

101 eBay Seller Secrets Revealed

By Tim Campbell

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101 eBay Seller Secrets Revealed

"There are tricks in every trade."

-- 17th Century English Proverb

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Here are 101 of some of the best touchstones for you to ponder
and act on as you build and expand your auction empire...

Enjoy!

AuctionTip #1: Buyers Demand Easy Payment Options

As sellers, we want to offer every payment option imaginable. It's convenient for our customer and we'll also make much more money. Let's cater to their preferences. Here are 2 reasons we want to do this:

Firstly, it lowers the chance that our buyer will become a deadbeat. If I offer payment options that they aren't comfortable with, I may turn a would-be buyer into a non-payer.

Secondly, you'll be able to snag those easy sales that come outside of the auction arena. This is so important- not every buyer will have Paypal. What do I do when they want to pay by credit card at the drop of a dime? What do I do if I don't have merchant accounts?

If you're flexible and cover all possible pay types you'll be able to make profits that pass others by...

Here are the payment options sellers on eBay offer:

- Paypal
- Personal Check or Money Order
- Credit Cards by email, secure server, phone and fax
- Billpoint
- Electronic Checks (a new service that eBay offers)

Needless to say, four of those you'll have no problem with- it's merchant accounts that may be some trouble; don't let it- it's easier to get them than you think. I'll show you how in just a moment...

AuctionTip #2: Over 75% of eBayers Use Paypal

Hands down, Paypal is the most popular method of payment on auction sites. It's also a free service and easy to use. You'll have no transaction fees taking away from your hard earned money-

You can get by with Paypal and Billpoint handling your credit card needs. Sign up for Paypal today and start taking credit card orders instantly- plus you'll get \$5 for opening and account and \$5 for anyone you refer.

<http://www.paypal.com>

AuctionTip #3: Getting Set Up With Merchant Accounts

It's not difficult or as expensive as you may think. It's a good idea to have them- with merchant accounts you'll be able to process a customer's credit card either manually yourself or automatically by secure server on your website.

You'll be able to take advantage of sales that other sellers miss out on. It also will give your business a much-needed boost in credibility. People will trust you more when they know you have your own merchant account. That will pay off.

Time will come quickly when you'll want to have them. They are crucial to growing your business online... with merchant accounts you'll be able to process orders automatically at your website- this will take a huge load off and free you for other things...

I got my merchant accounts in less than a week from Total Merchant Services. I didn't have great credit at the time and I was approved instantly- they have a 98% approval rate and are recognized as a leader in Internet merchant services; they are well worth looking into:

<http://www.marketingtips.com/creditcards/index.html>

AuctionTip #4: Use An Email Signature

One great free way to promote your auction business is by using a signature. Signatures are six to eight line "footers" at the end of your email messages and newsgroup or discussion board post. All email programs support them. Take advantage of this cheap and effective means of advertising your listings...

You can also use a signature to promote your auctions, website or whatever you feel is necessary. Considering the number of messages you'll be sending and receiving, you won't want to pass this up!

AuctionTip #5: 'Can' Your Email

You'll receive many of the same questions by email over and over again. Make a good canned message (or template as some call them) to use for responses to typical questions and for questioning others.

This will save you loads of time. Have your responses prepared ahead of time and you'll free up large chunks of every day. Spend your time taking care of business and not drowning in email.

AuctionTip #6: Use Email Shortcuts

Sometimes 'canning messages' will not cover everything- use a program like Shortkeys to type repetitive phrases and sentences. By smartly using email shortcuts and canned messages you'll cut your time responding to email down by 90%.

You'll also avoid typos of key info like your auctions link or shipping address. You can get a free version of the program at:

<http://www.shortkeys.com>

AuctionTip #7: Personalize Email Responses

When I use canned responses or shortcuts, I try to make them as personable as I can. Try plugging the persons name into the reply. Let's make our message sound as warm as it would if you were talking to them face to face.

AuctionTip #8: Automate To The Max

When it comes to selling on the net, this is the Golden Fleece. With auctions, we want to automate as many things as we can that repeat. This will allow us to get more work done in less time.

Progress here will drastically improve your bottom line. It takes time to learn everything you need to become more efficient, so keep trying. Master services like Andale to give your auctions a boost.

Use this service correctly and you'll explode your auction sales. With Andale you can save time on just about every aspect of the auction process- look into it... oh yeah, you get \$20 for signing up and \$20 for everyone you refer!

<http://www.andale.com>

AuctionTip #9: Never Delete Email

Throwing email away will come back haunt us, unless the message is spam. Spam is going to haunt us whether you throw it away or not. Keep your emails for reference in the future. Back it up it from time to time and clean your email boxes out to stay organized.

AuctionTip #10: Honesty Is The Best Policy

Make one virtue for yourself on eBay- and that's honesty. If I'm a little late getting the package in the mail... I want to tell my customer.

