



**the e-tailing group Customer Experience Index ---
Top Performing Merchants and Categories**

Investments in the Customer Experience Pay Dividends for Retailers

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INDEX RESULTS

In conjunction with their *14th Annual Mystery Shopping Study* conducted in 4Q11 the e-tailing group has released their **Customer Experience Index** results. "In the process of evaluating merchant performance it was clear that vigilance and perseverance are paramount as each year new dynamics add to the complexity of the customer experience and must be embraced while simultaneously maintaining robust key pages, exemplary merchandising and superior customer service," observed Lauren Freedman, President of the e-tailing group. These accomplishments are substantiated by an average index score of 71.30 in 2011 versus 68.71% in 2010. As the good get better and pull away from the pack 11 merchants scored 80 or higher in this 5th year of indexing, a feat accomplished by just three in the last round.

Merchant	2011 Score	Merchant	2011 Score
Sears	90.25	QVC	83.00
L.L.Bean	88.50	Williams Sonoma	82.75
HSN	87.25	Amazon	81.50
The Home Depot	85.00	Barnes & Noble	80.00
Toys R Us	83.75	Overstock.com	80.00
Petco	83.50		

METHODOLOGY

The e-tailing group index is calculated through quantitative analysis of metrics extrapolated from mystery shopping studies conducted annually in the fourth quarter with an objective of uniquely understanding how merchants stack-up against the e-tailing 100 websites (EG100), direct competitors and their categories. Websites are scored on a 100-point scale based on an assessment of metrics from five key pages, presence and execution of vital merchandising tactics and exemplary customer service.

While proficiency on the home, category, product and help/customer service pages plus the shopping cart accounts for one-fifth of the score, over 40% of the possible points are based on the presence and execution of merchandising features from the traditional through onsite search, promotions, gifting, mobile and social. Exemplary customer service functionality accounts for the balance of scoring with a focus on self-service information, the shopping cart, number of days to receive ordered products, order confirmations, live chat as well as the quality and response time for email/call center queries.

CATEGORY PERFORMANCE

Evaluation by category also shows how the curve is trending up as merchants invest to deliver an optimal customer experience. Mass merchants (81.81) and Pet supply retailers (80.63) attained the 80+ level but substantial year-over-year improvements were evident in many other categories including double-digit increases for Home/Garden (+17.13%), Office Supplies (+13.70%), Books/Music/Media (+12.84%), Baby/Toys/Games (+12.44%), Accessories/Shoes (+11.30%) and Pets (+10.08%).

Category (# of merchants)	2011 Category Score	2010 Category Score	% Change
Mass Merchants (8)	81.81	78.97	3.60%
Pets (2)	80.63	73.25	10.08%
Office Supplies (2)	76.75	67.50	13.70%
Baby/Toys/Games (5)	74.30	66.08	12.44%
Home/Garden (12)	73.42	62.68	17.13%
Drugstore/Health & Beauty (7)	72.50	66.09	9.70%
Technology (7)	72.25	75.75	-4.62%
Accessories/ Shoes (9)	70.89	63.69	11.30%
Sporting Goods (14)	70.68	77.10	-8.33%
Department Stores (6)	70.08	74.75	-6.25%
Books/Music/Media (4)	68.38	60.60	12.84%
Apparel (15)	66.78	65.55	1.88%
Food/Gifting (9)	63.56	67.92	-6.42%

CUSTOM INDEXING

"The e-tailing group Customer Experience Index provides an affordable overview that can help merchants prioritize which features and functions need attention first as they plan profitable 2012 initiatives," recommends Freedman. Merchants interested in having their sites indexed or purchasing 4Q11 performance data should contact Lauren Freedman via email to LF@e-tailing.com or by phone at 773-975-7280. Deliverables include: Individual scorecard of a website against the e-tailing 100, one category comparison along with identified best practices and opportunities for improvement. The cost is \$999 and there is a 4-week turnaround.

THE COMPANY

The e-tailing group, inc. serves as the multi-channel merchant's eye, bringing a merchant's sensibility to evolving the multi-channel shopping experience. A Chicago-based consultancy, they provide practical strategic perspectives and actionable merchandising solutions to merchants selling online as well as to enabling technology firms.

For more background about this research study, including a list of merchants surveyed or for additional information on the e-tailing group, inc. please contact Lauren Freedman at LF@e-tailing.com or visit the e-tailing group website www.e-tailing.com.

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