7

Tricks for Promoting Your eBay Business

You can put 1,000 listings on eBay and not get a single bite—especially if nobody knows about them. Yes, your auction listings show up in eBay's search results when customers go searching, but that's not very proactive marketing. (And you can't rely on eBay's search results if you have an eBay Store because Store listings don't normally show up in eBay's search results.)

To establish your eBay business and drive customers to your listings, you need to promote your business. That means employing advertising, publicity, and other marketing devices—just like the pros do!

Trick #61: Brand Your Business—And Market It

You have a choice. You can promote individual item listings or you can promote your business as a whole. (Or, of course, you can do both; they're not mutually exclusive.)

This is an important point. Many sellers have the initiative to promote the items they sell, but don't have the foresight to promote their businesses. Naturally, promoting an item listing can help that item sell, but it doesn't do much good for you in the long term. When you promote your business, however, you create long-term awareness—and help to promote your short-term item listings.

The first step toward promoting your business is to create a business identity—that is, you brand your business. A brand identity defines your business, tells the world what business you're in, and how your

business is unique. Without a brand identity, you're just another anonymous eBay seller. With proper branding, you stand out from the crowd with a unique and memorable identity.

The ABCs of Branding

What's involved in establishing your brand? There are a lot of separate steps to take, but I like to think of them collectively as the ABCs of branding:

- A: Tell 'em who you are—Give your business a name. You're not just JoeSmith014; you're Joe's Discount Aardvark Accessories, or Aardvarks 'R' Us, or Aardvark Emporium, or International Aardvark Supplies, or Aardvark Super Warehouse, or Aardvark Boutique, or the like. Your business needs a unique name that conveys what you sell and how you sell it (Discount? Warehouse? Boutique?), along with a little bit of your personality.
- **B:** Tell 'em what you do—Tell your customers what you sell. That can (and probably should) be part of your brand name; if not, it can be conveyed in a tag line or as part of your logo. And it pays to be specific—you don't want retail shoe customers calling you up if you're a footwear wholesaler.
- C: Tell 'em what you can do for them—Now we move beyond the name and logo to your brand's positioning. It's important that customers know what your business can do for them. You might be Joe's Discount Aardvark Accessories, but what does that mean? The unique benefit offered by your business becomes clearer when you say "Lowest prices on the Web" or "Biggest selection of custom accessories" or "We provide custom solutions" or something similar. Why should a customer buy from your business? That is the question you have to answer.

Establishing the Brand

Theory aside, what concrete steps do you need to take to establish your brand? Here's the short list:

• **Business philosophy**—Before you do anything else, stop and think about what it is that makes your business unique. Use the ABCs of marketing to help define what type of business you want to run. Are you the lowest-priced retailer? Or the one with the biggest selection? Or the one with the best customer service? (It's difficult, if not

impossible, to be all these things simultaneously.) Equally important is to define who your customer is; you don't sell to everyone, but rather a targeted segment of the overall market. Determine what it is that makes your business what it is, and then define your business's philosophy based on this.

- **Name**—After you know who you are, you need to give your business a name. Make it short yet memorable; you want customers to easily remember who you are.
- **Slogan**—Many businesses have a slogan or tagline that accompanies their business name. This slogan should express your business philosophy, and further define what it is you do.
- **Logo**—People remember pictures. That's why a visual logo is important to a business. When you see a big block "M" with the smaller scribbled "TV," you know you're seeing the MTV logo. When you see a lowercase "ups" in the middle of a brown shield or the purple and orange "FedEx," you know you're seeing the UPS or FedEx logos. A logo should be distinctive and easily recognizable. It can be as simple as your business name in a specific font, or as fancy as a stylized graphic. You can even incorporate your business slogan in your logo, if you want.

Reinforcing the Brand

The previous steps establish your brand. Now you need to reinforce and promote the brand. How do you do this?

The first thing you want to do is make the logo the dominant part of your business presence. That means plastering your logo on everything you do—your website, your eBay Store, and every single item listing. You also want to put your logo and slogan on your shipping labels, invoices, business cards, boxes, and envelopes. And, of course, if you create printed brochures or catalogs, as well as print or online advertisements, your logo should be prominently displayed.

tip

Whatever promotion you do, make it consistent. The key to effective branding is consistency. Use the same logo and slogan in everything you do; don't switch things up.

You want your customers to know that they're dealing with your particular business. Yes, they're buying a specific item, but they're buying it from *you*. It's the *you* they need to remember the next time they're in the market for something you sell. After all, you remember FedEx—even if you don't remember a specific visit to one of its stores.

