

The Little Black eBay Book

How to achieve PowerSeller profits

Want to take your eBay business to the next level?
Follow these three simple steps to success...

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Hermes
Makes delivery easy.

Introduction

Good product?

Check.

Competitive prices?

Check.

Impeccable
customer service?

Check.

Passion to take
your business to
the world?

Check.

If you're a business owner with a killer instinct to maximise your profits – eBay is the place for you.

The ecommerce site gives businesses, big and small, the power to reach a staggering 162 million customers at the click of a button.

The website has helped many ambitious entrepreneurs make their mark in their particular niche.

Each year, eBay releases a rich list detailing the journeys of start-up founders who scaled their business using the website.

As of today, the biggest 30 independent UK sellers on eBay have made a whopping £17m by selling through the site. These "PowerSellers" have reported an average £4m annual turnover.

These owners don't necessarily have a rich and famous investor bankrolling them nor are they children of some multimillionaire tycoons. They are ordinary people like you and me who took a simple idea, converted it into a business, and used eBay to grow it. All in all, there are countless stories of people who quit their mundane nine to five jobs to make a killing on eBay.

Why selling on eBay works is because it gives you access to a target audience a bricks and mortar shop will never be able to offer. It puts you in touch with people who want your product and are ready to pay a good price for it.

With this mini 'eBaybook' we hope to give you a useful snapshot of how to maximise eBay to augment your business. From attracting buyers to getting a seamless production and keeping customers happy, this guide has practical tips that'll help you nail your eBay game.

Shruti Tripathi
Author

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Three steps to success

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Attract and secure buyers

Find out how to reach more customers and really boost sales

If there's one foolproof way to attract a truckload of customers to your precious products, it's eBay. However, while you may already have a fairly successful eBay business, if it's growth you're after, you need to meticulously run your store to ensure you fully maximise your profits and reach the right target audience.

Here's a handy list of key things you should consider to optimise your eBay selling.

Keywords are crucial with eBay selling

Choosing the right keywords is instrumental in ensuring your customers easily spot you while browsing through the site.

The words that appear in a drop-down list of suggested keywords are an indication of what customers have searched for in the past when looking for similar products to yours. That's why you must make sure you include these keywords in your listings.

Use keywords that you think people are likely to use to search for items related closely to your product. However, don't make the mistake of using extra or unrelated keywords to spam your customers as this is in breach of eBay policy.

After choosing them, carefully consider the title and item description of each product. A good trick to

ensure all search engines like Google and Yahoo pick up on your listing is to include unique identifiers like Universal Product Codes (UPCs), European Article Numbers (EANs), International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) or Manufacturer's Part Number (MPN) in your listings.

Perfect your eBay lingo

As much as you might rate your product, steer clear from including hyperbolic phrases or statements that you may not be able to back up in your listing.

Be honest and forthright about your item description. Don't use flowery language, keep your description simple while shoehorning appropriate keywords here and there.

A good way to make the case for your product is putting in bullet points killer reasons why a customer should snap up your product.

Using the right lingo on eBay is how Les Bailey, one of eBay's UK millionaires and owner of car parts firm PF Jones, grew his business.

"You need to provide a no-nonsense description of your product so that your customers understand what you're offering. Think long and hard about the language you use in your description as this is what is going to give you an edge over your competitors."

A perfect eBay listing title

- ✓ BLACK Apple iPhone 6 for sale
- ✓ BRAND NEW and boxed
- ✓ Free shipping in the UK
- ✓ Free bonus screen protector

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Use good quality pictures

The option of uploading great photos of your product is your one sure shot chance of showing off your product. While you'll undoubtedly have already been using imagery, stop and ask yourself whether your equipment or shots could use an upgrade.

To stand out on eBay, use high quality images of your products taken from different angles to demonstrate how brilliant your product is.

eBay recommends using a photo that is at least 1600 pixels on the longest side. Don't enlarge small images as they get pixelated and don't look professional on your listing.

Remember that all listings must have at least one photo. Also, eBay doesn't allow photos with borders or text on them. However, it gives you an option to include a watermark to signpost that the photo belongs to you.

A good way to make the case for your product is putting in bullet points **killer reasons** why a customer should snap up your product.

Play fair – stick to eBay rules

You might think eBay isn't going to catch you if you flout rules but, the truth is, it will. One rule you should strictly adhere to is not including any false or misleading information and ensure you're not using profane or obscene language.

eBay also forbids you from including website addresses, email addresses, or phone numbers. The only exception to this rule is when you're selling domain names.

Bear in mind that the use of words like *"prohibited"*, *"banned"*, *"illegal"* and *"outlawed"* are a strict no-no too.

