



Ebay Fundraising Manual

Ebay Fundraising Manual

So, you're thinking about using Ebay auctions as a new fundraiser for your club, but you don't know where to start? It's not as complicated as you might think. This manual will give you the basic instruction, and some tips, for successful fundraising on Ebay.

What is Ebay?

Those getting started might wonder how this online auction phenomenon got its start and what it is today. In 1995 Pierre Omidyar, a computer programmer, developed the first version of the Ebay auction site as an experiment in efficient markets. Omidyar's project began as a collector's community but has grown into the number one location for commerce on the Internet. Today, Ebay employs over 9,000 people worldwide, and generates more than \$1.4 billion in revenue annually.

Who uses it?

While the Ebay community is diverse, approximately 90% of the 110 million Ebay users are buyers, which are people shopping, collecting and looking for rare and everyday items they want and need. The other major group is sellers. They range from beginners, who sell unwanted items from their closet, to large businesses that earn hundreds of thousands of dollars selling on Ebay.

What's The First Step?

Your first step should be to get familiar with the site. Ebay is filled with millions of items in thousands of categories, from cars to children's books and computers to stamp collections. Do some searching for things you like. Read item descriptions and auction terms. Exploring Ebay's site will help you get an idea of what items are for sale, how Ebay is structured, and how your club might be able to raise money.

Learning Resources

While buying and selling on Ebay is not complicated, it is important to be knowledgeable before you start fundraising to ensure your success. Ebay offers many resources for the new seller. If you go to Ebay's Help section, you will find an area for new users and the Learning Center. The Center contains FREE video and audio guides to orientate and instruct you on many aspects of buying and selling.

Another resource is Ebay University. It began, and continues today as onsite training courses conducted by Ebay to train and instruct anyone on how to use their site, or enhance their experience. Ebay University now also offers online courses and CD-ROM training. There is a cost for all Ebay University training, but it is much more detailed and provides far more information than Ebay's free resources.

Another option is local training classes. Many community colleges, high schools and community education programs now offer classes on how to use Ebay. Check in your area to see what is offered.

There are also many books and videos available to educate you on Ebay.

Need Some Help?

If you are not ready to take the leap into Ebay fundraising, there are also people out there that can help you. Ebay has established a program called Trading Assistants that allows new users who need help to connect with more experienced users. These Assistants usually charge their clients a percentage of the sale price for the help they provide.

Ebay consignment stores such as www.quikdrop.com and www.i-soldit.com are another option becoming popular in many areas. These retail locations allow anyone to drop-off items, and the business does the rest! These new businesses also make money by keeping about 30% of the profit from your listing, but you don't have to do anything!

Getting Started

Since this manual is focused on club fundraising, we will focus on selling. To buy or sell on Ebay, you have to register. Registration is easy. Just go to the top of the Ebay home page and click "register," and then follow the easy instructions step by step. All you have to do is provide some personal information and a valid email address. As a seller, you will also have to provide either a credit card or bank account information to pay for auction fees.

One of the first decisions you'll have to make is choosing an Ebay User ID. This is a very important step because your User ID will be your face to the Ebay trading community. You want to choose a name that represents your interests or identifies your group. DO NOT use personal information or your email address in your User ID. You could try using your club name, or a derivative like "BirminghamCivitanSells."

Once you have successfully completed your registration you can sell items on Ebay. This manual will take you through the selling process, but it is very important to take part in Ebay's tutorials and additional information for new sellers. This will explain many details and strategies in the entire selling process on Ebay.

Where Can You Find Items?

This is probably the easiest part. Just open your closet and find something you don't use anymore. There's a good possibility somebody on Ebay is looking for it. Many clubs conduct rummage sales. Find the best items from each sale and sell them on Ebay instead to increase your profits. Fine crafts made by club members sell well, and donated items from local businesses, such as gift certificates or retail items, are also good items to list on Ebay.

Research

The next, and probably most important step before listing your item, is to research it on Ebay. You don't just want to list anything, you only want to spend time listing items that will sell and make a decent amount of money. You can determine this before listing your item by searching for similar items that are already listed on Ebay. When you find similar listings, you can see which listings did the best and then copy their format, listing length, starting price, and other aspects. This also helps you determine the best category in which to list your item.

Listing Your Item

There are many steps in the listing process, and it is best to learn about the entire process from one of the learning resources mentioned earlier, but here are a few tips that apply to almost all auctions:

Start the bidding low - You have the option of setting the opening bid on your auction at whatever amount you desire. But setting the price too high can discourage bidders, or keep bidders away all together. If you have done your work before hand researching and writing an effective auction title and description, you won't have to worry about the bids. Auction that start with a low opening bid also get more bids during their run and attract more attention.

- **Don't set a reserve price** - this is always a temptation when you want an item to sell for a certain amount, but don't want to start the bidding high. This is another instance where research should set your expectations and alleviate your fears. Reserve auctions should only be used on rare occasions with high priced items when chances cannot be taken.
- **Don't buy extra features** - Ebay offers lots of ways to "enhance" your listings with bold type, featured placement and slide shows, but keep your money in your pocket. If you haven't already realized, the research you do ahead of time helps you create an effective auction listing. Extra features will only add to your cost while not substantially improving your bidding results
- **Always have a picture** - Pictures are essential for Ebay auction success, and Ebay even allows you to post one for each auction for FREE. This is where a digital camera becomes an essential for Ebay listings. If you are planning to list items regularly, you should purchase a digital camera. You can take pictures with a regular camera and scan in the prints, but this is more expensive and unnecessary for a regular seller.
- **Go the distance** - Always go for the 7-day listing option. This gives potential bidders the maximum amount of time to find and bid on your item. If you have a rare and high priced item, you may want to pay a little extra for a 10-day listing.

