

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF
PERSONAL COMPUTER USERS
WHO FREQUENT THE INTERNET,
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON GIST
SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS.

safe surfing

SPECIAL HOLIDAY ISSUE

- Ebates.com
- Woot.com
- Holiday Shopping Ideas
- Holiday Give-away
- Volunteers still Needed



Ebates.Com

EBATES Join Free

I discovered Ebates.com quite some time ago but never actually tried them until this shopping season. As a result, I only realized how beneficial their service could be after I released my last newsletter. So I sent an email to everyone just to get the idea out there. Now, after only a month's experience with the service, I'm even more impressed.

Not only are they good to their word about giving you cash based upon your purchases from their participating retailers, but they are also good about tracking and paying you for any referrals you make! Believe me, this has been a very nice surprise, and the money builds up pretty fast. It's not a huge amount, but everything helps.

As the company has become more popular it has attracted more retailers willing to participate. When I first visited Ebates they had only a handful of retailers. Now they have over a thousand retailers participating! For example, Nordstrom's, JC Penney's, and Macy's to name just a few. And one of my favorite places to buy is there too: Buy.com! The rebate percentages range from only 1% (very few are that low) to 28% (even fewer are that high). But the average is probably somewhere around 4 or 5% and I specifically look for higher percentages for stores with sales already in progress to maximize the benefit. Because the rebates you get from Ebates are above and beyond any discounts the retailers are giving on any given day.

Another pleasant and unexpected side benefit has been that I can see that my shopping advice is being followed because I have referrals from people I do not even know! So there are some of you out there who evidently read and actually appreciate some of my advice, even though we haven't communicated directly. That's really pretty gratifying, though in a kind of weird way.

So I do recommend registering at Ebates.com. When you do, if you give my email address (barry.mart@sbcglobal.net) as the person who referred you, they'll credit my account with another \$5! Then you can do the same thing with your email list and benefit from the modified Ponzie scheme too!

Woot.com

Funny name, funny site. In their own words, "Woot.com is an online store and community that focuses on selling cool stuff cheap. It started as an employee-store slash market-testing type of place for an electronics distributor, but it's taken on a life of its own."



The site is fun and terribly addictive! They say they offer at only one deal each day, but I've seen them offer many items, one at a time until they either sell out (like on the Home Shopping Channel) or the clock strikes midnight. I've rarely seen an item last longer than a half hour. So far the deals I've seen are at least good and they're often great, but they are also limited. Not only do they only offer a single product until that product is sold out, but the quantities are limited to three per person.

Be careful clicking on their linked "Side Deals" sites. I found an absolute "rip-off" at the site they were featuring today, eCost.com. How can you justify advertising a WII system (not a special bundle) for \$349 that can be purchased virtually anywhere for \$249? Stay away from eCost! Horrible reputation and well-deserved from what I have seen (eCost that is, NOT Woot). Woot seems quite worthwhile so far. For example, today I saw neat little (though off-brand) bluetooth headset for \$20 including shipping and a very nice laser printer for \$139 plus only \$5 shipping. Competitors' prices were far higher.

Holiday Shopping Ideas

Last month I gave you several ideas for gift giving this year, but let me get even more specific this month. And I hope to get this out in time for it to be truly useful as a shopping guide.

Laptops are the recent craze. It's not so much that they are replacing desktop PCs as the ideal home computer (although that's not far from true), but they are increasingly popular as a second computer. What is really helping this phenomenon is the rapidly decreasing prices for notebooks (partly because of the



LCD cost situation described in last month's issue). Also, much like VCRs in the "old days," at least one computer per household is becoming the standard.



Another factor in the popularity of portable PCs is the advent of the new ultra-portable laptops. These are called Netbooks or Mobile Internet Devices and are made by Dell, HP, Acer, ASUS and MSI. They are nifty little units with everything you need except optical media drives (DVD or CDROM). They have from 8 to 10 inch screens and either tiny flash hard drives of about 16gb or full-fledged



notebook hard drives of up to 160gb. They vary in price right now from about \$300 to \$450.

