

Target adds service to electronics offerings

August 25 2010, By EMILY FREDRIX , AP Retail Writer

(AP) -- Target is known for being cheap and chic. But now the retailer is making a big push to become known as a destination for electronics.

Target Corp. said Tuesday it's adding several services for electronics shoppers, including free telephone technical support for purchases, an electronics recycling program that offers store gift cards and expanded wireless phone offerings.

The company is rolling out mobile centers in its stores with partner RadioShack to allow people to sign up for cell phone plans with major carriers or get new phones. People will also be able to trade in old video games and other electronics for store gift cards.

The moves come as the electronics business becomes more competitive. Discounters such as Target and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. are competing with specialized electronic retailers such as [Best Buy](#). The category, despite the [economic downturn](#), is still hot because people consider cell phones and other electronics necessities, said Morningstar analyst R.J. Hottovy.

"It's another way to draw traffic into the stores," he said. "I think if you're going to become a major electronics retailer, you have to have the service side behind it."

Minneapolis-based Target wants to make sure people think of its stores as a destination for electronics. It wants shoppers to be able to use the products they buy and have no fears about buying them, said Senior Vice President Mark Schindele.

"Electronics are getting more complicated and more of us are connected to the Internet and wireless," he said. "Guests want a seamless experience."

So the new focus on electronics service starts in store and follows shoppers home.

Target started quietly testing a toll-free number, 877-myTGTtech, last month. The hot line is available nationwide to anyone who bought an electronic item at Target. All they have to do is provide a receipt number, although Schindele said the operators would most likely still help people if they did not have their number.

People call with questions such as how to sync their iPods with their computers and how to connect their netbooks to wireless Internet.

The two other elements of its electronics push take place in stores, at new mobile centers, which also double as a place to trade in used electronics.

Target Mobile - found in the electronics center - is a partnership with retailer RadioShack to let people buy and activate cell phones. The company declined to name carriers. Last October the company launched tests in 104 stores. It is rolling out more this summer and plans to be in 850 stores later this year. The majority of stores will have the mobile centers by the middle of next year.

For the trade-in program, employees will examine condition and age of the item and offer gift cards based on that. He said the average, older iPod or older mobile phone is worth about \$25, while a used video game is typically \$7.

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