You'll always be forgiven and spared the negative feedback if you fess up. They'll thank you for being straight with them- and reward you with generous feedback.

AuctionTip #11: Save Time At The Post Office

If you don't have much time to spend at the post office, prepare in advance. You can have all of your mailing supplies sent to you by the USPS. Visit <http://www.usps.com> for more details.

AuctionTip #12: Don't Hold Personal Checks As A Policy

Bounced checks are rare. Since your future as a seller depends on the service you provide, being quick and trusting is always going to pay off tenfold in the long run.

So, hold checks only when the item is highly valuable, or when the user has a bad feedback history. Most eBayers are trustworthy- just check their record if you're uncertain. Bounced checks are hardly ever blatant- mostly just carelessness.

Most buyers will acknowledge the mistake and make up for it.

AuctionTip #13: Price Straight Auctions Low To Build A Crowd

Do you have a good item that you KNOW will sell well? Start it off at a penny. This will get you healthy early bidding. You want a large group around the item; some will be competitive bidders- people who will pay extra just for the thrill of winning.

For instance, let's say you started an auction for a silver dollar at a penny. At the end of the auction you may have 35 people that have bid. Handfuls are hawking it trying to win; they've waited all week to duke it out for this coin. If I started the same coin at \$100 then I may only have 3 bids at the end. My chances for irrational bidding have just dropped through the floor.

At the end of the auction the fervor will kick in if you priced low and have a good product. You'll commonly get more for your item than someone who priced theirs higher, because your auction has more bidders watching.

AuctionTip #14: The UPS Will Stop By Too

To make life easier on yourself look into having a mail service come by to pick up your packages. The UPS charges \$6/week for daily pickups. They will also email your customer with the delivery date and provide you with shipping label software and printer. Doing these kinds of things will save you time and money.

AuctionTip #15: A Picture Says It All

Photos make you and your item credible. The better you are with your camera the more bids you're going to get. Take several photos of important aspects of the item, flaws and all. If your teapot has crack in it be sure to take a picture of that as well.

Also remember; by inserting a photograph of the item you are selling you get a 'Pic' graphic next to your item description. Bidders will see the 'Pic' symbol and will be more inclined to visit. If they can see the item, you'll get more bids.

AuctionTip #16: Remember To Say Thanks

Send a thank-you note/receipt email to your customer every time they pay. Include your eBay user name and telephone so they can contact you if they need to. Kindly ask them to leave feedback in your email. Include a convenient link to the feedback forum, and 9 times out of 10 they will drop a good word for you.

AuctionTip #17: Make Your Description Complete

When making your item description make it as complete as possible. Many people find your auction through the search engine, so use as complete and descriptive headline with good keywords too- this will make your listing easy to find for the person looking for your item.

Leave no stone unturned- if I neglect to mention some crucial piece of info bidders will steer clear due to uncertainty. If I'm selling a computer game, forgetting to mention if it's for a PC or Mac will spawn a lot of email. It will attract the wrong bidders and deter the right ones. I may even have bidders who own Mac's buying my PC game...

AuctionTip #18: Don't Overcharge On Shipping

This is one of the more common causes of negative feedback. We only charge what it normally costs you to pack and ship. Buyers are sensitive in this area. If I make a habit of gouging my customers on shipping costs, I'll lose my credibility and any chance for repeat business.

AuctionTip #19: Be Cautious

Be careful about leaving negative feedback for bidders that may deserve it. Go out of your way to clear things up before you decide to do so. It's normal for bidders to strike back with their own negative and unfair comments. Always try to find some other solution. Don't leave negative feedback unless they blatantly defraud you- if they don't pay, either leave neutrals or no comments.

AuctionTip #20: Make Your Customer Your Passion

Treat your customers and potential customers like royalty and they'll reward you. Your repeat business depends upon your customers. They are your main concern. Your customers are more important than your product or any short-term profit you make. Make it your passion to cater specifically to their wants.

AuctionTip #21: Use Delivery Confirmation

Rest easy at night and get delivery confirmation when you ship your valuable items. Some buyers will receive an item and say they didn't get it and demand a refund. You can cover the cost of delivery confirmation in your shipping charge. It only costs an extra .35 cents. You can email the tracking number to the customer so they can track the package.

AuctionTip #22: Send Customers The Auction Number

At the end of the auction include the auction number with the end of auction notice. Place the number in the subject line so you can easily track emails. Your customer may also be bidding on multiple auctions. Doing this will prevent confusion for you both.

AuctionTip #23: Your Listing Schedule

Do you always start and end your auctions at the best times? Always have auctions start and stop when traffic is the heaviest. If you make a listing schedule and stick to it then you'll get much better results on your auctions.

AuctionTip #24: Double-Check Your Title

Check to see that your item title has no spelling errors. Buyers mainly use the search engine to locate their item of interest. Search saves them lot of time and can pick up items placed in the wrong category.

