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**Merchandising on the Web and Off**

**By Marcia Yudkin**

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Now that I have several new products coming out in succession, I've been thinking a lot about how best to feature them at my Web site. My thoughts have turned to how supermarkets and department stores highlight certain products, and I've found useful analogies between catching the attention of a customer wheeling a cart up and down the aisles and a shopper on the Web.

Here are some merchandising techniques you'll find in bricks-and-mortars stores and their counterparts on the Web:

1. New products. In stores, these often smack you in the eye when you first walk in. On the Web, popular sites feature new products in a prominent spot on the home page.
2. Seasonal items. My local supermarket places these at the ends of the aisles and in a special interior aisle set aside for barbecue supplies in summer, Halloween candy in fall and rock salt in winter. On the Web, they often are featured on the home page but not centrally, getting less of a spotlight than the new products.
3. Combinations of items. In department stores, you'll often see signs saying, "Buy three for only \$25." Amazon.com is currently promoting book titles in this way, bundling two related titles together for an appealing discount, making sales of those items jump.
4. Non-traditional combinations. In supermarkets, instead of simply putting fruit with fruit and condiments with condiments, this involves putting caramel and piecrusts next to the apples and lemons on top of the fish counter. On the Web, this seems feasible at sites selling more than one kind of merchandise.

5. Add-ons. In supermarkets and department stores, these are the impulse items near the checkout counters, and in shops with personal service, it's the sales person asking, "Would you like a tie to match?" Again, I haven't seen this implemented on the Web, but it seems as if it could be programmed into the shopping process.

6. Customer mailings. At a lot of stores, you can sign up to get notice by postcard of upcoming sales. The online counterpart is pretty common, as with e-mails about cheap flights for the coming weekend.

7. Loyalty programs. Here, a department store promises 10 percent off today

if you sign up for our store charge card. A supermarket offers a free Thanksgiving turkey if you spend more than \$X,000 all year. Bonuses for buying frequently work well online too, because they can easily be automated.

8. Ads. You'll often see inserts in the local paper announcing the week's specials at supermarkets. Online, the equivalent would be banner ads or ads in ezines announcing promotional prices for a limited time.

David Weltman of Future Now puts it this way: "Merchandising is making sure awareness of your product or service breaks the preoccupation of your shopper and becomes part of his or her buying process." I'd amend that slightly, because good merchandising doesn't always interrupt the shopper's absorption. Put the right item in the right place in your store or Web site and it smoothly becomes part of the shopper's experience. Ka-CHING!

### **A Look At Third Party Ebay Tools.**

**By Kirsten Hawkins**

There are plenty of companies out there offering third party eBay tools. Most of them are web-based instead of downloadable, so you pay a monthly fee instead of just buying the software. But do you know what these sites can do for you? It can be hard to get to grips with what's out there using a search engine, so here's a quick rundown of the key players.

Andale (  
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Andale offer lots of small products instead of one solution that does everything: you can take your pick from a lister, image hosting, counters, analysers, a gallery, a checkout and an email manager. The price plans are a bit of a maze, but quite reasonable as long as you don't go and use everything.

Andale's real claim to fame is that they've been doing it for so long - they're not some fly-by-night organisation, and many eBay sellers have been using their free counters for absolutely years. They also have a reputation for being very responsive to customers, and will often talk to you directly on their forums and implement any suggestions you might have for improving their software.

Vendio (

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Vendio offer two editions of their software, Sales Manager: a Merchandising edition and an Inventory edition. The difference between the two is that the Merchandising edition is designed to make it easier to list individual auctions, while the Inventory edition is for sellers who sell many of the same item. They offer a pay-as-you go price of 10c per auction.

They also offer software called Tickets Manager, special software for people who sell lots of tickets on eBay - an odd product to have, but useful if you happen to sell tickets. Other services offered by Vendio include web and image hosting, fancy Flash galleries of your products for your listings, and stores.

ChannelAdvisor (

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ChannelAdvisor offer their software in three versions: Enterprise, Merchant and Pro. Enterprise and Merchant are both designed for very big businesses, though, and the chances are that the Pro version does everything you'd want. ChannelAdvisor is popular among sellers who want a solution that they know is used and trusted on a very large scale by enterprise-level customers.

It offers all the standard bulk listing and inventory features, as well as the unique feature of being able to create auctions from an Excel spreadsheet of your inventory. The cost is high, though, at \$29.95 per month.

And Many, Many More...

eBay maintain a comprehensive directory of third-party software, which you can browse through anytime you have a few days to kill. You can look either for complete solutions or for each part of what you want individually - the choice is so daunting that there's bound to be something out there for you.

You can look at their directory at

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Once your items have sold and you're about to ship them, you might be a little nervous about whether you can trust your buyer. Our next email will give you a few tips for spotting problem buyers before you send them anything.

Kirsten Hawkins is an Ebay and internet auction enthusiast from Nashville, TN. Visit [for more great tips on how to make the most from Ebay and other online auctions.](#)



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