



The eBay Auction Newsletter

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Proudly published for over 4 years by Brian McGregor

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Welcome from Brian McGregor



Welcome to the latest edition of the eBay Auction Newsletter. If you're a new subscriber, a particularly warm welcome to you.

Some eBay members are getting more and more irate about the direction that eBay is taking.

You can take your pick of the rumours about the number of sellers who have abandoned eBay to look for pastures new to sell their items. My take on this has always been simple.

Yes, they keep changing the rules, yes the changes may render the eBay marketplace apparently less attractive to sellers than it once was. But let's look at this from a totally different angle...

Just imagine that you are new, and you're just starting out today selling on eBay. Do you think you'd be spending time looking for the downsides, or worrying that sellers can't leave buyers negative feedback? Or would you perhaps spend your time determining ways and means of capitalising on the opportunity given to you by eBay based on the current rules and policies?

What I am saying here is that the internet is one of the fastest moving marketplaces around. Major changes happen weekly - new software, new communities, new methods, new competition etc.

If there's anything we've learned about the internet it is that change is the only certainty. I don't particularly want to install Windows Vista, or the upcoming Windows 7.0 or Internet Explorer 8.0. But I guess I will have to at some point.

Operating as it does within that environment, it's hardly surprising that eBay feels the need to continually develop. If some of those changes inconvenience the membership, I'm afraid that's just a fact of life.

There is plenty of money to be made on eBay. The trick is to learn to accommodate change, and then how to use it to your advantage.

Take care, and good luck in your eBay business. Speak to you soon.



1. Thought for the Day

"A master can tell you what he expects of you. A teacher, though, awakens your own expectations."

Patricia Neal

2. Easy Way to Make Quick Money on eBay

During these difficult economic days, the capability to generate some quick cash can be a handy skill.

Here is a very simple technique that anyone can use to get their hands on some extra money from eBay.

The key to this method is sticking to brand names that are popular and that you know everybody has heard of.

Go to one of those shopping locations which have a name such as outlet centre, designer discount shop, shopping village, factory outlet etc. Broadly, you're looking for shops which sell well known brands at less than RRP.

Visit each store and, this is key, check out their clearance items.

Your objective is to find items that will make you good profits by selling them on eBay.

If you're not sure if the items will be profitable for you on eBay, here's what you do. First, make a note of the details of the items i.e. exact product/model/name/number, regular price and clearance price.

Next comes the clever bit. If the shopping park has an internet cafe, go visit it. If you have access to the internet via your mobile phone, get online. Go to the <http://www.ebay.co.uk/> website.

Let's say, you've found a shop that is offering Charcoal Maclaren Footmuffs half price at £12.99. You go to eBay, you enter Charcoal Maclaren Footmuffs into the search box and then press the Search button.

The list eBay brings back are of the current auctions meeting that search criteria. But this isn't quite what you want. You're after auctions that have finished, to see what kind of price the Charcoal Maclaren Footmuffs were sold for. So, you scroll down the page looking at the menus on the left. What you're seeking is the menu item "Completed listings". When you see it, click on the Completed listings link.

The list on your page will now show you the completed auctions for Charcoal Maclaren Footmuffs covering the previous 30 days. The amounts in green are the selling prices achieved.

When I ran this today, I found that the latest five selling prices were £39.99, £36.00, £23.00, £29.99 and £37.00.

So, at £12.99 these Charcoal Maclaren Footmuffs are definitely worth buying and listing on eBay.

By the way, don't despair if you haven't the internet facility on your mobile. You can still use this system. Before you go out shopping, arrange for a friend or family member to be sitting at a PC. When you want to do the price research, ring them up, and get them to do the procedure described.

Hint to husbands, partners and boy friends - this is a great way to get out of the shopping trip. You can be the home based member of the shopping team, field the telephone call and look up the pricing information on eBay!

Armed with this eBay selling price intelligence, you can decide which of those clearance items you can buy to produce you the best profit on eBay.

Incidentally, you could also find that you're protected against an eBay selling failure! Suppose your item doesn't sell on eBay. You'll probably find the shops you purchase from operate a 30 day returns policy. If your item doesn't sell on eBay, you can often return it for a refund (don't forget to keep your receipt!). But do double check - some shops only operate a credit note returns policy - they may not offer a refund.

I won't make any recommendations about the names of the shops you should check out. But I would suggest sticking to what you know about. Ideally, you should be looking at product ranges about which you're familiar. In this way, you'll already have a feel for what is in demand and whether the discounts make the items attractive to you, and therefore other prospective buyers on eBay.