Breaking these rules could lead to your listing being cancelled or your account being banned.

You also need to ensure you're being totally transparent about the sale and delivering the goods at the agreed price and condition.

The price should be right

Remember that people shopping on eBay are usually looking for a good bargain. So to attract customers you need to price competitively.

Review your prices regularly, what might have seemed a good initial price may now not be appropriate. If you're selling larger amounts of each product you may be able to drop your price point. The key is to ensure you aren't being outpriced, search similar listings on eBay to determine how other sellers are pricing their listings – and how you compare.

When you set a price don't forget to consider shipping charges as the buyer is looking for the best deal that combines the price of the item and amount needed to be spent on obtaining it.

A good tip to sell is pricing your items at a lower value to increase visibility but also setting a reserve price to ensure you get a good deal. Setting a reserve price requires an upgrade from standard listings only but once your eBay business is growing, it might be money well spent to maximise your profits.

Get your production line seamless

It doesn't matter how popular your products are if your processes let you down. Improve your production line now...

To maximise your profits through eBay, you need to come up with a cunning little plan to make your production line seamless. From key storage considerations to nailing packaging, here's what you need to do to help your eBay business fly.

Inventory/cashflow – make sure you have the right amount of stock at the right time

Selling on eBay is all about ensuring you have the right stock at the right time, says Vijay Kanda, online brand strategy manager at Activ8, a company that sells wholesale and retail mobile phone products on eBay.



“Never be out of stock and ensure you sell only what you have,” Kanda advises. “Overselling can be detrimental to feedback on eBay so make sure you stick to a structured approach to selling by using [various tools available](#) that can ensure you get the customer what they have ordered.

“Collecting money and then not having stock is a cardinal sin for eBay sellers.”

Also keep a stringent check on your cashflow so that you can pay your suppliers and keep your business going from strength to strength.

Production line – refine your labelling/SKUs/packaging

Packaging your product to get it eBay-ready needs comprehensive planning. Play with different mock-ups of size and shapes before you choose the right packaging.

Your packaging needs to be simple yet effective so that your customers are impressed and give you repeat business.

Don't go overboard with different bells and whistles on your packaging as the weight of your packaged products could potentially increase shipping costs for both you and the end customer.

Your product labels are yet another opportunity to show off the amazing features of your product. Have you won an award? Include that in the label. Is your product made in Britain? Impress your customers by putting the Union Jack on your label.

Be precise with your wording and brand proposition and ensure you stick to legal requirements for selling your product. Finally, leave ample space for a barcode so that you can scan your products and keep a count of your inventory.

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Storage – make these key considerations

Les Bailey, star eBay seller and owner of car parts company PF Jones that generates over £4m in annual sales, reckons you should have a strict system in place for storage to leave no room for admin errors.

“First and foremost, you need to source enough stock to be able to process customer orders. Be very careful when you take delivery from suppliers or finish packing a product. One damaged good can lead to delays in delivery leaving the customer unhappy and you losing money,” he says.

The Manchester-based businessman also emphasised the importance of security to safeguard your stock.

“Introduce a system to check the weight of your consignment, this is one of the fastest and most accurate ways to make sure your products are in good order.”

Bailey also said that you should install CCTV cameras and employ security staff to guard your warehouse as thefts can leave you out of pocket.

He also reiterated the need for properly labelled inventory so that products get stored in the correct spot in your warehouse and are easy to identify and dispatch.

“Storing them in order of price [most expensive to least expensive] will ensure your staff sends out the right products and the end consumer doesn’t get confused about a product’s price,” Bailey adds.

There’s also the option to use a 3PL (third-party logistics) provider who can manage your storage and warehousing needs for you. They can also handle order fulfilment and delivery. The advantage is that you can rely on their logistical expertise so you can focus on sales and they can save you money in the longterm. However it’s a fairly costly upfront investment so you’d need enough stock and orders to justify it.

Efficiency – get the best deals

Being smart about your eBay sales will hold you in good stead to grow your business. If you want to sell off stock quickly, choose the *“Buy It Now”* option which will give users the option of snapping up your product quickly without going through the hassle of an auction. This trick is very useful to dispose of items that aren’t necessarily performing well.

If you want to get rid of unused stock, advertise them on eBay with really low prices and mark them as *“collection only”*. This helps you make a quick buck from stock you were meant to discard.

If your business starts to generate really high turnover, normally in excess of £1m a year, you may be allocated an account executive, which could help you get access to lucrative offers. You could convince them to give you free listings and lower final value fees. Different departments from time to time hold seminars to teach sellers key ways to maximise sales, attend some to educate yourself about using the full potential that eBay offers.