If my spelling is incorrect, the search function will not work. Therefore, I'll have lost all buyers using the search function. This will kill my auction like a doornail.

The good news is, if you catch misspelling before the first bid, you can always go back and revise it.

AuctionTip #25: Use A Spell Checker

With item descriptions, emails, titles and whatever else you write use a spell checker and grammar checker. Poor spelling and bad grammar will turn off some people. Even if it doesn't matter to them, it still upsets the flow of your message and confuses the reader. We want to make a great impression and get our message across. Let's check the things we write.

AuctionTip #26: Online Customer Service Rules

- 1) Your customers are everything. Try running your business without them.
- 2) Your customer is always right. Never tell them they are otherwise.
- 3) Go the extra mile...it is worth more than all the paid advertising you can afford.
- 4) Return emails promptly. If you can't, set up an autoresponder to tell your enquirers you'll get back to them soon.
- 5) Under-promise and over-deliver in everything you do.
- 6) Never criticize your customers directly or indirectly!
- 7) Make the auction process extremely simple for the customer.
- 8) Follow up the day after the sale and one week after. Ask if there's anything more you can do for your buyer.

AuctionTip #27: Watching Wording

Snipers don't have the time to email you about condition or vague info. Some buyers only look at items going off auction that day. Be careful what words you use to describe your item.

Be honest and avoid wording that will inflate your items value. It always backfires on those who make a habit of abusing words-

AuctionTip #28: Know Your Product

If I wrongly describe my item, some buyers will be leery of bidding. Buyers want professional sellers. The more information you have and use, the more credible you'll become in the buyers eyes.

AuctionTip #29: Include Shipping Costs In Descriptions

Some sellers have a tactic where they charge unfair shipping and handling fees. Sometimes they omit critical info in the ad and fill in the blanks at the auction end. EBayer's have been protesting this from day one and these seller don't last long-

Explain everything, costs and all in your item description in such a way that there can be no confusion... If you charge handling- make it known too.

AuctionTip #30: Always Insure And Pack Well

By law, I'm to blame for broken items due to my bad packing. Buyers have no control over how I pack an item. Carriers hardly ever accept liability for broken items. It's my job to see to it that they get their item in one piece and on time- Let's make sure we do everything to see to it that this happens.

AuctionTip #31: When The Buyer Lives Out Of The Country

Be careful when receiving foreign funds. Always insist that they pay by credit card or send an international money order. Remember to pick up some customs forms from the post office in advance to save yourself some time.

AuctionTip #32: Stay In Contact With The Buyer

When auction ends, quickly email the buyers with the final price, shipping, total cost, and your address. To reassure your customer, email them when you receive their payment. This is important for their peace of mind and they'll thank you later in feedback and repeat business.

You'll also score well with the buyer if you send them an email when you ship their goods. Nothing is more frustrating than not knowing. Even go so far as to follow up a few days later to see if everything is all right... you'll earn very loyal customers by doing this

AuctionTip #33: Keep Your Auctions Going

EBay bidders usually wait until the last minute to bid. I wouldn't let anyone persuade me to end early unless they made me an insane offer. If I do then I'll miss having my auctions go through the "going, going, gone" and "ending today" listings- categories that eBayer's browse heavily.

AuctionTip #34: Using The "Category Featured" Option

You'll want your item listed on the first page of your selected category's listings. Category featured listings are 66% more likely to sell. The cost is \$14.95- if you're running Dutch auctions then it's definitely worth it- the amount of traffic you receive is much greater.

AuctionTip #35: Avoid Misunderstanding

Before email, the only time a written letter was sent or received was when you were writing to a person you know well or a letter to complain. Emotion and character is easily misconstrued with email. Keeping in contact will solve most problems with the transaction.

AuctionTip #36: Use The Bold Title Option

Make your item stand out by listing it in bold. Items highlighted in bold are 50% more likely to sell. For some items it is a cost-effective alternative to featuring your auctions. Test what works for your particular item.

AuctionTip #37: Conservative Pricing

When playing it safe, set the minimum price for your item just slightly lower than what you think it might be worth. This will encourage opening bids on the item. The first bid is always the hardest one to get. Don't start too low, though, because the rules state that you are obligated to sell the item for that amount if the minimum is met.

AuctionTip #38: Free Advertising For Your Auction

You can tell other people on the Internet about your auctions. By actively driving extra traffic to your auctions you'll find that your Dutch auctions will do much better. Use signatures and post to appropriate newsgroups, message boards. Use email (not spam), search engines or whatever works. You can promote individual auctions, your about me page, or a website that sells your products or directs visitors to your auctions.

AuctionTip #39: Avoid Using Private And Reserve Auctions

Buyers are especially cautious of bidding when info is held back from them. Most informed eBayers can't stand reserve auctions unless your item is one of kind. Bidders will always prefer straight auctions to reserve. Private and reserve auctions will limit the number of bidders you'll have for your item.

