

The Internet Marketing Center's 10-Step Formula to eBay Success!

*Insider Secrets to Writing *KILLER* eBay Listings
That'll Outperform Your Competitors
And Have Your Items Flying off the Shelves!*



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Message from Derek Gehl, CEO of the Internet Marketing Center:

Creating eBay listings that really SELL your items on eBay is one of the most important skills you need to learn, if you're serious about making money on the world's number-one auction site.

Yet you'd be surprised how many people don't pay enough attention to this crucial element of any successful eBay auction.

In fact, many eBay sellers just copy and paste some descriptive product copy they found on a manufacturer's website into their listing or stick in a few bullet points and a paragraph about payments or shipping.

What these sellers don't realize is that they are losing bids – AND SALES! – by writing lousy listings that fail to capture the attention of their readers and encourage them to bid.

This means that if YOU put even just a little effort into making your listings stand out from the crowd, you're going to gain a powerful advantage over your competition. You're also likely to attract more bids – and higher ones, at that!

The good news is that writing listings that grab – AND hold – the attention of your auction visitors and compel them to bid is NOT rocket science. In fact, we're going to give you a tried and tested online selling system that 99% of eBayers don't know about – and that will give you a massive competitive advantage on eBay!

You see, many eBay sellers simply copy and paste a product description they found on a manufacturer's website into their listing or stick in a few bullet points and a paragraph about payments or shipping.

Some don't even do that! The example below makes you wonder if this seller really wants to sell their item at all!

Polaroid I –Zone Sticker Camra, 6"x2"x2"

sticker film not included,

What these sellers don't realize is that by writing ineffective product descriptions that are uninspiring, lacking in information, and doing little to capture the attention and interest of readers, they are LOSING bids – and sales!

The first step in turning your eBay listing into the most powerful selling tool you have at your disposal is to stop thinking of it just as a *description* of what you have to sell. It's so much more than that... it's an entire *sales process* designed to...

- Position your item as unique and rare
- Sell your item through compelling sales copy
- Tell the story of your item
- Convince buyers of your integrity and credibility as an eBay seller
- Provide details of your product's benefits
- Inject your own personality into your auctions
- Give readers compelling reasons to bid on your item
- Provide purchasing instructions and shipping information
- Reassure bidders by including a guarantee
- Ask for the sale (or bid)!

"Scarcity" and "desirability" are the two crucial elements of a successful eBay product. Your listing is where you promote the scarcity of your item and increase its desirability in the eyes of potential bidders.

To do that, your listing needs to *sell* your item, not just *describe* it.

That means a paragraph copied from the manufacturer's website is really not enough if you want your auctions to be as successful as possible. You need to follow a sales formula that's *proven* to work, and the one we're going to give you is your key to increasing your sales on eBay. It can be adapted to suit the various different items you sell.

The length of your item listing really depends on the value and uniqueness of the item you're selling -- obviously a box of golf balls selling for \$5 doesn't need as much description as a 1969 Chevy Camaro selling for \$20,000!

If people are going to have to spend a lot of money, they want as much detail as possible about the item. Equally, if the item is unusual, it needs to be described in as much detail as possible.

So let's jump right in to your step-by-step formula...

Step 1: Position your item as UNIQUE

Offering something unique is vital in the eBay marketplace where there are so many auctions competing for the attention of bidders. Highlighting your item's unique selling points -- the benefits of your item that makes it unique in the eyes of your customers -- will make it more desirable to them. It'll also set it apart from your competitors' auctions.

Other ways to make your item appear unique and stand out from the crowd include...

- Creating more value in your product by asking yourself what your product does better or differently from competing products. Does it look better? Is it a better price? Are there any special or unique features?
- Adding value by offering free bonuses to the winning bidder, like some recipes to go with cooking utensils

- Bundling your item with other similar items, accessories, or consumables, like batteries or a carrying case

The key is to find *one* thing that your competition doesn't offer, and then use it as the foundation of your item listing. Let's take the Polaroid i-Zone Camera that featured in the previous example of a bad item listing, and see if we can come up with a unique benefit that sets it apart from other cameras.

Now, our seller is offering an old film camera, which might seem like a hard item to sell in the era of digital cameras. However, a little research shows that this camera instantly produces passport-sized pictures that you can keep in your wallet. That's a fun feature you can turn into a benefit, as I'll describe soon – and it's a feature that sets this camera apart from others!

