



Behind the Counter

by Randy Booth

What Are the Pros & Cons of Retailers Selling Online?

From the outside, it looks like selling archery products online is easy: sign up for a service, list a product, sell the product and make money.

It doesn't get much better than that, right? Unfortunately, it doesn't really work like that.

There are a lot of things to consider if you want to sell online. What sales service will you use? What shipping service will you use? Do you have the right packaging to ship an item? What does the market look like for what you want to sell? Can you compete in that market? Do you have an employee who is dedicated to ship and answer questions?

Just the idea of dipping your big toe into the online sales world can be exhausting. But at the end of the day, if you

aren't selling online, you've already started to sink to the bottom of the pool.

It's not too late to get started. All you need is a product, a decent camera and the most important thing of all: time. I know that can be hard to come by for some shop owners but it's worth a couple of late nights to figure out online plans. Let me tell you why.

The first reason is obvious and I really don't need to spell it out. More sales equal more money. If you are sitting in a shop in the middle of June and all that's coming in and out is buzzing black flies, then why not create an online store or an eBay account? There's nothing to lose. There are literally millions of potential customers sitting at keyboards who want

to buy something that is sitting on your slat wall. If you have it in your shop and it's not going anywhere fast on the sales floor, list it.

If an item is going quickly in the shop, then it will likely go quickly online, too. That's when you could hit a snag. What are the market conditions online? If, for example, you're selling a pack of broadheads for \$40 in the shop but find that same pack is going for \$25 online, then maybe that is something you could just let keep flying out the shop's doors with a better margin. But if no one else has it online, you can potentially sell a few extra packs much more quickly by listing them.

Another pro of selling online is getting rid of SKUs that just don't work in your shop. Maybe at the ATA Show, you bought a couple dozen sights that you thought were going to be a hit. As it turned out, the sights weren't all that they were cracked up to be. You tried to sell your customers on some of their features but they were not convinced. That is when you turn to your trusty friend the Internet.

BCY BOWSTRING

BOWSTRING MATERIAL WITH SAFETY, STABILITY, SPEED, DURABILITY. RELY ON BCY

- BCY-X** - The latest and best compound bowstring - tough, fast, no creep.
- 452X** - Still preferred by many top compound archers and bow companies for complete stability.
- 8125G** - For higher arrow speed. The preferred bowstring for recurves.
- 8190** - Low creep, 100% toughest Dyneema. Compound or recurve.
- Dynaflight 97** - The original Dyneema bowstring - very durable and safe. Use on mid quality compounds and modern recurves. Also crossbows.

B55 polyester is offered for traditional bows.

Whatever you're looking for in a bowstring material, serving thread, or bowstring accessories, **BCY CAN HELP YOU.**

BCYFIBERS.COM PHONE (USA): 860.632.7115

The Internet has no bias. Good sight, bad sight: it doesn't matter. If you put it online at the right price, it's going to move. If you do it right, you can have a SKU that sat in your shop for months and collected dust disappear within a matter of days, hours or even minutes. That's the best-case scenario, of course but it does happen.

Selling online also allows you to potentially broaden your sales catalog. If you're feeling adventurous and have figured out how to play the game a bit, you could buy a product that you have no intention to actually sell in your store but you know will do well online.

Take, for example, a youth bow. There are some you can't sell online at all due to manufacturer restrictions. Maybe you have one that does well in the store but you want to get another just to sell online. Sell each strictly to its own outlet. Let one fly off the shelf on the sales floor and the other in cardboard boxes out the back door.

I truly hope I've sparked some ideas in shop owners' heads across the country. However, I would be wrong if I didn't warn you about the ugly side of selling online.

First and foremost, you need to read the fine print. Some manufacturers don't allow shops to sell their products online. In fact, some don't even allow shops to ship their product at all. Before you start just listing everything in the store, you need to make sure you aren't violating any policies. The last thing you want to do is to answer a phone call from a not-so-happy manufacturer.

The other caveat is the sticker price. Minimum Advertised Pricing is a big deal for some and they enforce it strictly. Sometimes it's even enforced to the cent. As ridiculous as it might sound, if the MAP ends with ".99" and you list it at ".95," then you might get a phone call. Even that four cent difference could result in a couple of sales if you manage to have it listed online for a few days. That's how much of a fine line there is with Internet sales.

Just like everything in life, time is the biggest factor. Your shop traffic might be dead in June, giving you plenty of time to list items and get them out the door. But if you have a small, busy shop in the fall, who's going to have time to ship items? That might mean late nights and less sleep if you don't have staff to fill the gaps.

Slowing online operations during the busy seasons doesn't make much sense. If it's busy in the shop, it's going to be busy online, too. You'll lose a lot of sales if you decide to pull items temporarily or not list items at all. If that is the case, instead of having an extremely busy season, your season will just be average. That's your decision to make when the time comes.

It's not all puppies and rainbows when it comes to selling online. It's time-consuming and will probably result in a few gray hairs but if it is done right, it can transform your bottom line for the better.

CHEROKEE SPORTS 1992

HAR Lite Deer Decoy
Intruder / Lover

- Changes from Buck to Doe (removable antlers)
- Photo Printed Inflatable Body
- Both Ears and Tail Move in the Slightest Breeze
- Inflates to Full Life Size • Fits in a Backpack

AND....

THE BONE™ Deer Call
"Will call 'em into your Red Zone"

Four calls in one!
(Grunt, Growl, Bleat, Snortwheeze)

Call (800) 858-2554 or email sales@cherokee-sports.com