

DEER COMPUTER CONSULTING, Ltd.

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DECK THE HALLS WITH MICE AND MODEMS



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As everyone is all too aware, the holidays are just around the corner. Already the stores are flooded with holiday cheer with everything from decorations to the Ronco Vega-Matic. Remember those? How about the Pocket Fisherman from K-Tel. Oh brother, did we really buy that stuff? Actually we did...and a lot of it too! Why - because it was a great way to get that unique gift without fighting the crowds at the stores.

Many of the items like this were advertised as mail order products only, while a few actually listed the stores where you could buy them right on the commercials. The idea was to hit people where they were the weakest – sheer laziness, with a side order of mall anxiety. Well, sitting here on the edge of the new millennium, we have a more modern alternative to Ronco or K-Tel – the Internet!

Yes that grinning, glowing video display in the corner of your office or family room has everything you need to do your shopping right over your Internet connection. Of course, you will have to provide your credit card numbers yourself. But you do not need to buy gas, or get a sitter for the kids. You will not even have to buy your Aunt Millie lunch – even though she insisted on going shopping with you so that she can find a new “I’m with Stupid” tee shirt for her daughter, who’s husband is now the reigning beer-guzzling champion down at Bubba’s Saloon.

If you would like to find just the right gift on the Internet, go to one of the search websites like Google or Yahoo and type in the keyword for the items you want. For example, if you want "talking bass" just put those words into the search. It should provide you with hundreds of searchable gift sites. As we know, the Internet is enormous, so listed below are a few recommended points of interest for those looking to do some holiday shopping online.

Amazon.com - <http://www.amazon.com> - It's not just for books anymore! Amazon now features a variety of sale items and also has an auction feature. Be careful here - some items sold on Amazon appear in multiple listings and not all are new items. Many say 'used' or 'preowned.'

Overstock.com - <http://www.overstock.com> - This site specializes in an 'odd lots' worthy buying experience. Shoppers can find everything from vintage lamps to plane tickets.

You've seen the ads on television. They feature an attractive redheaded woman all decked out in white and surrounded by white settings.

Imall.com - <http://www.imall.com> - This website is a little like an online Sam's Club. You apply for a membership and are treated to discount pricing on all kinds of products ranging from phone service to real estate.

eBay.com - <http://www.ebay.com> - Maybe you prefer the excitement of an auction house for your holiday purchases? The eBay site is an online trading community, like a kind of virtual flea market. Their principal market is one-to-one trading in an auction format on the Web. It is an excellent way to shop for a specific venue because you can search the auctions based on your interest.

Finally, a word on buying online – be careful. Even though the fear of credit card fraud and consumer theft on the Internet is a bit exaggerated by the media in their usual 'scare the public, make a buck,' mentality, the problem of identity theft still exists. When you decide to buy something from an internet site, you will be given a selection of payment methods and hyperlinks to forms you fill out with your credit card information, address, and so on. Whenever possible, use the “secured form.” This means that the online retailer has taken extra measures to insure the security of your financial and personal information.

America Online users note : you may not be able to use a secured form using AOL's built-in version of Microsoft Internet Explorer. If you have difficulty submitting a secured form through AOL, simply run AOL as usual, then go out to your desktop or programs list and open your outside version of Internet Explorer. This should allow you to submit your information. If this still does not work, contact your technical support specialist or the service provider's customer support line for assistance. Happy Holidays, and good computing!