

## SkyMall mobile app takes flight

When it comes to mobile apps, retailers and other companies must create an efficient experience that also is vibrant if they want smartphone users to keep the apps on their devices, mobile technology experts say. On this note, mass merchant SkyMall Inc. has come out swinging with a new mobile app designed to make mobile shopping as easy, and fun, as shopping on a web site.

The iPhone app, available for free at Apple Inc.'s App Store, opens to Featured Products, where shoppers can slide from left to right and back across five products SkyMall is highlighting. A box below enables shopping by department, and buttons below that enable search and access to a gift finder and the shopping cart.

SkyMall has gone beyond some other retail mobile apps when it comes to functionality and an entertaining experience, the company says. Its gift finder lets shoppers use "wheels" (akin to slot machine windows) to designate the type of gift recipient and a price range; or, shoppers can literally shake their iPhone or iPod Touch music player to obtain gift ideas at random. The app also links with SkyMall's Twitter feed to let shoppers follow the retailer via the app without having to go to Twitter.com.

SkyMall also has incorporated its own version of the game Concentration into the app. Shoppers waiting for a flight or sitting on the tarmac can play the game, which requires players to select boxes one at a time to see what picture lies beneath. Players then have to remember where they last saw a picture to match pairs of images, which are SkyMall products. When a shopper correctly matches two images, the app displays the product along with two buttons, View Product or Return To Game.

The mobile app contains the retailer's entire product catalog, so consumers can browse the store without wireless connectivity--for example, in flight. Shoppers can add products to their shopping cart at any point and then check out through the app when they have a wireless connection. When SkyMall makes changes to its product catalog, the app alerts the shopper to download the update.

SkyMall has made mobile commerce a strategic priority since launching its m-commerce site in 2007, and a dynamic mobile app was the next step in this strategic direction, says Jay Scannell, vice president of information technology at SkyMall, No. 151 in the [Internet Retailer Top 500 Guide](#). "This mobile app really demonstrates our mission, which is, 'To deliver more than just cool stuff through creativity, innovation and fun,'" he says. "Mobile is the fourth channel and it's here to stay."

M-commerce technology vendor iNomadics Inc. built the iPhone app leveraging e-commerce and m-commerce infrastructure already in place from CardinalCommerce Corp. SkyMall plans to release a BlackBerry version of its mobile app, being built by m-commerce technology vendor Digby. The retailer has yet to set a release date for the BlackBerry app. •