Including film and batteries would be a great way to make this camera more attractive than others that don't come with these extras.

Your unique selling point could be something you discovered while using the item, or it could be something you find out by researching the item online. Whatever you decide to emphasize, this one thing – and the benefits that come from it – should be placed prominently in your auction listing, starting with the headline.

Step 2: Write a killer headline

When potential bidders arrive at your listing, it's a safe bet that they're interested in what you have to sell. However, you *still* have a lot of work to do. After all, there are other eBay sellers offering similar items just a couple of clicks away!

So if you're going to attract a bid, it's critical that you grab each visitor's attention right off the bat.

The most important attention-grabbing tool is your headline. It's the first thing potential bidders see -- and just like the neon sign outside the movie theater, or the newspaper vendor on the sidewalk shouting out the day's headlines, it's what makes people stop for a closer look.

A great headline should...

- Create a problem that the reader can identify with
- Stress the main benefit of your product in solving that problem
- Generate excitement and a desire in your readers to find out more

Returning to our example, an effective headline for the Polaroid camera could be...

**Too busy to sort through your digital photos and get them printed?
Get colorful, wallet-sized prints in seconds after taking any picture!
Perfect for parties... special occasions... your kids' birthdays...**

Can you see how this headline creates a problem many people have with other cameras -- the fact that they're too busy to print copies of their photos -- and solves it by stressing the "instant" feature of your camera? It also stresses the benefit of being able to use the camera in all kinds of situations when instant pictures can be really useful and lots of fun.

It's amazing how few auctions use a headline to grab the attention of potential bidders. At the Internet Marketing Center, our tests have shown that a good headline can increase online sales by up to 714% or more, so it's *extremely* important that you apply this marketing strategy to your eBay item listings.

Step 3: Tell a story

eBay is different from many other commercial websites in that -- unless you're a major corporation like Olympus Cameras, which has created its own eBay presence - - you're an individual dealing with *individuals*.

So it's a good idea to write a little story around the item you're selling. Not only does this add some life to the auction, but if the item happens to have an interesting background, that in itself becomes a selling point. People like to show off things they've just bought, and if there's a story to go with it that they can tell their friends... all the better!

Some famous eBay examples include the man who sold his ex-wife's wedding dress and used his item listing to tell the funny story of how it came to be in his possession. He also included a picture of himself wearing the dress! This was one of the most-visited auctions in the history of eBay!

Even newer items can be sold in this way -- a description of a great party could be used to sell a home stereo system, or a road trip could tell the story of your car.

Another example of someone who used this technique well was the person who sold *everything* he owned on eBay! (If you're interested, you can see what he sold at www.allmylifeforsale.com.)

Along with each item, he included a little story that would generate a lot of interest from bidders. For example, to sell an old laptop he told how he used to write his diary on it:

I bought this computer at UI Surplus. It was so clean and worked. The battery wouldn't hold a charge so I had to find an AC power adapter but once I did I started to use it to do my email on and started to keep a

somewhat daily journal.

I brought this little guy with me when I lived in New York over the summer... For the first week or so before I found work with Sesame Workshop, I kept a fairly regular journal writing about hanging out in New York with most of my closest friends.

It has a 14.4 modem, a pretty big hard drive for its time and a black and white screen. It is one of the smallest PowerBooks ever made...

Want to read my summer journal, it's got some old software on it, too...Netscape 3, MS Word... and other little apps...

As you can see, even an out-of-date computer can be brought to life and made appealing with a personal anecdote relating some of the item's history. Of course, this style may not suit all of your auctions. But it *is* effective to give some of the history of an item, what makes it special, why it's cheaper than most, and so on.

Every item has a story behind it -- if you think creatively! When you're starting out, you'll have more time to find a little story behind an item for sale and write more creative auctions, so doing this is great practice until you get busier and start listing more and more items. By then you'll be able to quickly find things of interest in an item's history or things that make it unique. Pull out these points and emphasize them to your potential bidders.

Even if you haven't owned the items yourself, the more you research them, the more interesting little tidbits you're likely to dig up about them.

Returning to our example of the item listing for the Polaroid camera, we could use a story as follows...

