

GiftTree.com**Date launched**
August 1997**2006 unique visitors (monthly)**
75,000 estimated**2006 web-based sales**
\$15,000,000**Vendor relationships****Site design**

In-house

E-commerce platform

In-house

Web hosting

In-house

Site search**Content management**

In-house

Order management

In-house

Payment processor

JetPay and Teleflora

Fulfillment

In-house

Affiliate marketing management

Commission Junction

Search engine management

In-house

E-mail marketing

In-house

CRM

In-house

Customer service

In-house

Security certification

VeriSign Inc., Hacker Safe

**Web analytics**

ClickTracks

Rich media

In-house

Site performance monitoring

In-house

Site performance

Performance data measured by Gomez Inc.

Availability

99.91%

Response time

5.272 seconds

Consistency score

Good

Gifts under the tree

Wine aficionados base their purchase in part on being able to describe the flavors and aromas, i.e. the nose and bouquet of the wine. Since e-retailers of wine can't offer a tasting session on their sites, the next best thing is to describe the wine in detail and present a high quality image of the wine itself.

GiftTree.com has combined detailed notes on the wines in its gift basket with rich media images of the bottles to create an environment that captures the spirit of a wine tasting.

The approach is rooted in the concept that shoppers want high quality information and presentation of gift items for which they are paying a premium. That is important since GiftTree.com's customers tend to be busy, affluent, image-conscious individuals. As a result, Vancouver, Wash.-based GiftTree.com emphasizes style and sophistication in its site design.

"Wine enthusiasts shopping online want a description of the flavors they can expect to taste," says Lanae Paaverud, a board member of the Internet Merchants Association, a Wellington, Fla.-based non-profit

trade association for e-commerce companies. "If the description says the wine has a hint of pepper and the shopper is familiar with that taste they are liable to be more inclined to buy it."

The depiction of high quality magnified product images against a layered gray background enhances the presentation of the items and speaks to the style and sophistication of GiftTree.com's customers.

The e-retailer hit on the concept after opening a dialog with customers through surveys and focus groups. Shoppers told GiftTree.com they wanted a richer shopping experience and more of the bells and whistles that accompany Web 2.0 technology.

"Web 2.0 technologies are something our shoppers wanted to see and that convinced us to move away from the static and rigid design we had for many years," says Craig Bowen, president and CEO of GiftTree.com. "Without this dialog, we were only guessing at what our customers wanted to see."

By listening to its customers, GiftTree.com has brought the art of wine to e-retailing.