



The eBay Auction Newsletter

Issue 3404 - April 30, 2009

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IN THIS ISSUE

- Welcome from Brian McGregor
 - 1. Thought for the Day
 - 2. Spring Cleaning and eBay
- 3. Why Can't eBay be More Like Amazon? (Guest Article)
 - 4. Are You Making the Most of My eBay?
 - 5. A Gift From Me to You
 - 6. News & Views:
Product Review - Terapeak
And Tomorrow, the World
Win £10,000 with PayPal UK
Male/Female Eye Test - Take it if you Dare!
 - 7. Someone's Auctioning What???

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.

What do you make of the following data?

1. Wooden Hen House/Chicken Coop - 238 - £51,210 (\$76,347)
2. 12,000lb Recovery Winch - 267 - £59,758 (\$88,995)
3. Macerator WC Pump - 201 - £28,504 (\$42,437)
4. Executive Leather Office Chair - 247 - £15,921 (\$23,677)
5. Nike Air Max Men's Trainers - 615 - £28,071 (\$41,749)

As you may have guessed, these are items which have been sold recently on eBay UK.

Let me explain the first line, and you'll quickly see what it's all about.

In the last 90 days there were 238 Wooden Hen House/Chicken Coops sold on eBay for a total of £51,210 (\$76,347).

The common factor is that each of the items in the list above had a sell through rate of over 95%. In other words, 19 out of 20 listings of each of these items sold.

I guess this is proof if we needed it that eBay is alive and kicking!

By the way, I retrieved this data from a system called Terapeak - more about Terapeak later.

Take care, and good luck in your eBay business.

Speak to your soon.



1. Thought for the Day

"He who has health, has hope. And he who has hope, has everything."

Arabian Proverb

2. Spring Cleaning and eBay

Well we've reached that time of the year again. It's spring - and pollen and love are in the air.

It's also the time when many of us decide to clean the property from top to bottom, and get rid of those items which we now choose to call clutter. If you're serious about spring cleaning, how about getting some bankable benefit for your efforts and turn to eBay?

If you're an eBay seller, and you typically sell the same types of goods over and over again, you might wonder about the value of placing your spring cast-offs as one-off listings. You might feel that injecting personal and other unrelated items into your normal eBay inventory seems completely wrong.

However, if you consider these items as a form of test marketing, you get a totally different view. By offering your spring clean objects on eBay, you may well unearth a trend or opportunity that you hadn't considered before. You could well uncover an in demand niche that you didn't know existed.

Now, a word of caution, never treat your unwanted items as distressed products. As you will know, on eBay the discarded goods of one person could well be treasure to others. Do some research before you list.

In particular, search for similar items on eBay and check out Completed listings through eBay's Advanced Search. You'll discover how much demand is out there and what people have paid for that unassuming item you would just as soon throw away.

You may well come across an item or two that could easily attain a significant price. If you uncover an item of yours has this potential, do more homework before you offer it on eBay. Use the internet to discover more - verify the item's origin, originality and potential rarity. You might also be able to identify other unique items that might be of similar lineage.

Not only will your research be useful education about your item and its value, it will also help you to create an informative and compelling listing.

Having said that, please be realistic. We all have items that can be truly classed as junk. Just because we've had favourite knick-knacks for years and years doesn't necessarily convey a decent monetary value on them. If you simply cannot bear to look at these items anymore, just dispose of them. You could try a garage or boot sale, or a donation to a charity shop.

The bottom line to using eBay for your spring clean is that you should aim to price your items to sell. If auctioning, offer low starting bids with no reserve. If there's a market for the item and the potential for decent bids, let the bidders do the work.

If selling an item for a fixed price, make sure you price it to sell (you don't want it languishing on your any longer; that's the whole point of spring cleaning). Either way, it's not necessary to give away your stuff, especially if it's something truly collectible or otherwise desirable.

You won't make a fortune by de-cluttering, but you can feel a wee bit smug in that others are paying you to take your trash off your hands.

3. Why Can't eBay be More Like Amazon?

Guest Article by Sue Bailey (www.tamebay.com)

This week saw both eBay and Amazon release their Q1 figures, with what's becoming a sad norm: eBay underperforming, Amazon bucking ecommerce's downward trend. Mark T. posted the obvious question in our comments: why?

"Let me get what I want"

So to answer Mark, here's what I think: shopping on eBay is too damn difficult.

eBay is the only site on the internet where you can be told off for changing your mind. If I'm buying from Amazon, I can

- * put an item in my shopping basket and take it out again
- * get halfway through checkout and decide I don't want it
- * go to pay, and decide I'm not going to
- * pay, and then decide I prefer something else, and cancel in the click of a button so long as my item hasn't been dispatched yet.

I can't do *any* of that on eBay. eBay should join the 21st century, and get a shopping cart and a buyer-initiated "cancellation before dispatch" process, before all buyers quit in frustration and go somewhere else where it's easier to shop.

