

New-look eBay moves toward social shopping (Update)

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EBay unveiled a new look for its website Wednesday inspired by social networks, giving consumers personalized shopping suggestions and a new emphasis on mobile Internet.

Online commerce giant eBay unveiled a new look for its website Wednesday inspired by social networks, giving consumers personalized suggestions to help them sift through the huge shopping site.

The ecommerce giant with 105 million active users will start giving its users a "newsfeed" and a "personalized homepage" with recommendations based on a user's shopping history or personal interests.

The liberal use of photos on the revamped eBay site seems to mimic the fast-growing social network Pinterest. The eBay newsfeed appears

inspired by Facebook and users will also get a Twitter-like option to "follow" products or brands.

"We're delivering a cleaner, contemporary look and feel; a more intuitive, convenient way to browse, decide and buy—both globally and locally; and a new personal way to curate your own shopping experience and discover items perfect for you," eBay president Devin Wenig said.

The site will have "more inviting pictures" and allow users to click on an item and get key details, and then complete a purchase in as little as two clicks.

At a news conference in New York, eBay's chief technical officer Mark Carges said a lot of online shopping "killed most of the pleasure of shopping" and that "we are reintroducing all those elements."

And eBay marketing official Christina Mercado said the personalization would help shoppers sift through the millions of items sold each day.

Sellers on eBay will now be able to link their Facebook fan or profile page, and embed YouTube videos.

"These changes and more reflect the new eBay and our evolution as a marketplace that connects the world to the things they need and love—anytime, anywhere" said Wenig.

Wenig said the "new eBay" would be increasingly global and mobile, reflecting consumer trends.

"In a connected commerce world, consumers shouldn't care whether the product they want is at a neighborhood store, or in a shopkeeper's window halfway around the world," he said.

"The future of commerce is mobile. It's increasingly multichannel via any connected screen. Consumers want to move seamlessly across devices, through any shopping environment."

Executives at eBay said some of the early bets they made on mobile are paying off, pointing out that people spend more time on the site from a mobile device than from a desktop, and that 10,000 vehicles are sold every week on eBay mobile in the US.

Shares in eBay rose 1.2 percent to close at \$46.76.

eBay is set to release quarterly earnings next week. It had net income in the past quarter of \$692 million on revenue that rose 23 percent to \$3.4 billion.

The company said in July it expected mobile volume from eBay and its PayPal unit to each hit \$10 billion in 2012—more than double the amount in 2011.

But eBay's moves suggest the company, launched as an online auction site, now sees a broader range of competitors such as Amazon and Google, as well as social networks like Facebook that are edging into ecommerce.

One initiative for eBay is a same-day delivery service being tested in some markets. A consumer can place an order at a local partner retailer, and it is delivered within the hour.

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