Not many people know this, but eBay also offers special subscriber discounts when you set up a store with the ecommerce site. It also offers you strong customer support to check whether you’re doing everything right with your listings.

You should look into promoting your eBay stores on your social media accounts and your product website too. This will inform potential customers about your eBay stores and drive sales.

Another nifty way of getting the best out of your eBay listing is using third party listing tools that improve search results of your store. This makes it more likely for people to stumble upon your products when they’re searching online.

Take Auctiva, for example. It’s a listing tool recommended by eBay which can *“save you both time and money when it comes to managing the scheduling and automation of your listings”*.

Collecting money and then not having stock is a cardinal sin for eBay sellers.

Deliver great customer service

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Keep your customers coming back by building long-term relationships and encouraging repeat business...

To succeed in business, your focus needs to remain on your customers' needs. Delivering impeccable customer service is imperative to building your brand and securing your position as a PowerSeller on eBay. Be it getting repeat business or gaining more clients through word of mouth, treating your customers with the utmost respect will help you fortify eBay selling.

A crucial step to achieve this is using an efficient delivery provider. Take delivery provider [Hermes](#), which boasts nearly 100% customer satisfaction rate, for example. They pride themselves in considering "customers come before profit".

Eoin Kenneally, head of e-commerce, Hermes, said: "The biggest problems for customers include not only getting goods delivered on time but at a time that's suitable for them. They don't want to be fretting about not being home when the delivery man comes knocking.

"We acknowledge this problem and are developing a system where the end customer knows exactly when Hermes is going to arrive to deliver the products they ordered online. This helps us keeping both businesses and end customers happy."



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Never keep customers waiting

Time is money, we all know that. That's why you should honour your customers' time and never keep them waiting. Be prompt in replying to emails and calls and make sure your customer is getting what they want.

From phones, emails to social media, make sure you're connected to your customers by a variety of communication channels. Try and respond to all customer queries within 24 hours and ensure you fulfil all guarantees you give to your customers.

Your eBay customers will come back to you only if you give them a reason to. Reward your loyal customers with discounts and offers that don't burn a hole in your pocket.

Steve Lineton, ecommerce manager of electronics company Crampton and Moore, managed to get his company's online store to eBay's top 20 UK stores list. His advice? Listen to your customers:

"Businesses hoping to use eBay to grow should really value customer feedback. Part of the customer service element should always include follow up care and this should be built in to an email process. Always make sure the customer is left happy that they bought from you and if so always ask for feedback to be left," he says.

Use secure, fast delivery providers

Michael Day, director of Leicester-based Holywell Tools, started his business from the back of his van. His business took off when he set up a store on eBay. While he only saw a couple of customers buying from him in the first few weeks, sales started snowballing within two months of him joining the ecommerce site. Today, he sends over 500 parcels every week.

One of the key factors that have helped Day scale his business is his commitment to his customers for delivering all his orders properly.

"I started selling on eBay to broaden my horizons and quickly learnt that using reliable delivery providers will make sure both me and my customers will get our money's worth."

Day, who delivers his products through Hermes advises choosing your delivery partner carefully to ensure your products are delivered on time safely.

"I have a great working relationship with Hermes. They're very approachable and flexible and cater very well to my business needs."

Use a tracked service to give the customer confidence that they will get their product without any hiccups – no delays or damaged goods.

Another clever way of getting customers to trust you is to offer PayPal as a method of payment as this will cover both you and the buyer from any fraudulent transactions.

Build a reliable brand

Building a brand that customers can trust will take you a long way in not only your journey of selling on eBay but also in consolidating your business in your industry. Always remember that your customer is paying the wages of both you and your employees.

Be honest on your eBay listings and stick to all commitments you make to your customers. More importantly, never compromise on the quality of your product. You might be the best salesman and have a great knack for keeping your customers happy, but if your product is substandard, none of these qualities will be of any use.

If you make a mistake that left your customer unhappy, be quick to admit it and apologise to your customers right away. This will ensure you don't lose them and they'll appreciate your honesty.

Aim to develop long-term relationships instead of making short-term sales that wouldn't lead to repeat business.

Above all, build a brand that you're proud of and feel privileged to associate your name with.

Want a 98% first time delivery rate?

Exceed your customers' expectations with a Hermes Business Account.

Give your customers a fully tracked 48 hour standard delivery service.



*The more you send
the more you save.*

Email: sales@hermes-europe.co.uk or visit www.myhermes.co.uk/BA

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Makes delivery easy.