Give it a try. You might find it's fun!

3. See, Smell, Touch, Hear, Taste an eBay Sale

Given the power of the five senses in marketing, it is strange that very few eBay sellers ever take them into consideration when listing items on eBay.

If there was a way to appeal to your prospective buyers senses, this would not only differentiate your items from the vast majority of listings, but your auction description would be stronger and more effective. It would also assist your positioning when your buyer receives your item from you.

If you think this appears to be a stretch, think again. I know pictures of your items might be worth a thousand words but hearing is believing, high-tech requires higher touch, the nose knows, and the proof is in the pudding. So, here's a look (so to speak) at how selling to senses will help you improve your customers' impressions of you based upon how they humanly experience all facets of the goods they purchase from you. Depending upon what their collective senses tell them, buyers will quickly decide how inclined they might be to purchase additional items from you - and all within a split second of the firing of a synapse.

First let's turn to sight. It continues to be true that first impressions are lasting ones. If an item you have to offer is dusty, dingy, or generally a little dishevelled in appearance, see if you can clean it up a bit. But be careful. Whilst brushing and wiping can be a good idea, take care that your cleaning doesn't have value-diminishing effects. Some sellers damage items in their efforts to add a bit of polish, such as attempting to remove old price tags, stains, or other blemishes. Indeed some buyers state that removing an item's natural "patina" is a definite no-no. They respect the hand-to-hand history that tells the story of an item's provenance. Therefore, clean only when it makes sense — when there's no risk of devaluing the item, or to give the item the best possible appearance. You could research how other sellers and collectors shine up similar articles. If you're not sure, provide a full disclosure of the item's present condition and the potential for polishing, and leave it to the buyer to decide if some cleaning up is worth pursuing after they become the new owner.

Next, we'll consider smell. Sometimes it's the nose that knows long before the eyes ever get a glimpse of what's inside a package. Take special care to please this sense of "scents". Buyers can be more than disappointed when an item brings along a stench that wasn't bargained for. If an item has a musty odour from moisture exposure, let it be known when you offer it up for sale or bid. If your item has been exposed to a smoker's environment and it has absorbed the odour, let that be known too. Note that even if you can't detect the presence of second-hand smoke, be aware that non-smokers can detect the tinge of tobacco the moment they hold a package in their hands. Whatever the situation, if your goods have a certain "air" about them that could be potentially offensive and long lasting, be certain to state that in your auction description or you could be gathering in a negative.

The third sense is touch. You may think that touch wouldn't be a sensation that proves too troublesome for buyers. However many people let their fingers do the walking as they assess the textural quality about their newly purchased eBay treasure. If any items you sell are rough, sticky or whatever, and they shouldn't be, be sure to disclose this in your auction description. The same holds for furniture or other items that might have been worn smooth over years of use or could have the telltale rippling or warping that comes from moisture damage. If such factors exist, they should also be properly explained at the outset. This does matter to buyers. Indeed some purveyors of goods will close their eyes and run their hands over an item to detect variations or imperfections that their eyes might miss. So be truthful about item condition from the start.

We'll move onto sound next. Naturally, when you're selling audio-related items such as old records, tapes, radios and so on, you want to fully describe the aural qualities of the goods. But, beyond these obvious sound related items, give consideration to sounds any of your items might make. If something rattles, is it broken? If something squeaks, is it in need of lubrication? Tell your prospective customers what you hear and recognize that sometimes, the sounds you describe might be a good omen to buyers. They will want to know if a vintage doll still talks, if a classic instrument still has a pleasing resonance, and whether an old Beatles record still sounds as fresh as it did the day it came off the vinyl press.

Finally, the sense of taste. This is the one sense that you might not need to cater to as carefully as the previous four. However, some rock, gem and coin collectors have stated that their taste buds can offer the final determination about an item's authenticity and lineage. Enough said.

Appealing to your buyer's senses is an important consideration to be given as you market your goods on eBay. Never forget that selling online prevents your buyers from fully experiencing an item as they would if they were to inspect it in person. Take it upon yourself to present relevant sensory information as accurately as possible when listing your goods. It might just mean that you sell more. Also, if you pre-empt unwelcome sensory surprises when the goods arrive, you could save yourself from receiving the dreaded negative feedback!

