December 2008, No. 26

Welcome to the December 2008 edition of *eNews!*

This year has been the best year the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative has seen to date. Not only have we been able to formulate more of our curriculums into online learning modules, but we have also spotlighted these in a series of Webinars that target community and Extension educators. As an introduction for possible community implementation, each Webinar has been well-attended and have brought many new possible uses for our curriculums to light. In addition to the Webinars, this year has seen the launch of our Program Implementation Mini-Grants for Extension Educators and Teams to showcase new e-commerce curricula in their communities. Applications for the first round of grants are due on January 9. This holiday season, the SRDC would like to thank everyone who has made this year such an exciting time for the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative. We look forward to all the possibilities and growth that the New Year will bring to our program. We wish you a wonderful holiday season.

Shannon Lane Turner, eNews Editor

Experience Economy Webinar to Be Offered December 16
The National e-Commerce Extension Initiative will complete the Fall 2008 Webinar Series with Strengthening Competitive Advantage of Rural Businesses with e-Commerce and Experience Economy Strategy presented by the research team of Miyoung Jeong, Ann Marie Fiore, Haemoon Oh, Linda Niehm, and Cheryl Hausafus all of Iowa State University. This Webinar will be December 16, 2008 at 10 a.m. CST. Entrepreneurs will discover ways to assess experience economy strategies present in a business, use assessment tools to critique their current business, and apply experience-rich features to their business offerings. These online lessons are intended to be self-administered, providing an opportunity for the viewer to visit illustrative Web sites and to critique business offerings. For further information and login instructions, please go to http://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/index.html

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Two New Learning Modules Join "The Learning Center" Line Up
This month the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative launched two new learning modules to the online learning center. Helping Artisans Reach Global Markets is available at http://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/curricula/artisans/index.html and includes both a self-paced learning module as well as full instructions on teaching the module for the community educator or leader of an artisan collective.

The second, e-Commerce as a Strategy for Improving Business Vitality:
Lessons Learned from Rural Businesses is available at
http://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/curricula/case_studies/index.html. The curriculum lists case studies that both business leaders thinking of adapting e-commerce strategies as well as entrepreneurs will find beneficial. These case studies spotlight both the positive and challenging aspects of e-commerce adoption and come complete with Web site links and product descriptions. Other curricula currently

available include Connecting Rural Communities and Internet Strategies to Improve Farm Business Management.

The State of Ecommerce Innovation - a Competitive Survey
By Julian Chu

Cisco recently issued the 3rd installment in its annual survey of online retailers' ecommerce capabilities. The survey scope was expanded this year to include both North American and European retailers. Cisco asserts that retailers need to proactively address the growing usage of mobile devices for shopping, especially by younger consumers. The study found that 42 percent of surveyed retailers provide product content through mobile-specific sites/pages, 15 percent enable customers to buy products via mobile devices, and another 10 percent are using SMS to answer shopper questions. To review this survey in more detail, go to http://blog.demandware.com/blog/bid/5795/The-State-of-Ecommerce-Innovation-a-Competitive-Survey.

Is WiMAX the Solution to the Digital Divide?
By Holly Otterbein

WiMAX, a wireless communication technology with a greater reach and lower cost than traditional WiFi, holds the promise of extending low-cost Internet access into remote rural areas and underserved urban neighborhoods. WiFi has an average reach of about 150 feet, making it suitable for small-scale wireless networks in homes, hotels or coffee shops. WiMAX, by contrast, has a range of approximately 12 miles, which allows its costs to be shared among a broader swath of users, thus lowering the cost to each consumer. A recent article in the Next American City magazine, though, suggests that the promise of WiMAX for low-income consumers is being hindered by the management of public wireless networks by for-profit companies who are charging just as much for WiMAX as they do for broadband access. Read more about the WiMAX technology and the effect it can have on the digital divide at http://americancity.org/daily/entry/1050/.

Don't Mess With the Platform - Enhance the E-Commerce Experience
By Joe Chung

Many retailers are considering major changes to their platforms at a time when consumer confidence is in the tank. Online retailers should instead focus on the customer experience, which will keep shoppers spending, not on a new platform the customers won't even notice. Instead the article reminds etailers to focus on customer experience and engaging the shopper as means to retain customers.
Read more at http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/65128.html.

Keep Your Customers from Straying
By Lesley Spencer Pyle

Follow these eight simple methods of building business relationships that last. During these economic times, people are more selective on where they spend their money. So when they do decide to open their checkbooks, you want to be their first choice. Therefore, it's important your current customers choose to stay with you. To read more on customer relations, go to http://www.entrepreneur.com/homebasedbiz/homebasedbizcolumnistlesleyspencerpyle/article194784.html

FreeShipping.org: Painless Deliveries
By Vivian Wagner

Freeshipping.org started out in December 2007 as a side project for the founders of a Web design firm. Since then, it has generated leads for dozens of online retailers, who sometimes create shipping promotions specifically for the users of Freeshipping.org. For more information on how to use this customer retention tool, go to http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/FreeShippingorg-Painless-Deliveries-65184.html

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Sales and Marketing

Online Advertising: A Glimmer of Light?
By Jeff Meisner

The steep rise in Internet advertising revenue over the last year indicates more and more marketers are turning to the Web at a time when the global economy is drastically slowing down and the costs associated with traditional modes of advertising -- print, radio and television -- are on the rise. Review the full article at http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/65238.html

What's Old Is New Again for Driving Web Site Traffic
By Jeremiah Johnston

While online business owners have become more aware of tactics for driving traffic to their Web sites, it is easy to overlook the more basic methods amidst the rise of new Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques involving the content and HTML coding of Web sites. Search engine traffic can be inconsistent -- search engine algorithms can change, and search engines don't get paid by the organic traffic they create. Online businesses should invest in opening multiple channels of traffic toward their Web site, and one of the most time-tested yet little-known sources of traffic is called "direct navigation traffic." To review this information further, go to http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/65095.html.

Top 11 Money-Wasting AdWords Mistakes
By Jon Rognerud

Learn how to avoid costly errors and save yourself from big headaches in pay-per-click advertising, specifically AdWords. This column assumes that you're fairly new to Google AdWords. If you want to

educate yourself further, the 10 to 20 hours you can spend at the [Google AdWords Learning Center](#) is well worth it. This article offers seven hot tips to enhance your training time. For full information, read [http://www.entrepreneur.com/ebusiness/search ptimization/searchengineoptimizationcolumnistjonrognerud/article187842.html.](#)

eBay Selling Tips and Techniques

Maximize your eBay sales results by learning a thing or two about eBay's marketplace and buyer culture, as well as about the ins and outs of effective eBay auction listings. It's one thing if you just want to hold the eBay version of a garage sale and make some spare cash with items on hand. If you want to turn your eBaying into a profitable business, you'll need to think harder about your buying and selling choices. For more on eBay sales, go to [http://ebay.about.com/od/sellingtipsandtricks/Tips_and_Tricks_for_Selling_on_eBay.htm](#)

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e-Library Focus

This site explains how to send effective e-mail replies. It discusses why e-mail etiquette is necessary, lists e-mail etiquette rules, and explains how to enforce these rules by creating a company e-mail policy. To review, go to [http://www.emailreplies.com/](#).

Spotlight on Small Business Success:

Business sprouts from research and marketing: A Business E-commerce Success Story.
For the article on this business' success, go to [http://www.monstersmallbusiness.com/ecommerce-marketing/success-easytogrow.asp](#).

Visit the business' Web site at [http://www.easytogrowbulbs.com](#).