My friends and I had a blast with this great little camera last summer. It was the hottest August I can remember, and we all went hiking, swimming, biking... any excuse to get out of the house and enjoy that sunshine!

Anyhow, this camera went everywhere with us -- one of the great things about it is it's small enough to go in my pocket -- and I used up a lot of film. But it was worth it as it's a really fun camera and the prints are so small that I still carry them around in my wallet now that we've all graduated!

This tells a little story and gives the camera a life of its own. Even though the camera isn't a digital one, the story adds plenty of appeal by playing up the value of the small, instant prints it creates.

To add to the story, you could even include some of the pictures you took in your listing, rather than just shots of the camera itself. Get creative with your listings!

Step 4: Describe your item in DETAIL

When it comes to describing your item, don't leave anything out. The aim of your description is to answer every single possible question potential bidders may have. Include ALL pertinent details about your item with links to other credible websites to back up your claims (just make sure you don't link to any SALES websites, which violate's eBay's listing policy).

Adding your email address and inviting people to email you with questions will take care of any gaps in your description. In fact, answering people's questions can be a good way to start building relationships with your bidders and will help establish your credibility as someone who's good to do business with.

You should also keep in mind the keywords that people use to search for items like yours and be sure to include them in your item listing.

POWER TIP

Include common alternative names for your item

When writing your item listings, remember that people use different names for the same products. They may use these names to search for your item – so try to include shortened names, colloquial names, and even misspellings for your items.

An example is the Apple Macintosh line of computers, also known as "Apple Mac," "Mac," and "AppleMac." By including all the product's various names, you'll make sure you don't miss out on bids from people who search for these terms.

Other details you should include are descriptions of any interesting features, things that make it stand out from other similar items, how it's packaged, what you can do with it, and so on. All these details help convince bidders of the item's value and can make the difference between someone bidding on your item or on someone else's.

And always include images with your description. More expensive items need more images to sell them, as it's a bigger risk for someone to buy something expensive without first seeing it.

Step 5: Emphasize BENEFITS as well as features

When describing your item, you should always stress the *benefits* in addition to the features.

A *feature* is an attribute of a product; for example, an adjustable spout on a watering can would be a feature. A *benefit*, on the other hand, is a way that a product solves a problem for its owner. For example, if the adjustable spout (a feature) lets you easily change the direction and volume of water you pour on your plants so you avoid wrist strain and don't have to refill the watering can as often, that's a benefit.

So instead of stating features of your item, talk about how the product will benefit potential bidders and tell them exactly how it will solve their problems.

Here's an example of a item listing for a DVD/VHS Recorder/Player that only stresses the *features*:

- Records to DVD+R/+RW; up to 6 hours of recording per disc with a choice of 4 recording speeds
- Progressive-scan video output
- Plays back DVD, DVD+R/+RW, CD, CD-R/RW, VCD, SVCD, CD, MP3, CD-R/-RW and picture CD discs
- Play and record VHS tapes with the built-in VCR
- Front A/V connections for convenient connection to a digital camera with DV input
- Includes universal remote

These are features because they just describe what the recorder does. Benefits tell what they can do *for the buyer*. Here's how the *benefits* of this same item can be stressed instead:

- Build an entire DVD library and record all your favorite TV shows, sports games, movies, and home videos using the DVD+R/+RW function
- Store all your favorite movies and memories for years to come with nondegradable, digital-quality DVDs that preserve the original quality of your recordings
- Never miss an episode of your favorite TV series with 6 hours of recording per disc and a choice of 4 recording speeds
- Get the best picture possible with progressive-scan video output that maximizes the picture quality when used with a digital TV or monitor
- Play back almost ANY format so you never need to buy another media player: DVD, VHS, DVD+R/+RW, CD, CD-R/RW, VCD, SVCD, CD, MP3, CD-R/-RW, and picture CD discs
- Keep it old-school by being able to play and record VHS tapes with the built-in VCR. Pick up some classic VHS movies in the bargain bin!

- Connect your digital camera to the unit and transfer all your images instantly using the front A/V connections for convenient connection to a digital camera with DV input
- Use the universal remote to do it all without leaving your armchair!

Can you see the difference? The benefits are highlighted by placing them before the features, stressing what they can do for buyers and how they can solve their problems.