Reserve prices assure you your item won't sell for below a certain amount. But since the reserve price is not made public, this will turn off bidders. Suppose you set a reserve price of \$50, and a bidder is willing to spend \$49, if he knew your minimum was \$50, he might just bid that extra dollar. Not having a reserve price is a selling point. Announce it loud and clear.

AuctionTip #40: Readability Rules For Descriptions (and Email)

- 1) Use a short opening paragraph.
- 2) Short sentences make firm friends!
- 3) Make your paragraphs less than 5 or 6 lines.
- 4) Underline or boldface important words or phrases.
- 5) Include attention-boosters: questions, news items, promise...
- 6) Ask for the bid at the end of the description.
- 7) Use positive language.

AuctionTip #41: Talk To The High Bidder(s) By Phone

E-mail may travel at the speed of light, but that doesn't mean the recipient reads it right away. On some auctions it's a good idea to talk on the phone with the high bidder on your item.

AuctionTip #42: Know What You're Selling

Before you put something up for auction, look to see if something similar is already selling. Know the market value of your item. It's always wise to look in on the competition.

If similar items are available, your starting bid should be competitive. If you're not sure of the value of the item you wish to sell, then you should do a little research.

Having two similar items up for auction at the same time will just split the buyers and bring lower bids for both items.

If your Grandmother just passed away and left you a collection of buffalo nickels, find out what they are before selling off your heritage on eBay. You could be sitting on a goldmine or a lump of coal, and ignorance could mean the difference between a fortune and a loss.

AuctionTip #43: Use Good Packing Material

Newspaper makes good packing material, especially if it's shredded. It's cheap, it's handy and it gets the job done. Save packing material from any other shipments you receive. Bubble wrap is lighter but costs you more than newspaper.

AuctionTip #44: Switch Your Categories

If your auction is under performing (with no bids) and you still have time, change categories. This is helpful when testing new and different categories- if an auction in a new category starts to fail just switch to your bread and butter category.

AuctionTip #45: Very Simple Book Keeping Solution

Use "My eBay" to track monthly activity- on the last of every month save you're "My eBay" page to disk and get your sales totals. File this for income tax records.

AuctionTip #46: Write the Best Description You Can

If you find that many similar items have sold in the past, look for those which have sold for the most, and examine the item description and summary, to see what they did different to garner the higher bids. Then do the same. Try to avoid plagiarizing the exact item description, though. And be as detailed as possible. The more information you can provide, the more interested the buyer is likely to be.

AuctionTip #47: Learn HTML

All auction sites allow you to use HTML in your item description. Use it. Prettier item descriptions make the item more attractive to perspective buyers. There is a real good interactive HTML tutorial at <http://www.davesite.com>. Sooner or later you're going to want to get good at it- do it now!

AuctionTip #48: Use Counters

Services like Honesty.com offer free counters and image hosting. Keep up with your page hits so you can make adjustments to improve auction performance- <http://www.honesty.com>.

AuctionTip #49: Be Prepared to Sell for Less than Desired

Most normal items rarely sell for more than actual market value. And just because a similar item sold for \$20 doesn't mean yours will sell for as much. Just don't sell for a loss. Set your minimum bid, or your reserve price, to your actual cost.

AuctionTip #50: Use Dutch Auctions

If you have more than one of the same items for sale, then sell them in a Dutch auction. Remember that multiple simultaneous auctions for the same items are not permitted.

AuctionTip #51: End Your Auction at Peak Times

Many people bid on items from their computers at work, so ending an auction at 2am isn't wise. Bidders enter into bidding wars in the last minutes of an auction. This won't happen if all the warriors are asleep when your auction closes.

AuctionTip #52: Create Your My eBay Page

Your 'My eBay' page is very important! Don't overlook the significance of it- you can use these to give buyer important information and much more;

Have a nice 'My eBay' page set up with a picture of you. Include your contact info and a well thought out sales message persuading the reader to scroll down the page (where they will see your feedback and current auctions). You'll receive huge boost in credibility- something you can never have too much of.

It's also a good idea to use your finely tuned "My eBay" page as the rallying point for all your auction marketing (i.e. signatures).

P.S.- You may also want to have your signatures pointing towards your eBay seller page; it's really up to you.

AuctionTip #53: When to Accept Only Money Orders

Money orders are cash in hand. Checks can take up to a week to clear so you don't know if it's a bad check or not. Don't send valuable merchandise until a week after receiving personal check.

Make this known in your item description. If you are uncomfortable with checks and wish to only accept money orders, state this in the item description as well. Be wary with your valuable items.

AuctionTip #54: Remember, All Prices Are in U.S. Dollars

\$20 on eBay is not \$20 Canadian Dollars or \$20 Australian Dollars. Keep your eyes open for this when dealing with foreign orders.