A similar but even tinier alternative is the new Archos Internet Media Tablet. They come in a 5" and a 7" version, with hard drives from 80GB to 350GB and price tags from \$315 to \$550. They are extremely cool and allow wireless internet surfing from any hotspot, game play and especially excel with video recording and playback. In fact, with an optional docking station for another \$100, the IMT becomes a portable DVR with all the features of your home DVR **plus** the ability to travel with all your favorite show and surf the internet from virtually anywhere.

I mention and describe these new, very small portables not only as items worthy of consideration for this season's gift giving, but to point out some other trends that present new gift ideas. The Netbooks, with no built-in optical DVD or CDROM drives, leave you to think about how to add content to the device. Obviously you can download things from the internet, but you won't always be within reach of a hotspot. And you might just want to quickly transfer a few files to or from the device, to play or burn a CD or DVD or even to back up all of your files. These needs create a stronger market for some existing products like USB thumb or flash drives, external USB floppy drives and USB DVD/CD burners. So even if you aren't going to buy yourself or someone else a nice new laptop or Netbook, you can very realistically consider buying someone a nice new external USB DVD player/burner, floppy drive or thumb drive.

So far I've carefully avoided using these pages to promote my own products and services. But right now I



happen to have a very large number of attractively priced and brand new external USB/Firewire DVD burners, External USB Floppy Drives and AGP 128MB Video Adapter Cards available for sale. In

fact, for newsletter readers, I'll be able to sell the DVD burners for \$35, the floppy drives for \$12.50 and the graphics adapter cards for \$30 apiece plus shipping (and tax in California). That's less than my current listing prices on Amazon.com, which are already the lowest priced listings for the same



items anywhere on the site. Please excuse the brief commercial, just thought you might want to know.... That's BarryMart, just like Kmart but without the K (and without the Krapola)!



Holiday Volunteers Still Needed

(Sacramento Bee: Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008)



Here is a list of places in my local area still needing help. Sorry to bore all of you who are not near Sacramento, but I'll bet there are

plenty like this in your area, and certainly if you have similar local chapters like **The Make-A-Wish Foundation**.

• **The California Senior Legal Hotline** needs help assisting seniors facing foreclosure.

Volunteers with a legal or real estate background would be particularly useful. To sign up, or for more information, please contact Jennifer Anders at janders@lsnc.net.

• **"My Mother's Voice,"** a nonprofit in the Sacramento area, needs items for their Young Single Teen-Parent and Baby program. Nearly 70 teen parents are caring for infants and need basic baby items, warm clothes and food. For more information, call (916) 797-2899 or e-mail info@mymothersvoice.org.

• **The Davis Musical Theatre Company** needs volunteers to help with performances and day-to-day operations. Contact the theater company via e-mail at info@dmtc.org or call (530) 756-3682.

• **The Make-A-Wish Foundation** still needs toys and gifts for children. Contact Joanie Johnston at (916) 437-0206 for more information. You can also e-mail jjohnston@makeawish-sacto.org.

• **Volunteer Center of Sacramento's Adopt-A-Family Program** still needs 51 families adopted for the holiday season. If you are interested, call (916) 567-3100, ext. 106, or send an e-mail to cwallace@volunteersac.org for an "Available Families" list. The adoption/donation deadline is Monday.

Holiday Give-Away

This month, BarryMart (that's me!) will be giving away a gift to the first two people who register at Ebates giving my email address as the referral and then actually making some



purchase (which is what keys the referral bonus)! The gift will be your choice of an external USB 2.0 Floppy Disk Drive or an external 2.5" USB/Firewire Hard Drive Enclosure.

Be sure to tell me what date you signed up and the ID you use on the site so I get the "gift" to the right people!

Barry Codron, a retired U.S. Air Force pilot, lives with his wife and doggie, near his children and grandchildren and their doggies, in the Sacramento area. He enjoys writing and consulting in areas including technology and music, among other fields that pique his interest from time to time. He welcomes your questions,