

Crafting a web business

The leading application and service providers who help lay the foundation for the Top 500 retailers' e-commerce operations

By Bill Briggs

Web retailers and home builders have a number of traits in common, although thankfully the condition of their respective markets isn't one of them. Both rely on skilled craftsmen who know how to wield the tools of their trade to create safe and secure domains.

Like those carpenters, electricians, plumbers and other craftsmen and women who piece together a house, web retailers rely on specialists and their technology tools—both internal and external—to construct and maintain their e-commerce businesses. Similarly, e-retailers depend on information technology tools in helping them build their own information systems, working with third-party providers and service companies, or mixing the two.

But retailers' own technical skills are all across the board in terms of their ability, and sometimes willingness, to acquire, implement, deploy and manage their e-commerce applications. That's where software and services providers come in.

In the Internet Retailer 2008 Top 500 Guide, retailers identified whether they develop technology in house, work with providers or do both. The following report examines the vendors in their respective technology categories that were cited most often by Top 500 retailers. The top three vendors in each category were determined by research for and published in the Top 500 Guide. Data was gathered by Internet Retailer from January through April of this year and the provider rankings are based on the frequency with which those providers were cited by merchants in the 2008 Top 500 Guide.....

Web Analytics

Micro-metrics

Web analytics applications can tell retailers what shoppers bought—and what they didn't buy—faster than ever before and that can lead to more sales. A 2007 web site upgrade that rolled out in late 2006 paved the way for 33% growth, to \$85.2 million, for ShoeMall.com, part of Mason Companies Inc. With better e-mail technology, from CheetahMail, and better reporting using a new web analytics package from Omniture Corp., ShoeMall now concentrates on bringing more focused branding and merchandising messages to its core audience, says Internet director Jodi Bresina. Omniture, Coremetrics and Google Inc. were the top three vendors, in order, listed by Top 500 retailers. The providers account for the majority of web analytics customers, with a total of 389 retailers. Individually, they served 187, 116 and 86 companies, respectively. Omniture customers also include Apple Inc. (No. 7). Coremetrics' list includes Office Depot Inc. (No. 3) and OfficeMax Inc. (No. 6), and Google's features Blue Nile Inc. (No. 48) and CSN Stores Inc. (No. 69).