Here are some benefits we can use in our item listing for the Polaroid camera:

This camera has so many cool features...

- Stop leaving all your photos hidden in a folder on your computer, or in your Flickr account – take a few instant photos that you can take with you, give to friends, or stick up on your computer monitor!
- Easily create photos small enough to fit in your wallet and show your girlfriend or boyfriend you care ;-) but they're not so small that you can't make out what's in the picture. Let's just say they're small but perfectly formed!
- You can take this camera everywhere -- sneak it into concerts and parties easily -- so you'll never miss an opportunity to get a good pic and keep a record of a great night!
- And you don't have to buy anything else to get started because I'm including batteries and film... nice of me, huh? ;-)

Note how the benefits, as with the little story we told earlier, have a friendly, informal tone that helps make the buying experience enjoyable for visitors to your auctions.

This is important because many people go to eBay to have fun bidding on items they like. Some auctions they'll lose and some they'll win, but if you can contribute to their enjoyment, they're far more likely to want to buy from *you*.

POWER TIP

Make sure bad spellers can find your auctions!

Use the website www.MisspellSearch.com to find commonly misspelled words that relate to your product and include these discreetly in your item listings.

For example, "televison" is a common misspelling of "television," so if you include both spellings you can ensure that people who make that spelling mistake in their search still find their way to your item.

However, you should use this technique carefully (as too many obviously misspelled words will damage your credibility) and only if you find that there are very common misspellings for your items.

Step 6: Establish your credibility

Throughout your item listing you should always take advantage of opportunities to build your credibility in the eyes of potential bidders. Establishing your credibility helps your readers feel safe enough to buy from you and to give you their money over the Internet. You need to reassure them that you have all the right experience to be the person they should buy from, and that you are trustworthy and honest.

There are a number of ways that you can do this:

- **Share proof of your experience.** If you're positioning yourself as an expert -- in antiques, collectibles, cars, computers, or any other categories -- back up everything you say with details of your experience, qualifications, awards, or memberships in relevant organizations and associations in your industry.

You can do this in the auction listing, and by adding a link to your "About Me" page, where you can include more information about your background and qualifications. For example, this is how one dealer in antique books and maps describes his experience:

Antiquariat Daniel Good is internationally renowned and a leading dealer in scarce and early antiquarian books, maps and decorative graphics.

Proprietor of the business, Daniel Good, after graduating from Oxford University in 1983, has gathered some 20 years of experience in the antiquarian book and map trade and his shops contain one of Switzerland's largest stocks of rare books in the fields of science, Helvetica, natural history and early photography.

- **Be honest when describing your items.** Never leave anything out of your descriptions, including defects. Being upfront about any defects in the item you are selling boosts your credibility in the eyes of bidders.

And don't make extravagant claims about your item if you can't back them up with solid proof. For example, don't say a book you're selling is a first edition unless you also present conclusive proof that it is.

- **Share testimonials.** If other people have bought your products and felt satisfied with their purchases, they'll be happy to sing your praises!

Of course, on eBay, testimonials come in the form of positive feedback. You

can paste some of your best feedback into your auction listings themselves, as well as provide a link to your Feedback page that says something like, "To view ALL of my feedback, click here."

- **Use proper spelling and grammar.** It's possible to maintain an informal tone while still making sure your sentences make sense! If you present a sloppy image, you won't encourage people to bid on your item. They might worry about that sloppiness spreading to the way you package and ship their purchases!

Often – especially with smaller, less expensive items – just being honest and upfront about what you're selling and including a link to your feedback is enough to convince bidders of your credibility. For more expensive items, you *must* make sure that your credibility is established beyond doubt.

Step 7: Maximize the urgency of your offer

Auctions, by their nature, are urgent – there's an element of competition in every auction that can create a lot of excitement for buyers! Will they win the auction, or will they lose it?

Instilling a sense of urgency into salescopy is a common technique in marketing – and it's a technique you can also use in your auctions to encourage people to take *immediate* action -- ideally by placing a bid -- before they leave your auction page.

You can maximize the urgency of your offer in several ways. For example, you might...

- End your product description by restating the benefits of your item to people who buy it. For example, "Remember, you'll be able to store 10 times more music than on other MP3 players."
- If an item is discontinued or hard to find, emphasize its rarity and the fact that there might not be another chance to buy it.

