Invasion of the Eyeball Snatchers

BY PAT JONES

Greed, Fear and GuesWork Are Driving the Intense Interest in Online Selling

now, they'll be history in two years. For similar reasons, GCSAA is likely to take the e-biz plunge. The association doesn't want to miss out on a potential gravy train since e-commerce has the potential to erode revenues from its trade show.

Finally, the players are guessing e-commerce will rapidly emerge as a major link in the supply chain. They're also guessing that higher margins from direct sales (bypassing distributors) will quickly recoup their e-biz investment. Lastly, they're guessing that you will actually log on and buy stuff.

And that, friends, is the question: If they build it, will you come?

My thinking is that many of you eventually will, particularly when you need commodity supplies, replacement parts and other items that don't require any tire kicking. Cost-control pressures are high, and buying online generally offers a discount. More of you are computer savvy (and the kids flooding out of turf schools certainly are). Finally, the idea of one-stop shopping — and fewer sales calls — has appeal.

But what about service? What about local support? What about the value of dealing with someone face to face? How can you give all of that up just to save a few bucks and streamline the process a little? All good questions, but travel agents and bookshop owners were saying the same things a couple of years ago before e-commerce sent their industries ass over teakettle.

Will the same fate befall us? Anyone who says they know the answer to that question is a liar. All I know is that the era of e-business has arrived and you'd better grab your balls — er, I mean eyeballs — and hold on tight.

Pat Jones is the editor/publisher of Golfdom. He can be reached at 440-891-3126 or pjones@advanstar.com