Talking about making your auction description more effective by using the right words, here is a useful ebook. It's called "Magic Auction Words", and it contains exactly what it says on the tin. If you're getting good page viewing numbers, but you're not making sales, "Magic Auction Words" will help. You can get it here:

<http://www.workwinners.com/magic/>

4. How to Improve Your DSR

The introduction of Detailed Seller Ratings was one of several controversial announcements made by eBay in 2008.

If you're a seller on eBay, I am assuming you know about DSRs, and that you know your own DSR scores. If you don't, I suggest you get to your seller dashboard now and take a look.

What's that, you've never heard of the Seller Dashboard? Shame on you...

Get along to My eBay, look down the left for the My Account section, and there you'll see the Seller Dashboard link. Click on that, and per pare to be amazed, shocked, disappointed - it depends on what you find!

Anyway, once you've seen your own DSR figures, you'll know how well you're doing in providing the kind of buyer experience that eBay is would like sellers to offer.

The nearer you are to 5.0 on each of the four measures that constitute your DSR, the better. If your overall DSR is less than 3.9, you need to do some work!

The reason why you might wish to apply your energies to improving your DSR is that seller performance is one of the key elements of Best Match. You'll recall that Best Match is now the default sequence in which listings are returned in response to a search on eBay.

Best Match will penalise your listing in search return positioning if your DSR has been under 3.9 for the past 30 days. The good news is that if your overall DSR average is 4.8, then your listings will be rewarded in the Best Match search return algorithm.

Whilst this may seem to be out of your control - other people (your buyers) determine your DSR rating - remember whilst eBay may own the venue, but it's your business.

You need to apply yourself to your business to ensure you attract the response you want from your buyers.

To make the point, here are some actions you can take to encourage better your buyers to give you the top DSR marks.

There are no secrets and no magic bullets here. These are all business basics and require that you focus on your customers.

DSR has four elements:

1. Item as described
2. Communication
3. Dispatch time
4. Postage & packaging charges

First, make sure your auction description page tells it like it is! Ensuring that your item is accurately described is probably the easiest DSR element for which you can maintain a good score. There's really no excuse to get this wrong. If you find yourself getting marked down on the Item as described element, I suspect you probably already know why this might be. Go into your listings today and amend them so that your buyer cannot possibly misunderstand what you're offering.

Quick and concise communication is the next element in your DSR score that we'll consider. For example, any questions you receive about your listings via the My Messages route should be welcomed with open arms. This is because it gives you an unfair opportunity to demonstrate how responsive and genuine you are. Why do I say unfair opportunity?

Because, by taking the time to send you a message, you know that they are definitely interested in your item. Before they sent you the message, they were simply one more on your page visitor counter. Now, they are in conversation with you. And if you can't take the opportunity to progress their interest into a purchase from you, you may like to think of some other way to invest your talents than trying to sell on eBay! Moving along the eBay transaction timeline, active post-sale engagement of a buyer usually facilitates a quick turnaround of payment received. Quick shipment of the goods will convince a buyer that you're a conscientious and committed seller who's ready to do good business. However, quick shipment allied with an email stating that shipment is on it's way is a good strategy. By following up to ensure goods are received satisfactorily, you'll also differentiate yourself from many other sellers. Within this email you can even mention the dreaded subject of dissatisfaction. It's far better to open the door first and enquire if the buyer feels any portion of the transaction was less than stellar. If there are any problems, what you want is that the buyer communicates with you about them rather than allowing them to simply place a negative feedback without giving you the chance to resolve the issue to their satisfaction. Remember, the battle field is now tilted in favour of the buyer in that sellers can no longer hold the sword of Damocles negative feedback above the head of a buyer. Although this all sounds rather depressing, do recognise that buyers are always seeking reliable, conscientious and courteous sellers. If you can be one of these sellers, your DSR will be good and this is to your benefit.

Next, we'll discuss dispatch time and postage & packaging charges. It's important that you clearly and openly state your sales and shipping policies in all your listings. The last thing you want is for your buyer to receive what they consider to be a nasty surprise at some point through the purchase process. You can well imagine how this might impact on the DSR score they give you for the transaction! If you've been a little lax in updating these policies, I strongly suggest you re-read your policies and ensure they cover everything. Of course not every buyer will read every policy, but most will. The last thing you want is a ticking time bomb on your description page caused by an inadequate dispatch or postage policy. Also, in every listing it would be helpful to give prospective buyers a clear and comprehensive description of how you'll manage the transaction. For example, when will dispatch take place after payment, and how long will delivery take etc. This is where your customer-centric services come into play.

Good sellers do this anyway, as they know that presenting such policies not only provide good customer service, they can also attract buyers.

