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**Secure Selling Beyond eBay**  
By **Valle Dwight**  
July 26, 2006

The eBay bonding company [buySAFE, Inc.](#) is expanding its service to individual retail Web sites.

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Merchants who qualify to use the buySAFE seal pass the buySAFE business inspection, which ensures the merchant is trustworthy and committed to delivering on the terms of the sale. These retailers can then display the buySAFE Seal on

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item listings, which tells consumers the transaction is guaranteed with a surety bond of up to \$25,000. Additionally, all buySAFE bonded sellers agree to allow buySAFE to continuously monitor their performance.

Initially, buySAFE Web site bonding is being offered through seller service providers, such as storefront and shopping cart merchants. The first to sign up is [Zoovy, Inc.](#) David Steel, CEO, Zoovy says, "buySAFE Website Bonding levels the playing field by providing small- to mid-sized online retailers, which comprise the majority of Web merchants, an opportunity to compete against the major online brands."

BuySafe got its start on eBay where currently more than 2 million items are backed by the buySafe seal, and is the brainchild of Steve Woda, who founded the online trust and safety company in 2003. Six years ago as an MBA student at the Wharton School, Steve Woda got burned on an eBay auction when he paid \$400 for a PDA that never arrived. Inspired by that frustration, he started thinking about how to guarantee online transactions so that buyers were more comfortable and smaller merchants could compete with large well-known retailers.

"The concept of surety bonds goes back thousands of years," said Woda, when a third party would vouch for a merchant who might be unknown to buyers from another village. "We guarantee the terms of the sale," Woda explained. "We

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ensure that the buyer gets what they paid for."

To get backed by the seal, merchants undergo a rigorous screening process, including an examination of their history of selling online, customer feedback and financial stability. Sellers also agree to regular review of their online transactions. Merchants pay one percent of the final transaction to buySafe.

Shoppers looking for items that are guaranteed by buySafe can also go to [buysafeshopping.com](#), which lists bonded items at eBay, [TIAS.com](#) (antiques and collectibles) and [Overstock.com](#) as well as individual bonded sellers. "The number one problem for small and medium-sized online merchants these days is buyer confidence," Woda said. In order to compete with the larger brand-name stores, smaller merchants often lower their prices. "We mitigate the risk," said Woda, and the guarantee will hopefully lure the risk-averse customers who have traditionally felt safer buying from larger retailers.

A recent impact study done by the company showed that bonded items received 4.7 percent higher prices than non-bonded items. Michael Jansma, CEO, [Gemaffair](#) agrees, saying bonded items boost the bottom line. "BuySAFE increased both my sell-through rate and the overall price of items sold during a 30-day period, which had a major impact on my monthly sales revenue," said Jansma. "And the moment I can get buySAFE for my retail site I'll sign up because I firmly believe in the product. My eBay customers have been asking for it at my retail site for a while now."

*Valle Dwight is a new contributor to [ECommerce-Guide.com](#).*

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