AuctionTip #55: ALWAYS Leave Feedback

Positive feedback is always appreciated. If the transaction goes well for both parties

AuctionTip #56: Be Courteous

You should always be polite and courteous or you'll lose the potential of return business and run the risk of provoking the wrath of negative feedback. While I probably don't have to tell you this, there are plenty of rude buyers who will test your patience to the max- never let them get the best of you, you don't ever want to write an email in anger.

AuctionTip #57: Keep Notes

With so much to do, and so many strands to keep straight in your head, it's easy to get overwhelmed. The most important thing you can do to keep your priorities in a row is to keep an idea notepad near by to keep track of what must be done...

Also, buy a digital voice recorder to capture those fleeting creative thoughts before they fly away into oblivion.

If you're proficient in this area then you can get a lot of constructive things done.

AuctionTip #58: Reserve Auctions Benefits

Check the help pages on eBay to learn the specifics about reserve price auctions.

There are two benefits to reserve price auctions:

- 1) They allow you to list a low starting bid amount to get people started on bidding for your item.
- 2) They let you reserve the right not to sell your item unless someone bids at least an amount that you want for an item.

AuctionTip #59: List on Weekend Mornings

The best time to submit your ad is on Saturday or Sunday mornings between 6:00 am and 9:00 am Pacific Standard Time. More people review eBay on weekend mornings than at any other time.

AuctionTip #60: Get Positive Feedback

This is one of the most important things you can do. Potential buyers will review this feedback and determine whether or not they want to do business with you. The best way for you get positive feedback is to simply ask for it.

AuctionTip #61: 3-Day Auctions?

All featured and featured category auctions should be listed the full ten days.

It is sometime more advantageous to use a 3 day auction if you didn't buy any listing enhancements. This is due to the way that people naturally browse eBay's site.

AuctionTip #62: Use Uppercase Letters

As with item titles, you want to catch the potential bidder's attention. If you don't end up using templates or HTML code to spice up your text (which you should), then use uppercase letters to highlight the special features of your item. This is especially beneficial when the description text for your item is lengthy. Even if they don't read the entire description, their eyes will notice anything in uppercase or even surrounded by asterisks. The bottom line here is to get stuff to stand out and get noticed.

AuctionTip #63: When To Ask for Money Orders

A good policy is to say you will accept personal checks only from bidders with a +10 positive feedback. Accept only money orders by mail from buyers with questionable feedback- and state this in your policy as well.

AuctionTip #64: Check the Buyer's Feedback Listing

If the buyer that wins your item has a number in parentheses next to his email address, then he has feedback. Check this for anyone who wins the bid on your item. If the feedback is positive, you may be willing to accept a personal check no matter how much the item is going for. If the feedback is negative, require a money order. If there's no feedback, or if it's neutral, then follow the previous tip above.

AuctionTip #65: Check Your Email Three Times Daily

Keep alert! Potential buyers will come to you all the time with questions- you want to be responsive. Some will want more in

AuctionTip #66: During and After the Sale

I don't feel much explanation is necessary here. Common courtesy will go a long way here – in prompt payment and repeat buyers. Another simple tip is to email the buyer when you receive his payment and tell him the item will be shipped out immediately. This keeps the buyer informed as to the status of his purchase. Don't discount the power of this tip.

AuctionTip #67: Save Money on Relisting

If your item doesn't sell the first time you list it, you may be able to relist it at no additional charge. Once the item's auction is over, go to its auction page, and follow the instructions on relisting it at no charge. When you relist, change the title or description so create more interest... or lower the price.

AuctionTip #68: Use Asterisks in Your Item Titles

There are a lot of items up for auction on eBay, and it's easy for your item(s) to get lost in the thousands of others. Therefore, you must get your item to stand out and catch the eye of someone browsing an item listing. How? Use asterisks in the title.

Here's an example: ***** ANCIENT_COINS! *****

See how this catches the eye? This is so simple to do and yet so powerful.

AuctionTip #69: Use Uppercase Letters in Your Item Titles

As you may notice above, another thing done in the title was to use capital letters. Most people enter their titles in upper and lowercase letters. Anything you can do to get your item to stand out will get more people to notice your item.

AuctionTip #70: Use Bold Text Option in Your Titles

Another very powerful way to get your items noticed is to select the bold title option when setting up your item's auction. Use of this option must be specifically selected and eBay will charge you an extra \$2.00 for using bold, but your item will stand out. Use this for items over \$10.00 or it's not really worth it. Now, to really make your items stand out, use asterisks use uppercase letters, AND a bold title.

AuctionTip #71: Use Underscore/Tilde to Get Longer Titles

By using underscore "_" or tilde "~" between words in your title, you'll get to enter a longer title than if you just used spaces between your words. I don't know why, it just works. Try it and see.

AuctionTip #72: Use Key Words in Titles

Since there are so many items on eBay, one of the most effective ways people find things is to SEARCH using the search engine in eBay. If you want people to find your item, then place key words, or "obvious" words in your titles. For example, if you're selling a collectible model car, don't just put the word CAR in your title, put the make and model, too. Put in as many keywords possible in the title, so the greatest number of searches will locate it someone could think of who are looking for items like yours.