Since postage & packaging element is an important element of the DSR calculation, it is useful to offer your buyers two or more shipping options. According to eBay's CEO John Donohoe, there are significant Best Match rewards in the area of shipping costs, to the extent that free P&P could be rewarded most highly! In reality, eBay buyers recognise that shipping costs are controlled by the carriage medium you use. Buyers also know it takes time for an item to get from Point A to Point B. Therefore, by giving buyer options, they are being well served in that they can fairly select how much they wish to pay for shipping in relation to how long they choose to wait for an item to arrive.

For example, you may consider offering standard rate shipping, priority and rush delivery. You can also offer combined shipment of multiple items to save on costs to buyers. Also, occasionally reducing shipping costs as a temporary promotional tool can be highly effective.

Sellers need to remember that the satisfaction of their customers truly determines the DSR score.

At the end of the day, nothing has changed since eBay's inception. It's still a place where people meet to do business, person to person. But the business, remember, is yours.

Therefore, revisit and revamp how you communicate your sales and shipping policies, and offer choices and reasonable incentives to show the buyer you're eager to meet their specific needs. And always try to provide exceptional customer service on every transaction. This is your opportunity to ease any buyer apprehension and to garner repeat customers.

5. A Gift From Me to You

Here is a superb time saver. I use this all the time.

If you're like me, you'll have noticed how frequently you're asked to key in the same information time after time.

I reckon this piece of software cuts down my repetitive keying by about 95%.

It's called 123ShortCutKey, and is a tiny program - but it has big benefits.

You can download it here.

<http://www.workwinners.com/123shortcutkey/>

6. News & Views

See How You're Doing on eBay

It can be illuminating to see how one compares with the top sellers on eBay in your country.

This website gives you the opportunity to see the top sellers in feedback league table position.

What I like is that I can select to see only the top sellers on my country site - the UK.

This is the site:

<http://www.sellerdome.com/>

Keyword Gold

It's always useful to see what keywords are being used by eBay searchers. Particularly if this is available by category and sub-category.

Well, you can get all this information for each eBay country site as follows ...

Here are the keywords for eBay.com:

<http://category-keyword.ebay.com/default-category.html>

And the keywords for eBay.co.uk:

<http://category-keyword.ebay.co.uk/default-category.html>

Thin End of the Wedge?

There is a major change taking place this week for sellers on eBay.com.

From today, sellers can only accept what eBay terms "paperless" payment methods.

In other words, buyers can use PayPal and, well, that's about it....

Yes, they've introduced a new service called ProPay, which enables anyone to pay for their eBay purchase instantly with a credit/debit card. But Propay is currently only available if you are a Silver level PowerSeller or above!

I wonder if this will be spread out in the future to other eBay countries? What do you think?

And Next, the World!

If you run auction format listings on eBay.co.uk, you can get extra exposure for your auctions for very little expense.

From 6th November until 7th December, eBay is offering international exposure for only 2p per listing. Given that the normal international visibility fee is between 5p and 15p, this is a useful discount if it's relevant for you.

Check out the detail here:

http://pages.ebay.co.uk/sell/Nov08cbt_2p/

Free PayPal and eBay for a Year

PayPal UK are running a competition which costs nothing to enter, but has an exciting prize.

The top prize is that you get a refund of all PayPal and eBay fees you paid in 2008.

It's a simple draw made monthly from August 2008 to January 2009. Take a look at the August and September winners - they look happy enough!

If you'd like to enter the competition, you can do so here:

https://www.paypal-marketing.co.uk/ebay/a_year_of_free_fees/winners.htm

7. Someone's Auctioning What???

Nothing surprises me when it comes to internet auctions. Amuse yourself with some of these beauties in our regular trawl through eBay's auctions.

Here are some auctions I've spotted as I trawled eBay recently:-

[Now we can get to the bottom of it...](#)

[Wow, here's a real eBay entrepreneur](#)

[I never knew Turkish eyes were lucky!](#)

[I would imagine this is as genuine as the spelling...](#)

[Lincs Police Notice "School chairs stolen!"](#)

Disclaimer - I have no association with any of the sellers of the above items.



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NOTE: Depending on when you view this newsletter, you may find some links to third party sites no longer work. I know how frustrating this can be. But please don't shoot the messenger! The internet is a fast moving environment and, as the newsletters age, it is to be expected that some links may become obsolete over time.

The moral of the story?

If the newsletter sends you to a site that interests you, and you think you might want to refer to it later, make sure you store the site address in YOUR favorites.