Award Winning Excellence

The National e-Commerce Extension Initiative (NEEI) was this year's recipient of the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Team Award for Education Technology. The selection, based on the use of technology in delivering or managing educational programs in community development work was awarded to the program's management staff and the NEEI Advisory Board. The team category was chosen because of the active nature of National e-Commerce Extension Initiative's Advisory Board on matters of program implementation, grant awards, technical guidance and the benchmarking of program outcomes. This award comes after a monumental year of learning module releases, Web site updates, the introduction of an online tutorials section, the updating of the online resource library and an unprecedented number of Extension workshops based on NEEI online resources for community and business learning. Re-energized after receiving such an award, the Initiative continues with the goal of putting educational materials in the hands of Extension Educators who assist small businesses and individuals in adapting technology to bring their products to the online market place, or to enhance or expand their current business offerings. Congratulations to all the team award recipients on a collaborative job well done.

Spotlighting Research

The Diffusion of Internet Technologies to Rural Communities: A Portrait of Broadband Supply and Demand

By Dr. Brian Whitacre

Rural communities suffer from supply- and demand-side disadvantages when dealing with Internet access. Telecommunications companies are less likely to provide such communities with needed infrastructure because of their lower population densities; these communities also tend to have lower levels of factors known to influence the access decision, such as education and income. This study looks at the broadband Internet setting in Oklahoma over a three-year period, examining the diffusion of infrastructure and access rates. For the complete abstract or access to the full article by Whitacre of Oklahoma State University, please see
http://abs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/53/9/1283

Embracing the Self-Service Economy

By Daniel Castro, Roberts D. Atkinson and Stephen Ezell

The past decade has witnessed a rapid growth in self service that allows consumers to take on the traditional role of a service worker in the provision of a service. Self service has long existed—think of placing a call by dialing a telephone instead of using a telephone operator or pressing a button in an elevator instead of using an elevator operator—but its importance has grown as advances in information technology (IT) have created many opportunities to leverage self-service technology for large gains in efficiency and convenience. Using computer kiosks, airline travelers check in to their flights; on the Internet, consumers purchase products without ever speaking to a sales agent; and, using a mobile phone, customers check their bank balances and transfer funds. Self-service technology continues to become more efficient and more convenient, and, as a result, increasingly organizations, including businesses, non-profits and governments, are using self-service technology to operate more productively and to better serve their customers. For the complete report, go to http://www.itif.org/publications/embracing-self-service-economy

Social Networking and Customer Service

Social Media Adventures in the New Customer World

By Pam Baker

For corporations that have trouble embracing the warm and fuzzy aspect of social media, a new term is hereby coined: "C.A.R.E.," an acronym for "Customers Are the Revenue Engine." This thought must be firmly affixed to the social media strategy: Without customers, there is no business. To learn more about leveraging social media tools, go to http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/Social-Media-Adventures-in-the-New-Customer-World-69895.html?wlc=1274711838

Four Steps to Social Media Success

By Pete Gombert

There are online conversations happening right now about your industry, if not your specific business and brand. Listen to these conversations and learn about the audiences involved. Choose the best social media channels based on your research, and create your plan accordingly. To better understand the evolving relationships between businesses and customers through social media, see http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/69882.html

Harnessing the Power of Community for E-Commerce Success

By Bill Rogers

Your company's participation in social media is more than just sending content to the community. You need to participate in the conversation with the intent of building relationships. Answering questions, pointing consumers to solutions and ideas, and asking for input all create

the transparency today's consumers are demanding. For ideas on better customer connections, log on to http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/69905.html

Facebook's Open Graph: It May Look Personal, but It's Purely Business

By Renay San Miguel

Since Facebook began its Open Graph venture at its f8 conference last month, online publications and e-commerce sites have been exploring the new tool's possibilities and the opportunities it presents to users who want to share what they see online with their friends. That sharing can mean more clicks and more business -- as long as sites respect user privacy. To learn more, go to http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/69970.html

Facebook's Curious Social Monopoly

By Erika Morphy

Wrath over its privacy policies is taking on tidal wave proportions, but Facebook doesn't seem to be buckling at the knees. It's latest move? Calling a company-wide meeting to calmly discuss what some onlookers view as nothing short of a crisis. Why the steady nerves? In large part, Facebook's equanimity may be due to the incontrovertible fact that it has no real competition. A link to the complete article can be found at http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/70004.html

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