

# Pledging shopper support

**URL:** ShopPBS.com // **The Challenge:** Redesigning an e-commerce site that better anticipates the needs of older and affluent shoppers. // **The Solution:** The new ShopPBS.com is designed with parametric navigation and sorting, which filters video products by attributes such as price, production year, title and whether or not a program already has aired on PBS. // **Development Time:** 8 months // **Technology:** GSI Commerce Inc.

Good retail web site redesigns are as much about function as they are about form. When ShopPBS.com, the business-to-consumer e-commerce unit of Public Broadcasting Service, decided to work with GSI Commerce Inc. to redesign its web site a top priority was developing new features that matched the needs of older shoppers.

In some months ShopPBS.com can receive up to 700,000 visits, particularly after PBS airs a much-anticipated program such as "The War," a new film documentary by Ken Burns. But on the old site, which PBS last redesigned in 2003, it took the organization's core customers, affluent men and women age 55 and older, too long to find products and make a purchase. If, for instance, a shopper wanted to search for a film on British drama the internal search engine would return all 360 titles in the ShopPBS.com inventory. "The old site search was confusing and one of the features we wanted to improve," says PBS vice president of home entertainment and partnerships Andrea Downing.

ShopPBS.com was originally built in-house using Oracle hardware and software and later moved to a GSI platform. But by 2007 it was clear that ShopPBS.com needed better technology and improved features that would make it easier to showcase products and reduce the time it took shoppers to find a product. In conjunction with GSI, PBS marketing and merchandising managers spent eight months crafting a new

design plan. Today the new design is reducing by 50% the time it takes visitors to locate a product and complete a purchase.

That's because the new ShopPBS.com features parametric navigation and sorting, which filters video products by attributes such as price, production year, title and whether or not a program already has aired on PBS. This is particularly helpful when visitors want to see lists of videos only in DVD or only in the older VHS format, Downing says. "We worked to incorporate design features on our online store that mirror the quality and sophistication of our on-air programming," she says.

The new ShopPBS.com also has other new features and functions such as express shop preview windows, which let shoppers mouse over an image for more details without having to click to another page, a catalog quick-order button and a single-click icon that puts page content into a larger font size for easier reading.

The old home page also suffered from lack of organization. To correct the problem PBS and GSI analyzed three years of web site traffic and then designed a new home page with multi-tier top navigation. The new home page now highlights popular product categories such as new releases, recently broadcast videos and best sellers organized by sales volume.



PBS and GSI also introduced advanced shopping tools and product pages with more detail. Most product pages now feature advanced zoom, video clips and an e-mail a friend button. Other buttons let visitors and shoppers check on product availability and view previously purchased items and recommendations about similar products.

A key priority before GSI developers even began making design changes to the web site was creating a new site taxonomy that classified all of PBS' 4,500 SKUs into the right category. "We spent a lot of time making sure that what should be in the history category is now there," Downing says.

To give ShopPBS.com shoppers more reason to return and become engaged on the site, the e-retailer is planning to launch a third-party customer reviews application early in 2008 as one of the first steps in its growth strategy. "Customer reviews have become a staple of e-commerce these days," Downing says. "Now that we've relaunched our site, we have to keep moving." ●