Answering Questions

This is the next step in auction success. After listing your item, potential bidders can email you questions about your item, or your auction terms such as shipping or payment method. All questions are sent through Ebay's communication system to your email address and your My Ebay page. Be sure to check and respond to questions regularly throughout an auction (once a day is good) and immediately before an auction ends.

Accepting Payments

The most common forms of payment are money orders, personal/cashier checks, and Paypal online payments. Paypal is an online payment company owned by Ebay. It allows buyers to send payment to another Ebay user with a check, bank account transfer or credit card. Each seller has to decide what forms of payment are best for them. While mailed payments like money orders or checks can take a substantial amount of time to receive, Paypal payments can be sent and received instantly. The possible pool of bidders for your auction will increase when you accept more payment methods.

Shipping

Sellers need to think about shipping from the start. There would obviously be large differences in shipping a piano and shipping a stamp, so you want to think about your commitment in shipping any item, and whether you want to list it at all because of its size. Some auctions for large items do not offer shipping and require a buyer to pick-up their purchases, but we will focus on shipping items.

There are many shipping options available to sellers. It is common practice on Ebay for the buyer to pay shipping costs for the item IN ADDITION to their winning bid, so you need to determine the shipping costs for your item BEFORE listing your item. The lower shipping price you offer, the more attractive your auction will be to potential buyers. However, you don't want to lose money on shipping. When you start, it may best to pre-pack your items and get a shipping quote before listing your item. As time goes by you may be able to accurately estimate shipping costs, especially if you sell the same or similar items over time. The most frequently used shipping services are UPS, Fedex and the United States Postal Service. The postal service is the least expensive, but may not be the most convenient for you.

Most sellers will offer a set shipping cost, or a variable cost depending on location. Ebay has a shipping calculator included in its auction software so buyers can enter in their zip code to determine shipping cost for their area. Some sellers also offer additional insurance for all items they sell, but it is best to include insurance costs in your shipping amount for expensive items. If you have any expense for packing materials, it is important to include this in your shipping costs. Another consideration is if you are using Paypal, a tracking number is required to confirm shipping in the case of a buyer dispute.

You also have to decide whether to ship to other countries. While allowing international bids will increase your pool of potential bidders, you need to weigh the additional time and hassle created by shipping items to another country. Each decision you make can affect the profitability and success of your auction.

Feedback Forum

Ebay's Feedback Forum is one of the keys to Ebay's success, and can determine the failure or success of your auction listings. When Pierre Omidyar started Ebay, he had too many complaints to handle about Ebay users, so instead of investigating or responding to each complaint he established Ebay's Feedback Forum. The Forum allows each user in a transaction, buyer and seller, to leave positive, neutral and negative comments about the other user. The cumulated comments make-up a users Feedback Profile. A Profile full of positive feedback ratings can improve your sales and the trust of buyers, while consistent negative feedbacks can impair future transactions and reveal fraud. The feedback system is not perfect, but has worked perfectly for Ebay in protecting buyers and sellers in an auction community that based on a large degree of trust.

As a seller, it is important to praise good buyers, but only leave negative feedback as a last resort. Mistakes can happen in any transaction and good communication and understanding can resolve most problems. However, sometimes it is necessary to leave negative feedback to share with the Ebay community your negative experience with another user. It is important to be truthful and accurate in your feedback, as any comments you make can be used in a court of law (libel).

Fraud

While it would be great if everyone operating on Ebay was honest, but it's just not the case. The important thing is to use common sense and know the rules and protections of Ebay, shipping companies and payment companies (Paypal)

- **Ebay Security Center** - Ebay offers limited protections for buyers and sellers. You can read about Ebay's guidelines as well as find resources preventing and combating fraud
- **Fraudulent Emails** - A large number of criminals have sent emails to Ebay users stating that their accounts are suspended in order to link them to fraudulent websites. All Ebay emails will address you by your full name. It is important to forward to these emails to spoof@ebay.com to help Ebay combat this fraud.

Ebay Givingworks - Listings for Charity

While any Ebay auction can benefit a charity, Ebay Givingworks is a special program that makes it possible for any auction to benefit charity. Whenever a seller lists an item, they can choose a benefiting charity from a list on Ebay's website and then choose a percentage of their auction's winning bid to go to that charity. The Civitan International Foundation is listed with Ebay Givingworks, and is a great way for you to send money directly to the Foundation, or introduce other Ebay users to Civitan.

How To Promote Your Auctions Locally

Not only are Ebay auctions a great way to raise money, but they can also enhance many of your current fundraising events and bring added publicity to your club.

The first way to promote your auctions locally is to list them on your club website. You can promote your club website with flyers and business cards that have information about the auctions. Not only will people learn about your fundraiser, but they will also learn about your club and membership

You can also enhance your existing fundraisers and service projects by adding online auctions. This extends the reach of your club beyond the physical event, and can increase fundraising and promotion of your club.

A local media or corporate partner might also be able to provide you with auction items and promote your auctions through their businesses.

For more information contact

David Bledsoe at

david@civitan.org

or

(205) 591-8910 ext.134