



Ever ask an engineer a simple question and get a reply worthy of a research paper? Trying to compile a comprehensive list of industry e-commerce sites, I sorted through trade show files and e-mail, and then I visited *google.com*, usually a great search engine. There, like asking a simple question, I entered the words “e-commerce” and “concrete.”

I was informed that my search got about 52,500 results. A scroll down the first page revealed why. Article summaries related to e-commerce all right, but most read something like “Venture Capitalists Seek Concrete

► Want to buy used equipment or sell concrete online? Check out this list of sites.

Results from E-commerce.” Then I entered the words “concrete,” “e-commerce,” and “site,” and got a *much* more manageable 33,600 total, although most summaries still referred to concrete in, well, abstract terms.

Since this search engine ranks sites by popularity, I figured one not making the first several pages probably won't be around for long, anyway. So I didn't check all the pages. Here's my list, and I'm sticking to it:

Batchplantparts.com. Hundreds of new and used off-brand parts are available. Details and photos of new parts are available. Also, visitors can post free classified ads with their phone numbers.

Concretebrokers.com. Buyers and sellers can register on this eBay-like equipment site for free, and both parties remain anonymous during bidding. Sellers fill out their own profiles and receive e-mail notifications when

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posted requests for quotes (RFQs) match their profiles. Online payment also is available.

Earthking.com. Launched by Terex, this site gives visitors the ability to select, purchase, and dispose of their equipment. The FleetEdge equipment management service is designed to alert fleet managers when it's maintenance time.

Ironmax.com. Ironmax's site allows fleet managers to fill out RFQs and post them for free. It also offers subscribers several cost-estimation and asset-allocation tools, such as a Green Guide that lists equipment values, and a Custom Cost Evaluator that tracks equipment operating costs according to 25 criteria.

Ironplanet.com. This used equipment site differentiates with inspection reports from an insured, independent firm and an “IronClad Assurance” guarantee. Credit approvals for prospective purchasers are another point of differentiation. Equipment is available through a catalog or through periodic online auctions. The company also assigns customer service representatives to clients to handle financing, shipping, and parts replacement issues.

Materialink.com. MaterialLink allows cost recovery on surplus goods. Post a free RFQ for an overrun of 8-inch block and see if a nearby mason needs a few extra units, just as airlines make unsold seats

available at reduced fares through Priceline. Buyers and sellers can purchase and sell new or used goods without transaction fees.

Here's an update on sites mentioned in previous columns:

Buildpoint.com. BuildPoint Corp. recently unveiled its Concrete Selector Tool, which allows contractors to request performance criteria for a given mix, and a Concrete Order Tool, which sets orders as “firm” or “will call” (the customer can alter the latter). In addition, it's possible to save order histories on the site.

Buzzsaw.com. The producer can sign up to receive quotes online on a per-project or flat-monthly-fee basis. *Buzzsaw.com* also contacts non-member companies from whom customers still want a quote.

Citadon.com. One Citadon brand, MarketNet, allows the producer to respond to RFQs online. Another brand, ProjectNet, allows collaborative project document viewing.

Concretesoup.com. Visitors decide who receives an RFQ for equipment, consulting services, and materials, and check purchase order status.

Construction.com. Plans are to combine the large Sweet's catalog with BuildPoint's e-procurement engine.

—DON TALEND