



Housewares/Home Furnishings

Furnishing service

Whether it's the thickness of a rug, the likelihood of a dining room table getting damaged in shipment, or how eco-friendly a faucet is, CSN Stores is out front providing online shoppers what they need to know while shopping the retailer's more than 200 home furnishing sites that sell everything from bedroom sets and baby cribs to barbeque grills.

And, unlike many e-retailers, CSN prominently places toll-free customer service numbers and links at the top of every web page.

"Many retailers try too hard to entertain their customers, but we see our role as more of information providers," says chairman Steven Conine, who co-founded CSN with CEO Niraj Shah.

CSN carries out that strategy unusually well through its site designs, says Nikki Baird, managing director at research and consulting firm Retail Systems Research LLC. She especially likes the filters on category pages that make it easy for visitors to home in on the products they want. "You can sort by frame type, like kiln dried, for sofas on AllModern.com, or you can find a bathroom vanity on BathroomFurnitureDirect.com by the number of drawers it has," she says. "This is great attention to the details that aren't necessarily easy to pull out of vendor-supplied product descriptions, but are actually important to shoppers."

Conine and Shah started out in the mid-'90s with an IT services firm, but as retail e-commerce gained traction, they looked for a market where they could meet a need.

"We saw furniture as an area that could be better served on the web," Shah says. CSN was an early provider of white-glove, full-service delivery of a broad range of furniture products, and it has continued to develop new ways to help customers shop online. Furniture product pages, for example, show how items stack up to comparable products on construction quality.

CSN also caters to particular needs of its niche shoppers—blogs for parents obsessed with baby products, for instance, which help the retailer learn how to serve customers even better, Shah says. "We let them tell us how they want to interact," he says.



CSNStores.com

Date launched: 2002
2007 unique visitors (monthly average): 2,500,000
2007 web-based sales: \$202,000,000

Vendor relationships
Affiliate marketing management:
SHAREASALE
TRUE PERFORMANCE MARKETING

Content delivery network:
Akamai

Content management: In-house
Customer relationship management: In-house
Customer reviews and forums: PowerReviews
Customer service: In-house
E-commerce platform: In-house
E-mail marketing:
StrongMail

Fulfillment: In-house
Live chat/click-to-call: NA
Order management: In-house
Payment processor: Authorize.net, Life & Co.
Payment security: NA
Personalization: In-house
Rich media: In-house
Search engine management: In-house
Security certification: McAfee
Site design: In-house
Site performance monitoring: In-house, Coriant
Site search: In-house
Web analytics: In-house, Google
Web hosting: Savvis

Site performance
Performance measured by Gomez Inc.
Availability: 99.95%
Response time: 1.42 seconds
Consistency Score: Fair