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News from the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative

This issue of eNews is primarily dedicated to information about broadband access. Certainly, these resources outlined below represent only a sampling of the important information being generated on this topic. But, it is hoped that these articles offer our readership a better understanding of the economic advantages that might accrue to rural areas that adopt broadband as part of their community and economic development activities.

The SRDC’s National e-Commerce Extension Initiative is continuing to dedicate its time and resources to expanding our online educational products and programs, and we will be working to expand our e-Commerce educational workshops and webinars in the months ahead. Keep close tabs on our website to keep abreast of new curricula being released and new educational workshops being offered over the next several months.

- Shannon Lane Turner and Bo Beaulieu

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Broadband Connection Highs and Lows across Rural America
By Tim Murphy and Bill Bishop

The highest percentage of rural broadband connections cluster in recreation counties and areas with large farms and ranches. The percentage of U.S. farms with high speed Internet access varies wildly from state to state and county to county, according to the recently released federal Census of Agriculture. Nearly 6 out of 10 farms in Connecticut had a high speed Internet connection in 2007, when the Census was taken. In Mississippi, only 2 out of 10 farms had a quick connection to the World Wide Web. For more information log on at http://www.dailyyonder.com/broadband-connection-highs-and-lows-across-rural-america/2009/02/11/1921.

FCC's Adelstein to Oversee Rural Broadband Buildout
By Julian Sanchez

President Obama has named FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein to take charge of a $2.5 billion Department of Agriculture program designed to promote broadband deployment in rural America. In ordinary times, "Jonathan Adelstein will leave the Federal Communications Commission to take up a post at the US Department of Agriculture" would be an elevator pitch for a wacky, Green Acres-meets-West Wing fish-out-of-water sitcom. But in ordinary times, USDA's Rural Utilities Service isn't sitting on $2.5 billion in grant money for rural broadband deployment. President Obama has announced his intention to appoint the two-term FCC commissioner to head up RUS—a move that had been rumored to be in the works for some weeks. To learn more about these efforts go to http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2009/03/fccs-adelstein-to-oversee-rural-broadband-buildout.ars.
Rural Broadband at a Glance, 2009 Edition
By Peter Stenberg and Sarah Low, editors

Three-quarters of U.S. residents used the Internet to access information, education, and services in 2007. Broadband Internet access is becoming essential for both businesses and households; many compare its evolution to other technologies now considered common necessities—such as cars, electricity, televisions, microwave ovens, and cell phones. To review this information, visit http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB47/.

Spotlight on Sales and Marketing

Live Chat: Your New Online Salesperson
By Paul Sloan

Web site operators are tapping the potential of instant messaging as a new powerful sales tool. A year or two ago, it looked like instant messaging and other forms of online chat had reached their full potential as a business tool. Millions of people were using IM to interact with corporate colleagues. Live chat had also become a fixture on websites, giving customers a way to inquire about products and receive answers in real time. Learn more about sales and chat at http://money.cnn.com/2007/10/03/technology/live_chat.biz2/index.htm?postversion=2007100408.

Recessionary Times Call for Recessionary Marketing
By Jeff Zabin

The recession is having a profound impact on nearly all marketing-related activities. To help overcome at least some of the challenges of the current economic climate when it comes to attracting, retaining and increasing the value of profitable customers, companies are turning to five key marketing technologies. For a review continue reading at http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/66618.html.

A Little Bit About Twitter

How to Use Twitter as an Online Marketing Tool
By Vangie Beal

Like b-blogs (that's business blogs) and social networking profiles, sites such as Twitter offer businesses a new way to market products, promote sales and boost revenue — if you tweet right, that is. Microblogging — a type of social media Web service that has grown in popularity over the past year — lets you publish short message updates to a blog or microblog service. On some social networking sites, these short updates are called microposts (or status updates on Facebook). On Twitter they are called tweets and can be up to 140 characters in length. For full details go to http://www.ecommerce-guide.com/solutions/advertising/article.php/3810796.

Can Twitter Keep It Real as It Searches for Dollars?
By Jeff Meisner

Twitter is starting to sing for its supper. In the inevitable quest for monetization, the Internet's fastest-
growing Web site may launch extra features for paying business users. That could up the annoyance factor of using the micro-blogging phenom, but Twitter is unlikely to seriously compromise its greatest strength: simplicity. For more on Twitter go to http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/emarketing/66636.html.

Trends and Forecast

Microsoft Survey Forecasts Small Business IT Trends
By Lauren Simonds

Microsoft today released its first-annual Microsoft SMB Insight report, a study designed to look at the challenges and technology priorities facing small businesses. The study surveyed more than 600 of its Small Business Specialists in the U.S., Canada, the U.K., France and Brazil. For more details go to http://www.smallbusinesscomputing.com/biztools/article.php/3812106.

Growth in Online Advertising Slacking Off
By Erika Morphy

Online advertising revenues grew by 10.6 percent in 2008 -- a statistic that has prompted both positive and negative reactions. Any growth is a plus, of course, but the figure is far less than the 26 percent growth the industry saw in 2007. Despite the slowdown, certain categories of online advertising are still doing well. Today's mantra: The more targeted the better. For more information, visit http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/66689.html.

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