

If you're interested in buying online, here are a few hints to help you find the bargain you're looking for.

Purchasing is an essential activity in every business – buying raw materials, office supplies and equipment. E-procurement refers to the business to business (B2B) sale and purchase of supplies and services over the Internet. The Internet allows you to:

- search for product and supplier information on the web
- download a product catalogue
- email enquiries to suppliers
- place orders online
- make payments online.

Companies using e-procurement techniques to support their purchasing are likely to benefit from:

- higher productivity and efficiency than current methods
- greater convenience — products and prices can be easily compared without leaving the office
- greater success locating 'hard-to-find' items
- lower costs
- faster delivery times
- the ability to search for suppliers by location — regional businesses use it to find suppliers they didn't know existed!

Setting up E-procurement

Look at your current suppliers — do they have an email address? Do they have a website? Ask about their services and planned services, and how to develop e-procurement procedures with them.

Talk to colleagues, local advisers, industry associations and business associations about how they use e-procurement, or how they can assist you. Assess the e-procurement benefits they have gained.

Visit local business portals or search the web for products or brand names you use to find

alternatives to your current suppliers. Look at their websites, and consider any commercial benefits from buying elsewhere.

Develop internal business processes that encourage the use of the Internet for purchasing. Start in a small way — for example by using email rather than phone to make inquiries — to find what works best for you, and what benefits you most.

Tips for Success

Online credit card payment is a major concern for many people. Buying online doesn't always mean using a credit card for online payment — there are alternatives.

You can email orders through and continue to use traditional payment methods — become an account customer, telephone or fax the supplier to find out credit card details, or pay by cheque.

Encourage staff to come up with new ideas to gain the most from e-procurement.

Handy Hint

When you find an e-procurement technique that works for you – e.g. downloading product catalogues and specification sheets – make it a standard, normal way of carrying out that business activity and maximise the benefit.

Tips to Protect Yourself as a Buyer

Know who you're dealing with.

Make sure the vendor provides an address, business registration details (such as an ACN or ABN in Australia) and contact details. If you are unsure, try to contact the vendor before you buy.

Take care when purchasing from new suppliers, especially those located outside Australia as it may be harder to resolve problems or recover money. They won't be necessarily covered by Australian consumer protection and trade practices laws.

If involved in currency exchanges, be careful to protect yourself from exchange rate movements.

Know how much you're paying. Make sure you know the total amount you'll be paying, including delivery and insurance, in Australian currency.

Find out about warranties on the goods you buy.

Check delivery details — both timing and costs.

Check for a returns policy — can you send the goods back if they are unsatisfactory?

Print out copies of any forms you fill in and pages in the website that outline the offer you have accepted.

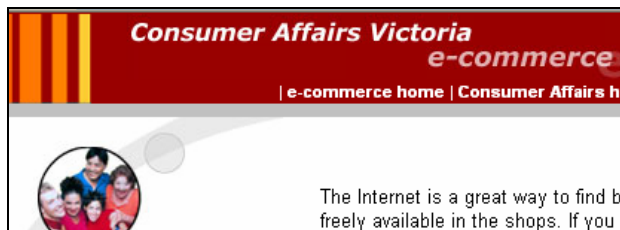
Remember that websites can change overnight. Also, ensure you keep any email correspondence.



Check the site offers a secure socket layer which is illustrated by the 'gold lock' in the Internet browser.

Where to Get More Information

- Consumer Affairs Victoria has useful tips for shopping online — www.consumer.vic.gov.au/ecommerce.



- Talk to the economic development department at your local council. They encourage local businesses to use e-procurement, and they may offer training, funding or other incentives to help you.
- Your regional development association may be keen to develop business growth in the region by helping businesses to use e-procurement among themselves. Talk to them, and find out how they can help you.
- Access useful tips for shopping online — www.accc.gov.au search for 'online shopping checklist'.

Disclaimer

These materials are provided for general assistance and information only. Neither APT Strategies Pty. Ltd nor the State of Victoria makes any representations or warranties (express or implied) as to the accuracy or currency of the information contained in the materials nor endorses any company or organisation or other web-sites or materials referred to. The State of Victoria does not accept any liability for any reliance placed on this material, including any liability in negligence for relying on any information in these materials or any products, services or information which may be provided by the companies and organisations referred to. Copyright State of Victoria 2004.