



The eBay Auction Newsletter

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Proudly published for over 5 years by Brian McGregor

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<http://www.auctioninnercircle.com>

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.

Who said eBay don't listen? Not me...

If you read this welcome section last month, you may recall I talked about the changes that were being implemented from April on ebay.co.uk.

One such change concerned Good 'Til Cancelled listings. This was highly relevant to eBay Shop owners. If you had these types of listings, and no sales had been made on them in the previous 16 months, eBay were going to automatically end them.

Following representation by many eBay members, me included, eBay have agreed not to automatically end these listings. Instead, eBay will notify the seller that a Good 'Til Cancelled item has not sold in the past 16 months. This will enable the seller to decide what action to take.

Nice one eBay.

Here's the link to the updated policy:

<http://www2.ebay.com/aw/uk/201003291002362.html>

I wish you every success in your eBay business.

Speak to you soon.



1. Thought for the Day

"The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will, and the other from a strong won't."

Henry Ward Beecher

2. Perseverance - One of the Keys to eBay Sales Success

This is an article by John Merritt who lives in Natick, which is just outside Boston, Massachusetts. It's self explanatory, but I like the way John went about finding solutions to issues he encountered. As the Chinese proverb says - a problem is an opportunity flying on the wind.

So, here's John's story ...

In my "real job" I provide waste management consulting services, chiefly, to municipalities or other public entities. So, it is no surprise that clients have been fewer and farther between, with shrinking municipal budgets during this very difficult economic environment. While many years in business has provided some cushion, after too many bad months, I felt alternative sources of cash needed to be identified and had often thought fondly about developing some Internet business that could be managed anywhere - like in the shade of a palm tree somewhere.

My alternative business got its start with friends and family encouraging me to sell a hummingbird feeder I designed to attach to the outside of house windows, allowing close-up viewing and easy photos. "Do what you love for work and it will never seem like a job..." resonated with that suggestion, because hummingbird attracting and photographing has become an abiding passion. Beyond that, family forbears have a long history of selling things and it always appealed to me on a visceral level. Since I already had an eBay account, it seemed the logical place to begin the effort.

Like many others, I had made purchases and sold the occasional odd or end on eBay. Over the last nine months, though, I've plunged myself into an illuminating and satisfying immersion course on how to make and sell a product in today's worldwide shopping mall. But I really had no idea how much research and learning would be required. I needed to recognize and address various issues regarding design, manufacture, sales and shipping of my product at a price others were willing to pay.

Initial market research at eBay turned up thousands of other sellers offering hummingbird feeders, which came close to ending my endeavor before it ever began. But, I thought about it more and surveyed lists of carefully focused search results. I learned that no listed feeder emphasized photography, providing a sales angle and a product name: The Hummer Photo Feeder.

Setting a price was a very important element to consider, given not only our general economic conditions but also the fact that eBay is noted for finding buyers the best prices a worldwide marketplace can provide. Most feeders were priced above \$15, while virtually none were at or under \$10. If I could price at \$10, I believed I would have a chance at some sales, even in tough times.

So my plunge into the fundamentals of manufacturing and sales really began. The final price is composed of many elements, including my time. At first, it took a half hour to make one feeder, using copper, suction cup, glass beads and test tube - worth about \$4. When shipping, postage, eBay and PayPal fees are added to that, staying under \$10 profitably became a challenge.

I reviewed the feeder design, construction, cost, shipping weight and aesthetics. Glass tubes are heavy, expensive and breakable. Online research found lighter, cheaper, shatterproof, clear, plastic test tubes, as well as better, lighter and cheaper sources for each feeder component, dropping total raw material cost to about 75 cents. With ultra-light shipping packets and the lighter feeder, postage and the other fees now brought my total cost to \$5.

But, even after practice, it still took me 20 minutes per feeder and \$15/hour didn't seem that great. So, further work led to my new "assembly line" workspace that allowed me to make a dozen feeders an hour, using a special wooden, wire-winding tool I dreamed up and my dad turned on his lathe. \$60/hour seemed much better. Excited, I submitted my first eBay listing at the bargain basement price of \$9.99, shipping included, and was immediately rewarded with pretty good sales, which have continued and grown to the point where I have placed over 135 feeders in 44 states.

Another important and satisfying lesson is how important post-sale services and support are to growing a customer base and generating repeat business. I always ship in less than 24 hours and offer unlimited e-mail support, as well as a monthly newsletter and feeder-related blog to my buyers. Many contribute to the blog and reply to my newsletters with their own ideas and experiences. Some have said they feel like part of a community and get diversion and pleasure from their experience.

