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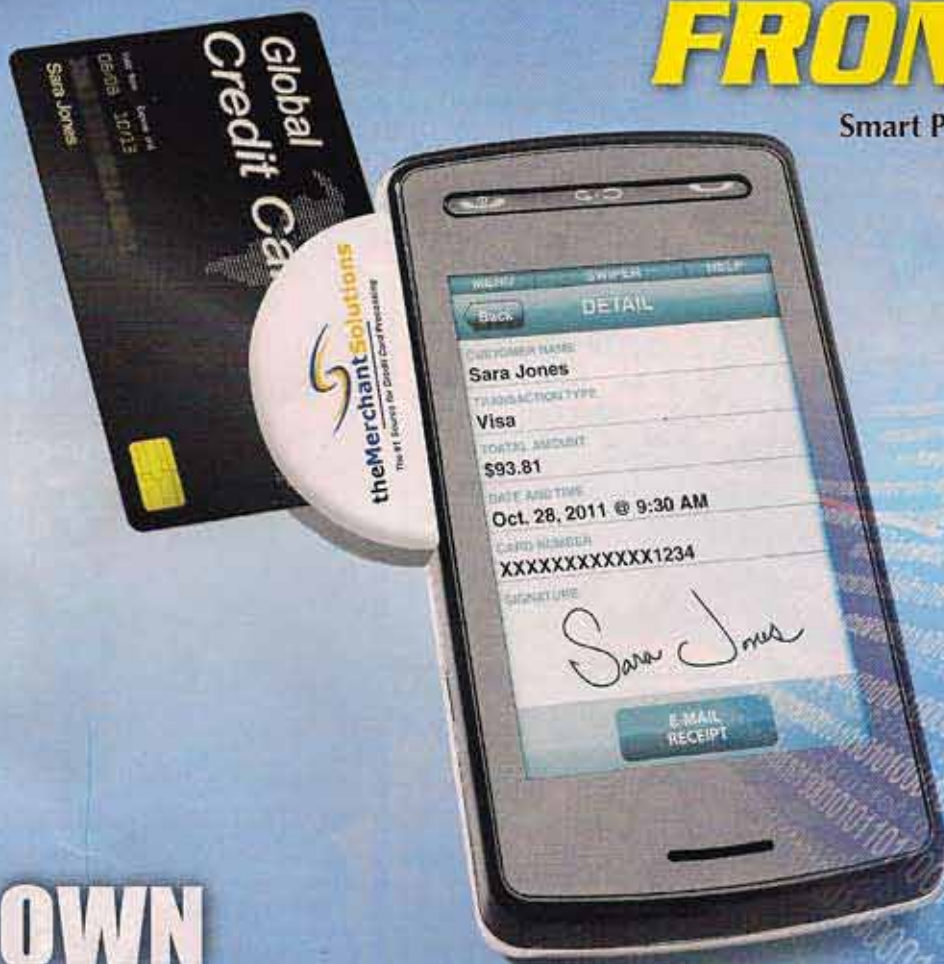
# WEB WHOLESALE

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# Steal Deal is Web Savvy

MIX A SUCCESSFUL wholesale clothing business with a savvy Internet strategy, and expect explosive growth. "Our website has gone from about 100 items to the 2,000 plus skus we have today," says Ebby Davood, president of Steal Deal Inc. "My website went from 3,000 to 4,000 unique users per month, up to 28,000 business-to-business hits per month." The urban apparel supplier attributes this growth to numerous factors, from customer service to ease of use. First and foremost, Davood credits a detailed and thorough search engine optimization (SEO) strategy for Steal Deal's increasing success.

## Traffic Grows

Partnering with his brother, Davood's family run business went online in 2004. "We used to advertise our site in many different places," explains Davood, "and WholesaleCentral.com was probably the best website we used in terms of putting our site on the web." Another initial strategy was to hand out business cards and talk up the site face to face. "Our company goes to about 50 tradeshows a year. That got us to the 5,000 new customers and unique hits per month," Davood adds.