AuctionTip #73: Be Ahead

Ask your high bidders to email their shipping info ahead of time, that way you can have everything packaged and ready to go. Doing this isn't always feasible but when it is do it- it's a good habit to attack your auctions this way instead of waiting to the last second.

AuctionTip #74: Digital Shoebox.

Create a purely digital filing system- save some trees and save you a headache! Use email receipts only to keep records income. Get a scanner and scan important documents into the computer like business expense receipts that come in the mail.

Throw your recent opened customer snail mails in a box, put account statements in a folder- and throw everything else unimportant away. A mess of paper is the last thing you want on your mind- file it and forget it.

AuctionTip #75: Crunch Your Graphics

Buyers won't wait forever for huge graphic files to load. There are several really great programs for shrinking graphics. Smartsaver Pro is my program of choice. Go to Hot files and do a search for it:

<http://www.hotfiles.com>

AuctionTip #76: Don't Get Thrown Off

If you want your item to show up during primetime, remember there is 2-3 hour posting delay, so post 2-3 hours early. For instance, if you want your auction to end at 10PM EST, then start your auction at 7PM.

AuctionTip #77: Be Neat

When I first started selling I had a problem with getting everything in its proper place. This came back to haunt me. Get an organized and stay that way!

If you throw everything into a big pile, as you've been tempted to do, you'll suffer an eventual clutter avalanche. Don't let procrastination get the upper hand- a clean desk indicates a happy mind.

AuctionTip #78: Proofread Your Ads and Email

Always make sure to proofread your listing before you post an ad for the first time, or have some else do so for you. You'll be amazed at what fresh pair of eyes will uncover...

It's very frustrating to catch a mistake after the auction has began and people have started bidding. Make sure you check over your ad and email for errors.

AuctionTip #79: Find Your Niche

Selling on eBay is just like the Internet or any other real world business. In order to be successful you need to pick a niche and stick with. When you're starting out selling it's ok to sell a little bit of everything- but when you get serious, sit down and decide where you're corner of the market is.

AuctionTip #80: Offer A Free Newsletter

A great way of staying in touch with customers and potential buyers is to offer a newsletter dealing with their interests- such as something dealing with the niche you chose. You can use this to build trust, give out free information, and to plug your auctions.

AuctionTip #81: Don't Start Auctions Too High

Whatever you do, don't start your auctions out too high. EBay is not a good place to do this since bidder want a deal. It's always better to start low and set nice reserve if you absolutely must cover yourself.

Starting too high kills the spirit of the auction process. People come to the auctions to compete for a bargain.

If I price highly I won't get the frequent early bids and won't get the same following that I could when I price low. When you have many bidders on an auction, then irrational bidding isn't far behind. This is something you want! Pricing highly undermines this.

You will also incur higher listing fees if you price high.

You only pay the minimum in listing fees if you start anything below \$9.99- which on eBay is 25 cents.

Do good research and get a good idea of your items market value- generally similar items tend to sell within a fixed price range; your goal is to hit the upper limits of that range. The people that drive prices up are either "irrational bidders" or they don't know the market value of a product they want, and exceed it in their bids without really knowing that they overpaid.

AuctionTip #82: Beware Of Reserve Auctions

Reserve auctions are taboo on eBay- most bidders steer clear because they aren't "true" auctions and are somewhat deceptive. Use reserve auction only when necessary, and as a means of protection only when you are uncertain of value and demand. You can also use them if you absolutely refuse to take less than a certain amount for your item. Be prepared for mediocre results if you use them. If your auction fails to meet the amount you set eBay will tack on a \$2 fee.

AuctionTip #83: Backup, Backup, Backup!

Losing your data is like losing your brain- it's crucial that you begin backing up your data today! Murphy's Law is always waiting for you to slip.

Get a good surge protector and CD burner to make cheap backups and you'll be able avoid most disasters.

AuctionTip #84: Eudora Pro

What email program are you using? Outlook Express? If yes, you may want to consider a more powerful program to take care of your email. Eudora Pro will do the trick.

It retails for about \$40 but you can use the shareware version for 30 days. The Eudora Lite version is less versatile but doesn't expire. You can get a copy from the link below.

<http://www.eudora.com>

AuctionTip #85: Your Database

Your customer database is a gold mine of information- you want to have a simple program that will record and keep track of customer info. Info such as name, email address, auction number and so on.

While there are hundreds of ways of keeping track of all your auction information, there is one program in particular that I use called A.I.D.-

<http://www.epigroove.com>

You can use a program like MS Access, Excel or some other simple type of spreadsheet program as well.

If you plan on being organized and profitable as possible, keep an excellent and complete customer database!

