

Attic.City's search, discover tool connects consumers to retailers

By Mary Burritt
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WASHINGTON — Instead of scouring the city's myriad mom-and-pop stores or navigating hits in a Google search, shoppers seeking vintage furniture can go to the Attic.City website, select a category, click on the photo of an item they like and discover the name, address and phone number of the local store selling it.

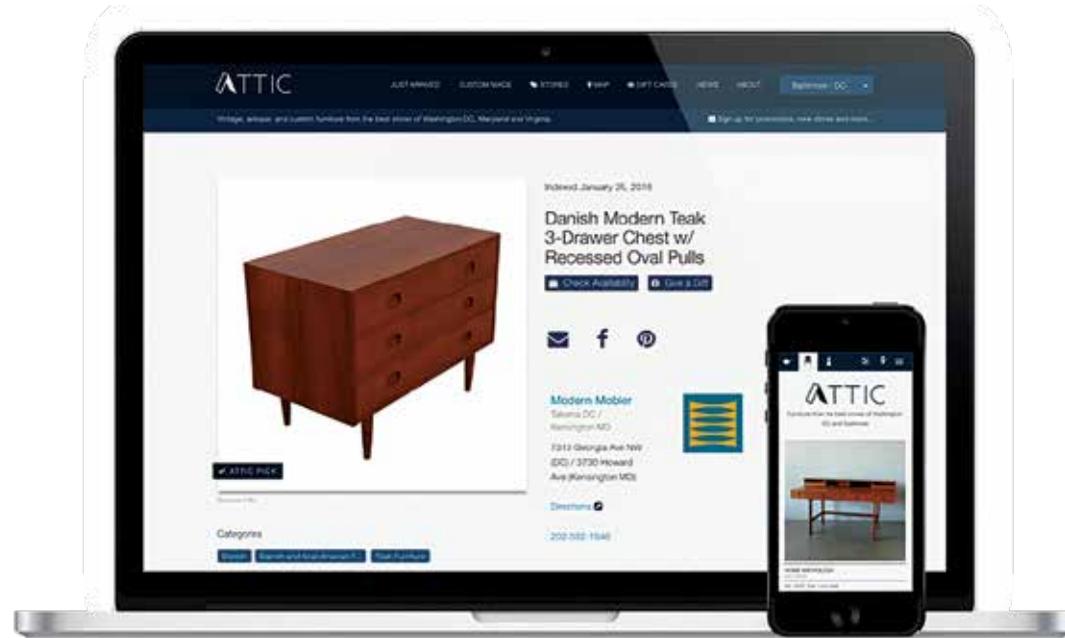
Attic.City is a website that's more like a search and discovery tool than an e-commerce platform, said co-founder Tarek Anandan. "We're not a site where you can purchase an item; we don't get involved in any transactions. We're basically there to point consumers to commercial options.

"We've chosen to focus on vintage and artisan-made furniture at the outset because of our own personal passions and preferences," he said, "but our technology is agnostic. There are some interesting lateral opportunities, and a wider array of furniture retailers is certainly an opportunity.

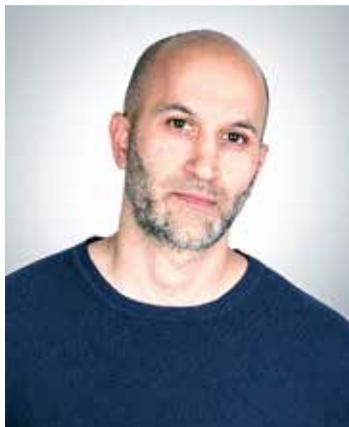
"Our niche is to focus on the independent dealers, the small mom-and-pop, brick-and-mortar stores," Anandan said, explaining why the products and stores on an Attic.City site are specific to that city.

The need for such a site became apparent four years ago, when Anandan and his wife tired of ricocheting between social media and websites looking for unique furniture pieces.

"I was facing the challenge of how do I figure out what's available at these stores easily so that



Attic.City sweeps the websites of member stores and adds new product listings.



Tarek Anandan
Attic.City

I have more options compared to the larger chain retailers that make it so easy to discover what they have online," Anandan recalled.

The economics and public policy major had been moonlighting



Francisco Serrano
Attic.City

for years in IT. Attic.City became a passion project for him, and his partner Francisco Serrano "became hooked on the programming challenge." The site launched four years ago in Washington.

Now beta versions of the site

are launching in Boston and Philadelphia, soon to link dozens of retailers with local treasure hunters.

Attic.City's software continuously scans the websites of member businesses and pulls their new product listings onto Attic.City's site. Anandan said the program doesn't have a way of tracking whether a visitor makes a transaction but does track traffic from Attic.City to stores' websites.

"That's our key conversion metric," he said, and it's about 20%. "For us, it's not the sale; it's the number of people we're putting through the store's doors, whether they be their virtual doors or their physical doors."

Operating costs are covered by the \$200 annual fee for a basic membership and ads on the websites.

"We've also experimented

with some interesting concepts in D.C.," Anandan said. He and his partner "built our own technology" for a gift card redeemable only at participating stores and free of the fees charged by a company such as Visa.

The company also has a premium package for the stores in Washington, which includes a featured slot on the page showing all the stores, a nicer individual page with a link to all social media, logos on products and product pages, a larger marker on the map and discounts for a la carte marketing services such as mobile and banner ads and gift card commission.

Related markets and services such as real estate agents, furniture home shows and delivery services have contacted Attic.City about advertising or collaborating, Anandan said.

"There are definitely people who've seen the eyeballs that we have, and I think there's definitely opportunity to collaborate with some of those other services in the future."

That interest, he added, indicates that brick-and-mortar furniture stores still have a future.

"As much as the Internet is having an impact on retail, furniture is still a tough nut to crack because you want to touch and feel and sit and understand the piece of furniture really well.

"Augmented reality is going to help, but it's still got a ways to go, I think, and even when you can see what a table is going to look like in your house, it's not the same as touching it and getting a real true in person sense for the piece." 

New Storis, BrandSource pairing gives members added commerce solutions

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SACRAMENTO, Calif. — As a new partner with BrandSource, Storis will showcase and demonstrate its technology at BrandSource industry events and provide educational seminars to their members.

Storis, based in New Jersey, provides to the home furnishings industry commerce solutions such as serial tracking, integrated customer services,

in-store and mobile point-of-sale software, inventory management, merchandising tools, e-commerce, in-store kiosk and business intelligence.

Storis will attend the BrandSource Convention in Las Vegas in August, where it will present an educational technology seminar. The company also will offer incentivized cloud packages to BrandSource members, including benefits related to implementation services.

"Storis is happy to partner

with BrandSource to bring technology solutions to the group," said Doug Culmone, COO of Storis. "We know our clients have found value in what BrandSource delivers, and we look to leverage our technology platform to give them a competitive edge."

The alliance between BrandSource and Storis grew out of the interest of some BrandSource members, who requested assistance with commerce solutions to help their businesses.

BrandSource, a buying group



Storis will demonstrate its commerce options at the BrandSource member convention.

for the home furnishings industry, also provides its members access to Alta 360, a new

digital platform from Associated Volume Buyers. AVB is a member-owned merchandising group. 