What I enjoy the most is learning how folks around the country use and enjoy something I contributed to their lives. But there are also practical benefits. I learned several ways to improve my feeder and also that I should offer replacement tubes, nectar-dispensing bottles and cleaning brushes as additional products, further enhancing my little cottage industry.

From raw materials and inventory, through assembly and shipping to customer service, I have happily absorbed an interesting range of topics on my path to finding my entrepreneurial bootstraps. There are quite a few steps remaining before this enterprise will be paying the mortgage, but the return in learning and experience are harder to value.

This is Brian again ... I've just checked John's eBay ID and he's up to 149 feedbacks. Not bad for just over a year on eBay. If you'd like to see his Humming Bird Feeder, John's eBay ID is mercomm. You can check the latest position, and see his listings, by using the advanced search on ebay.com and search for seller ID mercomm.

3. What Can You do About Unreasonable Buyers?

In my experience, the vast majority of buyers on eBay are decent people. Transactions conclude and payments are made swiftly and properly.

Unfortunately every seller will, from time to time, come across a "buyer from hell". These are buyers who retract, renege and refute their responsibility to complete a transaction.

Whilst there are limits as to what a seller can do to encourage a buyer to be fair and reasonable, that doesn't mean that the seller should be a doormat for nasty buyers.

Here are one or two things you can consider when attempting to head off or handle these awkward buyers.

1. Create and publish your eBay sales policy on every listing. You should clearly state when payment is expected from buyers. Ensure also that your policy reserves your option to negate any sale if payment is not received within the stated timescale. eBay suggests 7 days is reasonable, so you could use that or go for 10 days to be ultra fair.
2. If you sell with a Buy It Now option, use the "immediate payment required" feature. This will prevent buyers from completing checkout without paying for the goods. You can only use this method by selecting PayPal as the sole method of payment. Also, in listings you place with an auction format, the immediate payment option disappears once a bid is placed.
3. You can create your own rules to block unwelcome bidders or buyers by setting up a requirement that they must meet before they can bid or buy on your listings. For example, you can choose not to do business with those who don't have a PayPal account, have unpaid items recorded on their account, have a primary postage address in countries you don't deliver to, have reportedly violated eBay policies and have a Feedback score lower than the number you specify. You can select any mix of those factors.
4. You can set up a blocked buyers list containing the eBay IDs of those with whom you will not allow to bid or buy on your listings. These might be individuals who have caused you problems in the past, or you can get lists of rogue buyers from a variety of websites. You can block up to 5,000 eBay IDs.

These methods will help to screen out the difficult buyers before they can cause damage to your reputation and your pocket.

However, despite your best efforts to filter them out, it is possible that some will still slip through. If after the sales has been made it is looking a little uncertain, try the following to help you quickly determine the buyer's commitment and capacity to make good on the transaction:

1. Whilst you should be prompt and courteous in your e-mail correspondence with your bidders and buyers, make sure you re-state your payment expectations policy. If your messages go unanswered, send a follow-up notification re-stating your policy about transaction completion and mentioning your policy to negate a sale if the pending transaction goes ignored.

2. Beware of "excuse abuse". This is where all manner of down-and-out, hard luck stories will come your way as to why the buyer can't send payment just yet, if at all. By all means show an appropriate amount of compassion, but don't allow the transaction to become drawn out and ultimately cost you a sales opportunity elsewhere.

3. If you believe a transaction is not going to complete, cut the buyer loose by cancelling the transaction. You can then relist the item, or contact any other interested parties who have expressed interest in the item.

Finally, some thoughts about feedback

Now that the capability to post negative feedback is only in the hands of buyers, it is more important than ever that sellers act professionally, sensibly and reasonably. Also, make sure you keep records of all the communications relating to each transaction.

If you receive an unwarranted negative from a bad buyer, post your response and explanation within eBay's Feedback Forum. Then, if you feel the buyer has acted unreasonably, you could consider notifying eBay of the situation. They might decide to remove the undeserved negative.

Deadbeat buyers is an unfortunate fact of life when doing business on eBay. The good news is that such buyers are few and far between.

4. eBay Flipping - An Explanation

I've mentioned before how you can make money by what is known as arbitrage selling. This simply means finding and buying items that are priced low on eBay, and then re-listing them at the correct right price.

The quickest way to find low priced items is via miss-spelled searches. What we mean by this is locating items where significant words in the listing title have been miss-spelled. The point about these listings is that, thanks to the incorrect spelling, they will have few visitors and can often be bought for a bargain price.