AuctionTip #86: The Taxman Cometh

Did you know that auction income is taxable? It certainly is. Keep good records and you'll be rewarded at tax time. Don't keep good records and you'll be penalized- the tax advantages to having a small business are many-

Consult a CPA or the SBA for advice on tax liabilities and credits. Rules differ from location to location.

Your tax filing records should allow you to identify your sources of income and keep track of business expenses. It's that simple.

As a small business owner or sole proprietor uses what is called a cash basis bookkeeping system.

This simply means income is recorded when it is received, and expenses are reported when they are actually paid. Many sole proprietors and businesses with no inventory use the cash method.

From a tax standpoint, it is advantageous for a new business to use the cash method of accounting. That way, recording income can be put off until the next tax year, while expenses are counted right away.

Also remember licensing issues. The laws and regulations vary from location to location. Some states require licenses to sell some do not. Check with the Small Business Administration for more detail!

<http://www.sba.gov>

AuctionTip #87: Using A Website With Your Auctions

One great way to boost your profits is to use a website with your auctions. Use a little subtlety promoting your website using your auctions. The rule is: You can't provide a link to your website where you are selling the product for the same price or less. Be sure you don't break any rules to avoid having your auction pulled.

A website can serve many purposes. Use it well and it will catapult your auction efforts ahead of everyone else.

I once sold a particular item on eBay and had a link to my website where the person could order directly from me by secure server. I easily picked up an extra \$150 a week by just including a link on my auction page to my website.

Be careful here- you can too be very creative, but if you get too cute eBay will warn you and eventually pull your auction due to fee avoidance.

AuctionTip #88: Promoting Your Auctions Outside eBay

Few people try to drive traffic to their auctions. Find a good way to do this and you'll get tons of free hits. Find appropriate message boards to promote on. Use free classifieds, newsgroups and whatever method will work for your particular type of auctions. You can use email just make certain its highly targeted- don't spam.

AuctionTip #89: Study Up!

You are what you read... I spend a good bit of time reading and trying to keep up with the newest trends in Internet marketing. There's a lot of good information available to you for free, but to get the really good stuff it's sometimes worth investing a little bit of money.

I think I have bought everyone's book; but by far the two most mind-blowing books that have had the most impact on me, as well as a lot of other people are:

"The Insider Secrets to Marketing Your Business on the Internet" Home Study Course- by Cory Rudl

<http://www.marketingtips.com/tipsltr.html>

And then of course there is the Bible of selling online...

MYSS! (Make Your Site Sell) - By Ken Envoy

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

MYSS! is an absolute steal, being given away at an insane price- Cory's course is steep for some but easily 10 Times worth the investment.

These two courses are the best of their breed by far... get them and succeed online!

AuctionTip #90: Using Other Auction Sites

You may find that your area of the eBay market is a bit too stuffy. If the competition is really tough for what you're selling check out a few of the other auction sites such Amazon and Yahoo.

Try to limit yourself to these two extras- once you start selling on some of the other auction sites you begin get smaller and smaller returns- plus the buyers are going to be less reliable. A negative feedback on Lycos auctions means nothing- on eBay it does... people just don't take smaller venues very seriously.

Note: I have never had a bounced check off of eBay- I have had three outside of eBay (2 on Cnet, one on Yahoo).

On Yahoo you can list for free- but don't let that fool you; your ad will never be seen. On the other hand- Yahoo allows you to bid on your ad exposure. You may have a product that fits into a category with no competition- you can buy a day's worth of the sites best advertising for a quarter. I once netted over \$300 on a Yahoo Dutch auction with a small \$2 in advertising...

AuctionTip #91: Information Products Are the Way To Go

Selling information by CD is the way to go on eBay. The competition can be fierce but your inventory costs are laughably low and your markups are high. Simply find the hottest selling information products and change them a little, give them a name and make them yours. Go with the proven winners- check the featured auctions to find out what the hot items are...

AuctionTip #92: Skyrocket Your Auction Profits by 40%

Up-sell products are items you offer the winning bidder at the end of the auction for a few dollars more that complements the product they bid on. All you have to do is make sure they'll want it, show them the benefit of having it, and simply ask them to buy.

It's just like when you go to McDonalds and order just a burger and the cashier asks if you'd like fries and a coke. You thought you just wanted a burger but you end up with the fries and drink because you really wanted that too-

You won't always be in the position to offer up-sell product starting, but as you get more experienced you will see some obvious opportunities; if you're selling information it will be easy to create good complementary products that your customer will want.

Realize the importance of up-sell products.

AuctionTip #93: The Real Way to Boost Your Profits

The other way to boost your sales is by offering your customers products called back-ends. This is where you can make major money if you prepare.

Once you have built the trust of your customer they're likely to buy from you again and again- take advantage of this by offering them things they will want and are interested in...

