



Sometimes It Just Clicks

Net-a-Porter founder Natalie Massenet has changed the face of online retail.

by Rachel Bowie

NATALIE MASSENET is reinventing retail one click at a time. Chloé, Fendi, Marc Jacobs, Stella McCartney—you name it, her luxury fashion site, Net-a-Porter, sells it. But Massenet is taking a new approach.

A former fashion editor, Massenet combines her editorial and retail know-how to produce 52 issues of *Notes Weekly*, the online Net-a-Porter magazine that features the latest in fashion news and trends. In addition the site offers its clientele access to a team of fashion advisers who can advise on size and fit, not to mention give styling tips for the pieces the customers actually purchase. Twice a week Net-a-Porter uploads new products from around the world to offer its 1.8 million monthly viewers, and ships to 170 countries. Cutting-edge photography, current video from runway shows, same-day delivery of merchandise in Manhattan—Massenet has found a recipe for success.

“We’re able to inspire our customers in a unique and exciting way in terms of how to wear [designer brands],” she says. “Plus, our increasing use of video also allows our customers to feel like they’re front row at the shows.” And sometimes that means getting a first crack at the merchandise. After airing video of Alexander McQueen’s pre-spring 2009 collection, Massenet says, “we provided Net-a-Porter users with the opportunity to purchase eight looks from the show more than two months before they were available anywhere else.”

This spring Net-a-Porter is adding even more high-end names to its already extensive list of designer brands. Visitors to the site can expect to see looks from YSL, Lanvin, Jil Sander, and the like. And despite a troubled economy, Net-a-Porter is still chalking up more than 7,000 new customers a month.

But Massenet isn’t resting on her laurels. “We’ll continue to focus on what makes our customers turn to us,” she says. “A fabulous, edited buy with new designers and exclusive products.” **G**