

CHANNEL

IN THE FIELD

How to Combat Internet Resellers

Integrator proves to clients there are *not* better deals online by calling Web vendors and asking pertinent questions. **BY JULIE JACOBSON**

HOW DO YOU HANDLE the client who thinks he can get a “much better deal” buying a TV online? One CE pro, David Ault of Oakdale, Minn.-based Audio Video Planners (AVP), has set up a strategy.

After a customer tried to reject a few line items on an AVP proposal, balking at a few extra hundred dollars, Ault stepped into action. The client was telling Ault that the gear could be found “way cheaper” online. Ault was determined to show the client it wasn’t true.

Ault asked the client to listen in as he called online vendors offering the products in question. Here is a transcript of his conversation.

This conversation (not verbatim) took place in March 2008, and it pertained to a 65-inch plasma TV. After listening in, the client scrapped his plans to purchase online, instead buying from AVP as planned.



Internet Vendor (eBay power seller)

AVP: Do you have this TV in stock?

Vendor: Back-ordered.

AVP: What should I do?

Vendor: Call back daily until we have one.

AVP: How much would shipping cost?

Vendor: \$325 for “basic shipping.”

AVP: What is “basic shipping?”

Vendor: A semi truck, not a lift-gate truck.

AVP: So, that means that I have to help get a 65-inch plasma off of a semi trailer?

Vendor: Yes sir. Residential trucks are more than the \$325 quoted on our site.

AVP: What if there is a problem or the TV is broken? Or, worse yet, what if there are pixels on the TV? Who will check this for me?

Vendor: You must do that while the driver is still on site.

AVP: What! In my driveway?

Vendor: Yes, sir. The driver will wait.

AVP: So, what if I don’t test the TV (and discover the problem) until I can get it into my house?

Vendor: Then, you repackage the TV and pay the shipping back if a problem is found.

AVP: What about a replacement TV?

Vendor: Sir, you pay *all* shipping expenses.

AVP: Even for a replacement?

Vendor: Yes, sir. We might be able to give you a \$100 discount if you need a replacement.

AVP: So, I would pay to ship the TV here, ship the TV back, and then pay to ship the replacement TV here — all with lift-gate trucks? I may be looking at as much as \$1,500 in shipping fees?

Vendor: That is a possibility. ■

David Ault (far left) of Audio Video Planners in Oakdale, Minn., along with his staff, calls up Internet vendors with clients. His mission: To quell the notion that deals being offered online are better than his own.



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