware and glassware pages.

9. Make it easy to find and contact customer service. Providing an easy-to-find phone number on the site helps online shoppers feel more secure. Clearly state your company's return policy and deadline dates.

10. Make your search function more effective.

To learn more, visit www.praxissoft.com.