However, dramatic growth came from better SEO practices. "Through the years, I've used probably four to five companies focused on SEO success that robbed me blind. About a year and eight months ago, I contracted a

company named LAD Solutions. Their service is so good, I can tell you that these guys have done everything they told me they would," says Davood. He emphasizes that although most SEO consultants say that results take time, this provider delivered an immediate improvement.

Among the consulted tweaks Steal Deal made to the company website was to frequently rotate and add new content to the homepage, boosting rank results. The company

now features an industry blog right on the homepage that includes actual news articles about the hip-hop and urban wear apparel business. "We put new links all the time about what is happening in the industry," says Davood. He is especially proud of his Google results. "If you type 'men's wholesale clothing' on Google," he says, "I'll be first." A focus on keywords has been another key to search engine ranking success. "I work on many keywords each month, so I'll get more traffic coming in," Davood explains. As a result, the company's traffic num-

bers are through the roof. "It just doesn't make sense why everyone isn't doing this. Google is the yellow pages of the world nowadays," Davood exclaims.

## Website Strengths

Davood pointed to the way products are organized by



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brand as especially useful. "The website is really easy to use and navigate," he says. "My most important thing is that I want anybody in the world to be able to click around the site and get what they need." That applies to young, tech savvy buyers, as well as those still learning about the Internet's uses. "I have customers who are 60, 70, maybe 75 years old, and they tell me that my site is so easy to navigate," explains Davood.

Keeping up with social networking has played a role as well. "Facebook is important," he says. "We throw some deals out there, and people follow us." Davood also points to the site's rich content. "We have a lot of tabs and links on our site that we didn't used to have. Having our history published on the website gives us a little more legitimacy against all the other sites that are out there," explains Ebby Davood.

## Bringing in Repeat Customers

Steal Deal could not grow its online business, however, if it were not also selling a compelling product line. As a specialist in closeout urban theme clothing, the company has the tricky job of staying on top of the long term trends, while dealing in last season's lines. It's a tightrope act that requires a certain responsiveness. "We used to do a lot of unbranded stuff in the market," says Davood, offering an example of how his company has changed in response to customer demand. "But nowadays a lot of people care about the brands, so we transformed our site into one where people could shop for all the brands and buy them under one roof."

On the left hand side of every page, about 30 of the most popular brand names are listed, from Akademiks to Girbaud to Yo-Me. Some generic popular product categories are included as well, in case the customer wants to shop for dress shirts or jeans, for example. One important consequence of



this organizational scheme is that a retailer buyer looking to sell many lines and many brands can get them all at one site. This is an advantage to buyers who appreciate the time savings. "We don't have minimums, so we've always been able to help the mom and pop stores. A lot of my customers call me and say, 'You know, if it weren't for you, I think half of my day would be spent just buying.' We really do bring value to the customer at StealDeal.com," Davood says proudly.

That pride comes from the company's high percentage of repeat customers. "We want to make sure our customers are paying about 50 percent off of regular wholesale," insists Davood. The company can do that by buying closeout and off-season apparel. "We go to the brands and look for the items they are done with. We're jobbers, so we really get out there and knock down the prices," he says. "We buy older goods. We go in there, look at the deal, and negotiate prices way below what they would offer the average person."

The combination of low prices, no minimums, no registration, and ease of use keeps the customer on the website after a top ranking search result ropes them in. But the finishing touch is excellent customer service. "We have seven sales reps on board, and they are really customer friendly," explains Davood. "I've built my business on putting customers first. If they don't make money, we're not happy." ■■■

For more information:

#### **STEAL DEAL INC.**

1220 Maple Ave, Suite 609

Los Angeles, CA 90015

Toll Free: 800-416-6149

Tel.: 213-747-6347

Fax: 213-747-6330

Email: [ebby@stealdeal.com](mailto:ebby@stealdeal.com)

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## Apparel / Clothing — Dropshippers

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