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Cyber Monday

By Rachael Morrow
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It's a trend that's catching on.

"What they're predicting this year is 70% of adults between the ages of 18 and 34 will shop in the work place," said Tasha Wallis, Executive Director of the Vermont Retail Association.

That translates into nearly 73 million people shopping online from work the Monday after Black Friday. Retailers coined the term "Cyber Monday" five years ago to mark the day, and it's grown in popularity ever since, as shoppers cite no crowds, convenience, and free shipping as their biggest reasons for buying online.

"It's just, it's so much easier, because you order it, click, it's there, and then it arrives at your house, and then you can hide it, wrap it, and put it under the tree," explained Rowan Hardy, mother of three from Charlotte.

"The convenience, much easier to get what you need and have it brought to your door, than getting out to the stores," agreed Burlington resident David Barron.

But shopping online can also have its drawbacks, as consumers tend to flock to big box stores, and send their money out of state. According to the National Retail Federation, consumers spent \$733 million dollars last Cyber Monday shopping online, and that number is expected to increase. That means e-tailers will be stepping up the competition, and offering deals that smaller stores may not be able to match.

"I think it's going to be a challenging year for smaller retailers online, because there is so much discounting, and it's so competitive. So that

puts the smaller boutiquey stores who are online at a disadvantage," explained Wallis.

But the Internet can also allow a local retailer to expand its reach. Gardener's Supply in Burlington sees a significant increase in their online traffic this time of year. The web has allowed the company to go nationwide.

"I think for us, it enhances the local market. It allows us to be independent, and compete with the big boxes, and if it wasn't online, I don't know that we'd have that ability," said Jim Feinson, president of Gardener's Supply.

And in a tough economic climate, retailers are hoping to recoup their losses with a click of a mouse.

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