Every time I suggest eBay needs a shopping cart (and yes, I say it a lot ;-), a seller tells me that it wouldn't work because buyers would leave things in their carts, and those items would be stuck in limbo. Funnily, Amazon Marketplace has made this work just fine: the item isn't yours until you've paid for it and someone else can still buy it from under your nose. So in fact, you've got *more* incentive to buy now, *more* incentive to get on and check out - rather than doing the eBay thing of popping that BIN item on your watch list and forgetting about it. If we made it easier for people to shop, they would shop *more*.

Of course, a shopping cart would require one other change to the eBay system: the much-needed addition of instant payment required for multiple items. It's utterly ridiculous that this hasn't be implemented, meaning that those of us who commonly sell multiples have to sit on unpaid eBay orders for sometimes weeks at a time. If eBay needs an incentive to make these essential changes, think about the extra PayPal-funded sales that multi-item IPR would bring in.

"But you will change your mind"

The easier shopping = more shopping rule also applies to order cancellation. Buyers - whether we like it or not - have a legal right to change their minds. The current system of UIDs undermines that right. It's too complicated, it's too easy for either party to get wrong, it relies on clear and accurate communication when tempers may be getting frayed. And it should be gotten rid of. Lets replace it with:

1. a buyer-initiated "cancellation before dispatch" process: until the seller has marked the item dispatched, the buyer can cancel their purchase. The PayPal payment will be refunded, the eBay fees (all of them, including featured) will be refunded, and the item will be automatically put back "into stock" - either added back into a live multi-item listing, or if on a single listing, made available for relisting to the seller.

2. a seller-initiated "cancellation before payment" process: if the buyer hasn't paid after a stated amount of time (3, 5, 7 days...? could be seller-selectable) the seller can just cancel the sale and get their fees back. Without arguments, without negative feedbacks, without "disputes".

And for both of these, I would envisage saying that as no transaction has taken place, no feedback can be left by either party.

eBay will doubtless worry that some sellers would abuse such a system to avoid fees. IMHO eBay are so obsessed with the idea of fee-avoidance that they're ruining the site because of it. They can see which sellers are potentially abusing the system easily enough, and they can take action against them. And the rest of us can quit feeling like we're in some Kafkaesque nursery school where childish bureaucracy rules, and get on with buying and selling.

"You've got everything, now."

In last week's earnings call, John Donahoe said that eBay is outperforming ecommerce in general in every selling format it has, apart from auctions. Fixed price revenue is up 12%. Classifieds revenue is up a massive 23%. Auctions, on the other hand, are down 20%.

So what is eBay doing? Encouraging sellers to list auctions. On .com, auctions insertion fees are 15c; BINs are 35c. On eBay UK, private sellers' auctions starting at 99p or less have no insertion fees; BINs are 40p each if you don't have a shop. On eBay.fr, auctions are 15c and the headline price for BINs is 50c. eBay Germany's vastly complicated fee structure largely favours auctions. Sellers across all eBay sites are being pushed to list auctions. But (except perhaps in a very few specialist areas) the novelty of online auctions has worn off: buyers don't want to sit around for a week to see if they've "won" - they just want to get on with their shopping: eBay's own figures show that.

"What eBay does best" is a phrase that's used often to back up arguments, and I'm going to use it again here. Meg Whitman said that auctions were what eBay does best. John Donahoe seems to think that "secondary market" retailer clearance is what eBay does best. I disagree. What eBay does best and always has done is to provide a marketplace, for everyone, for everything. Amazon, Ebid, Bonanzle, dozens of start-up wannabees: nothing comes even close to eBay's breadth of inventory, nothing comes close to the huge variety of sellers from the mother selling her kids unwanted toys to the biggest high-street names, nothing, in fact, comes close to eBay.

eBay should stop being an auction site, and reposition itself as a shopping site. Sellers should be encouraged (financially) to list in the formats that work: the fixed price ones. eBay should teach buyers to think of eBay as the site where you can buy everything, right now (not a site where you can "win" that thing you want next week, if you haven't bought it on Amazon in the meantime).

"I've already waited too long"

Given the figures that JD announced last week, I don't think it would take much to turn eBay around. Not much except, perhaps, some rather radical thinking: to get out of the auction mindset into the shopping mindset. eBay seems to be moving in the right direction - easier returns and multi-variant listings being two such recent moves - but they're doing it too slowly. We're due another announcement of site changes in September; rather than the fiddling for the sake of something to do while Rome burns we had this month, let's next time see some really radical change that will make eBay a great place to shop again.

4. Are You Making the Most of My eBay?

I wondered the other day if the My eBay page is an under utilised tool on eBay?

My eBay is a little like having a virtual personal secretary. It follows you from auction to auction, keeps complete notes on all of your bidding and selling activities, and provides you with updates on what you need to do next to keep your eBay business on track.

