

CYBER: New Black Friday for Internet shoppers?

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Beemer say Cyber Monday is a ruse. Mr. Beemer's firm, America's Research Group, tracks consumer behavior, and a survey it conducted in 2005 showed fewer than 1 percent of 1,000 respondents participated in Cyber Monday.

"It's an unadulterated farce," Mr. Beemer said. "Nobody's going to shop over Thanksgiving weekend, write down the price and shop online Monday and think they are going to beat it. It just isn't going to happen."

Online vendors, though, feel they will miss out if they don't run Cyber Monday promotions.

"If it's out there and it's in the public consciousness, you would be crazy not to participate," said Joe Sponholz, chief operating officer at BabyAge.com, an online retailer of pregnancy, infant and toddler products in Hanover Twp.

BabyAge.com, which has 40 employees, has special prices Monday on car seats and free shipping for shoppers who use PayPal, an online money transfer service.

"I think the dollar has to travel farther this year," Mr. Sponholz said.

The dollar travels longer this year for shoppers who buy products on Cyber Monday at West Pittston-based igourmet.com.

An online retailer of gourmet food and cheeses that has 40 full-time employees, igourmet.com offers a 20 percent, one-day discount on all gift boxes, baskets and board sets and lets shoppers determine when the recipient receives it.

"People can schedule their delivery, so it's sort of a save now, pay later thing," said Stephan Bernstein, igourmet.com's marketing director.

Some shoppers may want to hold off and possibly save more later, said Lauren Freedman, president of the E-Tailing Group Inc., a Chicago online retail consultant.

"I think now, the nature of the times is such that they are trying to spur any kind of shopping at this point," Mrs. Freedman said. "There's a deal a second coming through and I think it will be more aggressive as the season goes forward. It depends on how patient customers can be."

Retailers themselves know the peril of the shaky retail climate and wonder how it may affect sales.



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Danielle Fleming, of Danielle & Co. in Scranton, arranges shelves in her retail store. The company, which sells personal and beauty care products, has strong online sales.
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C. Britt Beemer

Chairman of America's Research Group in Charleston, S.C.

the smaller retailers that we sell to have gone out of business," said Ms. Fleming, who has five full-time employees.

"Everyone certainly has toned their expectations down because you just don't know," Mr. Bernstein said. "There's this uncertainty about how people are going to spend."

Contact the writer:



Bill Fleming of Danielle & Co. fills lotion bottles for his daughter.
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