By adding to the feeling of urgency your potential buyers are experiencing, you'll pick up the maximum possible number of bids on your auctions.

Step 8: Give clear terms and conditions

One of the most common causes of disputes, withdrawn bids, negative feedback, and misunderstandings on eBay is sellers failing to make their terms and condition clear enough.

When you list your auction, don't rely on bidders to read eBay's "Shipping, payment details and return policy" section. Include these details in your auction, too -- leaving bidders in no doubt as to what's involved in buying from you.

These terms and conditions include...

- Stating the payment options you accept, such as PayPal, credit card, checks, and money orders
- Stating the shipping and handling fees, or providing a calculator for bidders to work out the cost
- Being clear about any shipping restrictions such as only shipping to certain countries
- Stating who is responsible for any other taxes or customs duties that may apply
- Stating when you will send the item (e.g., within three days of receiving payment)

At the end of this section, provide your email address again, saying, "Please email me with any questions about shipping and payment options. I'm happy to answer all your queries and will get back to you as soon as I can!"

POWER TIP

Don't scare your bidders away with a grouchy tone!

Have you ever walked into a shop, then found the seller so unfriendly that you decided to walk back out without making a purchase? Well, the same thing happens with eBay auctions all the time!

To avoid scaring bidders away – particularly new eBayers who are inexperienced in the eBay buying process – it's vital that you use a friendly tone in all the messages you use when selling. Be nice! These people could turn out to be valuable long-term customers!

Which seller would YOU buy from? One whose listing states...

PayPal ONLY!!!! If you don't have an account with them, DON'T BID!!!

... or one whose listing states...

**Please note that I only accept PayPal payments.
You can set up a PayPal account easily at www.paypal.com.
It's free, secure, and only takes a couple of minutes.
Please email me if you have any concerns.**

We thought so!

Let's go back to our Polaroid camera example and see how we can make sure people know how to pay for their item and how it will be shipped:

If you're the lucky person who wins my camera, I'll drop you an email straight after the auction ends with the final total.

I prefer to be paid through PayPal as it's quick and easy, but I'll accept money orders, too. When payment has cleared, I'll pack up your camera carefully, mail it the very next day, and send you an email to confirm it's on its way!

Shipping is \$5 US, and that includes insurance. Any questions, please email me at me@myemail.com.

Happy bidding!

Step 9: Include a strong guarantee

Adding a money-back guarantee is another proven marketing technique that is an excellent way to increase sales.

Stating something like, "We stand by our products! If you aren't satisfied with your purchase, send it back for a full refund" reassures bidders and shows that you have complete confidence in your items for sale. It also separates you from your competitors who don't offer a guarantee.

You may be tempted to put a time limit on the guarantee, but a 30-day, or even 90-day, money-back guarantee doesn't carry much weight. The fact is, guarantees that don't state a time limit outperform those that do because they convey a much stronger message that encourages more bids and purchases.

Think about it... if someone's kept the item for more than 30 days, it's highly unlikely they're going to suddenly turn round and decide to send the item back.

Although you may get a few returns, the fact is most people *don't* return items unless they genuinely have a serious complaint with it -- in which case it's only right that they get a refund.

And any returns you do get are outweighed by the extra sales you generate through your guarantee.

Step 10: Ask for the sale!

A call to action -- where you ask directly for the sale -- is another essential component of your item listing. It may seem obvious, but restating the main benefits of your product and then actually *asking* people to place a bid is a great way to get more bids.

As well as restating your main selling points, your call to action needs to be urgent and to the point. For example, for the Polaroid camera, you might say...

Remember, no other camera prints this small *instantly* and it's not being manufactured anymore, so **don't miss out and bid now!**

Asking for the sale is simple, but the impact it can have on your bottom line is *huge*. By adding a simple call to action, you make it easy for your bidders to understand what they're supposed to do.

And once they know THAT, you can make sure they won't hesitate to place their bids -- and your profits will go shooting through the roof!

Are YOU ready to take your eBay sales to the next level?

Visit www.auctiontips.com today to receive our FREE "Bidding Frenzy" newsletter, packed with the latest tips, tools, strategies, and resources for skyrocketing YOUR eBay profits!

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