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eBay launches socially conscious retail site

- Story Highlights
- eBay launches a Web site to sell goods made with social and environmental goals
- WorldofGood.com focuses on "ethical supply chains" behind consumer products
- The site sells fixed-price goods that purportedly have a positive effect on the planet
- Shoppers can search for products by social or environmental categories

NEW YORK (AP) -- Most consumers probably associate eBay Inc. more with vintage lunch boxes and low-priced electronics than with laptop bags made from recycled plastic by women in New Delhi.

The online auction operator is trying to change that perception with WorldofGood.com, a Web that launched Wednesday to sell goods produced with social and environmental goals in mind.

eBay developed the site with World of Good Inc., a startup focused on "ethical supply chains" behind consumer products, and licensed the group's name for the marketplace. World of Good will get a share of the revenue from the site, which had been operating for the past six months as an online community focused on the social impact of business.

The site sells fixed-price goods that purportedly have some positive effect on people and the planet. The goal is to help consumers align their social values with their shopping decisions, WorldofGood.com general manager Robert Chatwani said.

Shoppers can search for products by certain social or environmental categories, revealing, for example, a photo of the man who produced the fair-trade coffee you're interested in buying, details of its origins and whether some of the proceeds support a charitable cause.

Independent third-party organizations like Rainforest Alliance and Co-op America will screen sellers and verify the items listed on the site.

"We really want consumers to drill down into the detail of what's behind that product," Chatwani said.

Already the market for products that emphasize social and environmental awareness is growing. Chatwani cited the Natural Marketing Institute's estimate that the U.S. market for such goods was \$209 billion in 2005, and the group projects that will rise to \$420 billion in 2010.

And while there are plenty of places to buy such items already, [eBay](#) and its 84.5 million active users might dramatically increase awareness for artisans. WorldofGood.com items are cross-listed on eBay proper, blended into standard search results.

The arrangement drew praise from Roberto Milk, chief executive of Novica, which works with artisans around the world to sell their home decor items on eBay. The National Geographic Society owns a stake in the company.

Novica has sold things on eBay since 1999, but given the enormous nature of the site, "nobody knows we're on eBay," he said. This could change with additional sales on WorldofGood.com, where Novica will sell items it has either bought or taken on consignment.

"All our artisans really need is exposure," he said.

As on eBay, sellers on WorldofGood.com will pay fees to list items and give eBay a commission on successful sales. All transactions will be made through eBay's electronic payment system, PayPal. So far the site has several hundred sellers, including many merchants who are also current eBay sellers.

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