

EBay buys local shopping engine Milo

December 2 2010, By RACHEL METZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- EBay Inc. said Thursday that it bought a local shopping engine that lets consumers search online for products available at stores near them.

The company plans to add results from Milo to those that [eBay](#) users already get when they search the company's website and mobile apps.

Milo tracks inventory ranging from laptops to body jewelry at about 50,000 stores in the U.S. in real time. Visitors can search for products that are usually carried by those stores and learn whether they are in stock. Once users find the product they want, Milo can also send them to [Google](#) Maps for directions.

Milo, which is based in Palo Alto, has more than 140 retail partners, more than half of them small and medium-sized companies. Larger retailers include Target Corp., [Best Buy](#) Co. and Barnes & Noble Inc.

EBay did not disclose terms of the acquisition, which marks the San Jose-based company's latest attempt to penetrate the world of offline retail and intermingle it with its online marketplace.

In June, eBay bought barcode-scanning iPhone app RedLaser, which lets you scan an actual product and see its price at online stores and on eBay. That helps you decide if you should buy the product right away or purchase it on the Web.

EBay will start incorporating Milo's data by adding it to the RedLaser

app. It will add Milo's search results to eBay.com next year.

Mark Carges, eBay's chief technology officer, said the Milo purchase shows that the lines between "pure e-commerce and pure brick-and-mortar really are starting to blur."

People are increasingly using their phones these days to shop online while on the go, and they may use a phone or laptop to start looking for a product and then decide if they should buy it online or in a store. Some may even check out a product at a store and then decide to buy it online.

The acquisition also gives eBay shoppers more selection and more ways to buy, Carges said, which eBay believes will spur more traffic.

The company isn't worried that the tool will take sales away from eBay sellers. Rather, Carges said the expected rise in traffic will potentially help those who auction off items or sell "Buy It Now" fixed-price items that are shipped to buyers. eBay also intends to add inventory from small and local retailers to benefit eBay sellers who also have physical stores.

Jonathan Garriss, executive director of the Professional eBay Sellers Alliance, said there is a chance that Milo's addition to eBay would dilute traffic to the site. But he's not that worried about Milo hurting eBay sellers' businesses, noting that eBay already includes its classifieds ads in search results.

Milo will remain a stand-alone website for the time being at Milo.com, and the company's staff of about two dozen will join eBay, Carges said.

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