Why is this so important? No matter what level of eBay activity you're involved in, a central repository of information like this saves you time and helps you go about your eBay dealings in a more orderly and professional manner.

In reality, the My eBay page is actually a group of pages that sorts and organises your information into several categories. There is a summary page, which you can customise to provide as little or as much information as you like. Additional pages allow you to view information specific to your buying or selling activities. Another page view allows you to keep track of your eBay favourites, including searches, sellers and stores. A Message centre keeps track of your member-to-member communications. And the Account view allows you to manage your eBay account and leave feedback on specific transactions.

When you first open your My eBay page, it will default to a view called Summary, which provides a quick rundown of actions you need to take as a buyer or a seller. A Page Options enables you to select what you wish to appear on you're Summary page.

If you are primarily a seller, you might want to switch your default view to All Selling to see the most relevant information instantly when you open your My eBay page. (If you are using eBay's Selling Manager feature, the All Selling tab is replaced by a Selling Manager tab).

To change your default view, open the Preferences link under the My Account tab, and go to General Preferences. Click on Show to the right of the My eBay heading, use the pull-down menu to select your default display, and click Apply.

The All Selling view displays information about:

- * Items you have sold
- * Items you are currently selling
- * Unsold items
- * Pending items-those that are scheduled to list at a later time

For items you have sold, My eBay automatically generates a list of the next steps you need to take, such as provide the buyer with a payment total, ship the item or leave feedback.

The All Buying view provides a similar digest of items you are watching, have bid on, have won or didn't win, and what to do next.

The My Messages tab opens a message centre that organises all your communications with trading partners, alerts and eBay announcements, and customer service correspondence. Only eBay and eBay members can send you messages here, there is no way that spam or spoof emails can infiltrate you're My Messages.

My eBay also lets you centrally manage your eBay account from the My Account tab, whether you want to update your personal information; change the way you receive information; or view information about recent payments, credits or fees. You can also pay eBay fees via PayPal from this page.

One of the most useful things about the My Account view is that it contains links to customer service features that can be difficult to locate on eBay. Use it to save yourself time sifting through eBay's Site Map.

Whatever your eBay business, the My eBay page is a feature well worth reviewing and personalising to your way of working. It's useful, it's free and it's easy to use. Sounds good to me!

5. A Gift From Me to You

The heading of this section isn't strictly true this time.

What I'm giving you here should strictly speaking be called a gift from Scot Wingo - CEO of ChannelAdvisor.

eBay has announced some significant changes, and Scot has produced a superb guide summarising these and also showing how sellers can take advantage of the changes.

You can download Scot's guide from here:

http://www.workwinners.com/ebay_spring_changes/

6. News & Views

Product Review - Terapeak

As you may know, I am based in the UK. I do most of my eBay business on UK eBay.

When looking around for a research and analyses tool, one of my pre-requisites was that the system must have eBay UK capability.

I plumped for a tool called Terapeak. It's early days, but I am very impressed!

For example, instantly knowing the Sell Through % Rate (STR) of items or a category is eye opening. The STR is the percentage of successful listings. If an item has a 100% STR, this means every listing for this item has sold!

STR is just one of the features I'm currently using. There are many others.

I highly recommend Terapeak.

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

And Tomorrow, the World

In a recent newsletter, I suggested that UK eBay sellers should look to capitalise on the weakness in the pound sterling by offering to ship their items to countries outside of the UK.

It looks like some eBay sellers truly understand the opportunity. This week, eBay UK has reported that cross border trade from the UK is up 49% compared to last year.

If you want to take advantage of the buying power of overseas eBay users, list items on eBay UK as normal, and offer to ship to Europe, the US or the Rest of the World. If you're not shipping overseas, you may be missing out - especially in the current economic climate. By the way, make sure that you specify overseas postage rates in your listing so that buyers understand exactly what they'll be paying.

You might also consider listing on other English speaking eBay sites such as eBay.com, Ireland, Canada and Australia. You can log in to these sites using your UK User ID and password. If you've basic language skills, you might consider listing on eBay France and eBay Germany too.

Win £10,000 with PayPal UK

For each of the six weeks from 20 April, 2009, you stand a chance of winning £10,000 with PayPal UK.

You just have to use PayPal to pay for an eBay purchase, and you're automatically entered. More details here...

<http://pages.ebay.co.uk/paypal/win10k/>

Male/Female Eye Test - Take it if you Dare!

Am I a man or a woman? I thought I knew....

Here is a test which genuinely caught me out when I did it!

How about you?

<http://www.fropper.com/posts/26121>

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:-

[Perhaps starving would be more sympathetic](#)

[Would this be any good against Brett Lee's bowling?](#)

[What is this?](#)

[That's not a bad hourly rate these days!](#)

[Wow, this must be a really big bar!](#)

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



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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.