Suzanne Wells is an excellent eBay educator. She is based in the USA, although the principles of her teaching apply to any eBay country.

Suzanne has produced a useful video which shows exactly how she performs eBay arbitrage. The video is only 5 minutes long.

http://www.workwinners.com/ebay_flipping/

And here are some real examples where Suzanne has made money using eBay arbitrage:

<http://ebaysellingcoach.blogspot.com/2009/10/local-sources-for-inventory-i-really.html>

As I mentioned, this system can be applied to any eBay country. So, if you're in the UK, it can work for you. If you want help in locating UK equivalents of the software mentioned in the video by Suzanne, let me know.

5. A Gift From Me to You

One of the keys to improving sales on eBay is to make your listing description page look as professional as possible.

Not everyone has the necessary web coding knowledge to manipulate their descriptions. This is why eBay offer the chargeable Listing Designer option.

Here are some sites where you will find eBay templates that you can use at no cost.

<http://www.alouwebdesign.ca/free-ebay-templates.htm>

<http://www.isdntek.com/tagbot/templates/shipscrip.htm>

Hope you find these useful.

6. News & Views

eBay Lifts Ban on Selling Teachers' Manuals

In 2006, eBay imposed a ban on selling teachers' manuals on its marketplace. Recently, and very quietly, eBay has lifted that ban. This is their explanation:

"eBay reversed our policy and began allowing teachers' editions on the site last July. The community continued to tell us these textbooks were of value to them. After further review we came to a similar conclusion as the community: allowing these types of textbooks on eBay provides home schooling teachers and parents an opportunity to access materials at a great value for their educational needs."

Amazon continues with their ban on selling teachers' manuals. It's policy statement says, "Because solutions manuals and teacher's editions of books are not intended for general use, such listings are prohibited on Amazon.com."

Do You Check Your eBay Invoices?

Here is a story where eBay overcharged a seller. This lady had upgraded her eBay Store from Basic to Premium, primarily because eBay was offering an incentive to do so. When she received her next invoice it turned out she had been charged for both a Basic Store and a Premium Store for the last month.

I've heard before about special offers not appearing correctly on invoices. Whenever you take advantage of eBay offers, I recommend you check the subsequent invoice to make sure that the offer is reflected properly in the fees you wind up paying!

Some Guys Have All the Luck

Al and Bernice Gallego run a small antique store in San Francisco. A few years ago, Al bought some storage space. Along with the space, came a box which appeared to hold junk.

Bernice dug into the box and pulled out a baseball card. It was obviously old, and showed the picture of a baseball team. The card had a title of "Red Stocking B.B. Club of Cincinnati". Bernice decided to put it on eBay. She set the start price at \$10. She was going to start it at \$15, but that cost 20 cents more in listing fees.

She quickly started getting enquiries about the authenticity of the card. The Gallego's rang a friend of theirs who was also in the antiques business. He said they should end the auction immediately and find out exactly what they had in their hands. As there had been no bids, Bernice ended the auction.

It turned out the card was 139 years old and it showed the first ever professional baseball team. After getting the card officially authenticated, it was put back onto eBay. It sold for \$75,285.78.

And Bernice was worried about 20 cents!

eBay and the Forbes Rich List

The Forbes Rich List was published recently. A gentleman called Pierre Omidyar is in position 148, and is estimated to be worth \$5.2 billion.

You may have heard of him. In 1995, Pierre Omidyar had an idea for a new website. People could place items for sale by auction on the website. Other people could place bids, and the highest bidder won the item.

Had any good ideas lately?

77 Ways to Make Realistic Money Online

Some years ago, Dennis Becker wrote an ebook called "5 Bucks a Day". Forget the Americanism, what Dennis taught was how to easily set up a project to make a small amount each day online. Once you had learned how to do this, Dennis then showed how you could replicate the process again and again. I still have the book, and it's excellent.

Well Dennis has launched a new ebook called "77 Ways to Earn Up to \$100 per Day". Again it's about earning online and, as usual it's in Dennis's down to earth style. It's well worth reading and I thoroughly recommend it:

http://www.workwinners.com/77_ways/

Coffee Time

This game is really easy. All you have to do is not have two of the same colours in adjoining shapes. Simple!

http://www.onemorelevel.com/game/flood_fill

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.

[Not sure that "unusual" is the right word here...](#)

[What would you say it is?](#)

[Yoga is good for Princes too!](#)

[Now, that takes me back...](#)

[All we need now is the band!](#)

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 favourites.