

High-Tech Glove Marketing

Buying and selling gloves is a whole new game, thanks to the Internet.

By Joseph D. McGarry, Gloves-Online.com President & CEO

In this world of online matchmaking, finding the perfect pair of gloves for safety, work, or play is easier than ever. No longer relegated to thumbing through catalogues to find the right match, today's safety buyers have a plethora of resources available on the Information Superhighway.

Most users already know that there's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all glove. In fact, there are specialty coatings, fibers, and features galore available in today's hand protection products. Coated gloves, for example, made their appearance in the 1990s and, in doing so, added a level of safety that never before existed. Coating options included latex rubber, nitrile rubber, polyurethane, PVC, and neoprene, and less-used options of PVA, butyl, or Viton. These coated gloves were waterproof, and some were chemical resistant. They even offered a new level of gripping by adding a texture to the coating.



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Specialty fibers also mingled with the coated gloves, among others. There are now fibers that are cut resistant, including Kevlar and Dyneema. Heat-resistant gloves with Carbon-X fibers are very popular for their high-heat, flame, and spark resistance.

There are the new specialty gloves for specific applications, such as anti-vibration gloves to protect against Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) or electric hazard gloves to prevent electrocution. And, of course, the standard work gloves of the 1990s are vastly improved with added dexterity, comfort, warmth, and grip.

But the newest innovation to high-tech gloves is not a glove at all; it is the way gloves are currently being marketed and purchased. For right around the time the Internet's popularity took off, so, too, did the manufacture of high-tech gloves that were once thought of as low-tech safety items. As one of the most inexpensive pieces of personal safety equipment available, gloves are mandatory in our ever-increasing world of safety requirements.

Enter the Internet

The Internet has changed how we learn, date, and shop, and the glove industry wasn't immune to its effects. The proliferation of Web sites that sell gloves, the increase in Web-based selection tools, e-marketing, and the addition of social marketing all make purchasing gloves a whole new game.

And where buyers once purchased all of their supplies from one or two distributors or catalogues, now those same buyers have a multitude of choices from which to select their products. At the same time, distributors no longer have to stock every item needed, but can readily drop-ship specific gloves to their customers. Thanks to the Internet, prices are also much more competitive.

Early on, safety buyers ran into a major problem with purchasing from the Web: the lack of details about new products. For even if the copy detailing all the glove's functions was sufficient or even exceptional, questions would always come up.

That has since changed. Thanks to the addition of video files, manufacturers of high-tech gloves now can offer online demonstrations of glove performance in specific applications. These videos often can replace a personal sales presentation and offer more than a catalogue alone.

Blogging Right Along

Even if you don't have teen-age children, you've heard of blogging, RSS feeds, YouTube, Facebook and MySpace, all of which are part of the new online "social networking" phenomenon. Manufacturers and sales professionals are sharing knowledge and expertise through these social networking channels, which in turn serve as valuable learning and purchasing platforms for safety buyers.

Expect these channels to grow in the years to come as an increasing number of buyers, distributors, and manufacturers of gloves interact and collaborate via the Web. Consider the fact that gloves are adapting to the high-tech world with models such as the Freehand Glove, which allows wearers to text or surf the Web on a cell phone or laptop without removing them. What will be next? We'll have to wait and see. . . . ●