Think of a professional stamp seller who uses eBay to add to his customer base. Let's say he has a customer database of a 10,000 avid eBay stamp collectors; If this stamp seller does his homework then he will know what types of stamps his customers are crazy about. He will find the right source for these stamps and Voila! He will make money-

One day he sends them an email explaining to those 10,000 people that he has 5,000 rare civil war stamps. Within a couple of days he sells them all and nets a \$50 profit per stamp. He just made \$25,000!

You'll want to approach your auctions the same way- that is why you'll want to find a corner of the market to work from. That way you'll be in a better position to resell to your customers over and over again... not only will you know what your buyer wants in general, but you'll have a huge base of people who have similar interests. If you don't have a niche you can't do this.

AuctionTip #94: Marginal Net Worth?

Marginal what? This term simply refers to the long-term value of your customer. Develop a long-term relationship with your bidders and offer them similar products they will want (by email). Look past the initial sale-

Now you know why selecting a niche is so crucial. Pick a niche market and you're in a superior position to know your customer and to anticipate what they will want.

Stamp collectors are interested in stamp stuff; Video game players are crazy about video games.

Consider the lifetime worth of your customer and leave everyone that doesn't in the dust.

AuctionTip #95: Mister Lister, Who's That?

EBay offers the program called Mister Lister that will save you hours of listing time every day- it's real helpful if you have lots of the same items. Make one good ad for them and list it over and over for years. It's easy to use and it gets you one step closer to auction automation.

Normally you'll have to post each auction manually- this can take a very big chunk of your day if you want to have a lot of auctions. Use programs like Mister Lister to get around this:

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/sellerguide/mr-lister-faq.html>

Andale has a similar program in beta. Most novices find Andale intimidating and hard to use. Don't rely on it until you fully understand how it works.

AuctionTip #96: Other Must Have Programs

Here are the several programs I use daily that you can download for free at <http://www.hotfiles.com>:

- A.I.D.- Auction information database program
- Eudora Lite- fully featured email client
- Homesite- an excellent must have html editor
- Paint Shop Pro- graphics software
- CuteFTP- FTP program for uploading files to the Internet
- SmartSaver Pro- Crunches pics so pages can load faster
- ShortKeys Lite- Email shortcut program.

AuctionTip #97: Verza and CCNow Will Offer You A Solution

Earlier I touched on merchant accounts. If you have a website or are selling one product at a fixed price then you need short-term solution for taking orders via secure server. Two services I recommend for this are CCNow and Verza:

<http://www.ccnow.com>

<http://www.verza.com>

AuctionTip #98: Don't Go to the Post Office!

Save loads of time and take care of all your postage needs from the comfort of your own home. In order to do this:

- Buy an inexpensive scale
- Print postage from your PC with E-Stamp (<http://www.estamp.com>)
- Look up shipping rates with I-Ship (<http://www.iship.com>)

Remember the USPS.com and UPS Internet services- be sure to take advantage of these things- your goal is to not spend one second of your life in the post office. If you don't prepare and you start an auction business you will spend your life there when things pick up; I know this first hand. Postal clerks dreaded me stopping by!

AuctionTip #99: Use a Good Sales Policy to Avoid Trouble

Post terms and conditions on every listing you create. Things like shipping terms or any other rules that you'll use. Make a separate text file containing your sales policy that you can edit, copy and paste into your listings quickly. Sit down and come with a good one in order to avoid any bumps in the road- do you insure packages? Be sure to state these types of things in your policy.

AuctionTip #100: The Importance of Good Feedback

Building up a good feedback record on eBay is your #1 priority starting out. The credibility factor will weigh on you at the beginning but this can be overcome...

Remember:

- Treat your winning bidders like royalty
- Sell them a quality product
- Actively pursue positive feedback from winning bidders

On average, only 35% of bidders leave feedback if you don't prompt them at all. Let them know that you NEED feedback. Make it easy for them to get to the forum and consistently follow-up... You can get that up to about 90%.

Once you have a good record people will be much more likely to do business with you. Make it your goal to never get a negative comment. This is hard to do but very impressive with the buyers. If get 'negged', correct the mistake and move on, it's not the end of the world.

Kindly reply to the response with a rational explanation for the problem and your buyers will overlook it when they glance your profile.

For an example of an excellent feedback record and what positive feedback will do for you... check out eBay's all time greatest seller:

<http://members.ebay.com/aboutme/parrothead88/>

This fellow has over 16,000 positive feedbacks. I wonder if he's made any money on eBay?

AuctionTip #101: Last but not Least!

Throughout this eBook I have spoke about the importance of automating repetitive tasks in your business...

While it's not the easiest thing, there's one tool on the market that I use everyday and would have a hard time getting by without it...

It's going to be very helpful if you plan to do marketing with your website and auctions by target direct email...

The name of this revolutionary program that will set your profits on fire is Mailloop- you can find out more about the benefits of this awesome software and what it can do for you at:

<http://www.marketingtips.com/mailloop/mailloop.html>

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Here's hoping all goes well for you!

Warmly,
Tim