Trick #62: Link to Your Other Listings

Although it's important to promote your overall business, you also have to promote the individual items you have for sale. With eBay, that means promoting your auctions and eBay Store listings.

Linking to Your Other Listings

The most obvious place to promote the items you're selling is through the other items you're selling. After all, if you have potential customers interested in one thing you're selling, why not show them what else you have for sale? You'd be surprised how many customers can turn into purchasers of multiple items—and those extra sales are especially profitable.

eBay helps you promote your other listings by including a View Seller's Other Items link in the Meet the Sellers section of all item listing pages, as shown in Figure 7.1; this links to a page that lists all your current listings. If you have an eBay Store, there's also a link to your Store in the same place.

М	Meet the seller						
Se	eller: <u>trapperjohn2000</u> (<u>940</u> 😭) me						
Fe	edback: 100% Positive						
Μ	ember: since Aug-22-98 in United States						
	Read feedback comments						
	Ask seller a question						
	Add to Favorite Sellers						
	View seller's other items: Store List						
-	Visit seller's Store: Molehill Group Store						

FIGURE 7.1

Links to your other listings and eBay Store.

Unfortunately, many buyers tend to overlook these links. For this reason, you might want to emphasize your other auctions by including other, more prominent links in your item listings.

When you want to link to your active listings, insert the following HTML code in your item description:

```
<a href="http://cgi6.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?

ViewSellersOtherItems&userid=USERID&include=O&since=-

1&sort=3&rows=50&sspageName=DB:OtherItems"

target=_blank>

Check out my other items!

</a>
```

Naturally, you should replace USERID with your own eBay user ID. You can also replace the Check out my other items! text with any text of your choosing.

To add a link to your eBay Store to your listings, insert the following HTML code into your item description:

```
<a href="http://stores.ebay.com/StoreName" target=_blank>
Check out my eBay Store!
</a>
```

Replace StoreName with your eBay Store name. Again, you can replace the tagline with text of your own liking.

Linking from Other Sites to Your eBay Listings

You can also link to your eBay listings or eBay Store from other websites, using the same HTML code just described. You can also add an eBay button, like the one shown in Figure 7.2, to your business or personal web pages. When visitors click this button, they go to your Items for Sale page, which lists all your current auctions.



FIGURE 7.2

Add an eBay button to any web page.

To add this button to a web page, go to the Link Your Site to eBay page, located at pages.ebay.com/services/buyandsell/link-buttons.html. Check the box next to the My Listings on eBay button, enter the URL of the page where you want to display the button, scroll to the bottom of the page, and click the I Agree button. When the next page appears, copy the generated HTML code, and paste it into the code for your web page.

Linking to Your eBay Store

Building a link to your eBay Store is a bit more complicated. Start by going to the HTML Builder page (cgi6.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll? StoreHtmlBuilderHome), shown in Figure 7.3. From there you can build links to individual items, specific Store pages (including your Store's home page), and a Store search page. Click the appropriate link and then follow the instructions to build the link.

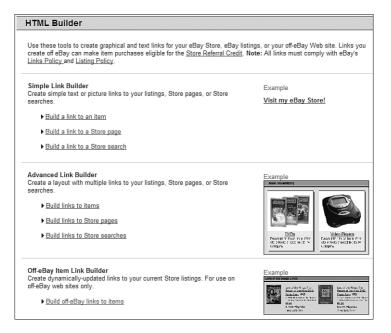
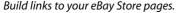


FIGURE 7.3



Trick #63: Set Up Product Cross-Promotions

Cross-promoting is a powerful tool to drive potential customers to the items you have for sale. If you have an eBay Store, you can scroll down to the bottom of any of your eBay listings (Store or auction) and see a cross-promotion box like the one shown in Figure 7.4. This box displays four other items you have for sale, and serves as a powerful advertisement for those items.



A typical eBay cross-promotion box.

This cross-promotion box is available to all eBay Store sellers, and is managed via the Cross-Promotions Tool. You use the Cross-Promotions Tool to determine which items display in which boxes—vary the items based on the types of products you're selling.

To manage your cross-promotions, go to your My eBay Summary page, scroll to the Manage My Store section, and click the Manage My Store link. When the Manage My Store page appears, go to the Marketing Tools section and click the Cross-Promotion Settings link. From there you can turn on or off cross-promotion, determine how you want to cross-promote, choose how your cross-promoted items appear, and so on.

In addition to these settings, you can configure what items display, based on product categories within your Store. To do this, click the Cross-Promotions Defaults link on the Manage My Store page. When the next page appears, click the Create New Rule link to link the display of products in a given category to the type of product viewed by a customer. For example, if you're a bookseller, you might want to display your active mystery books when someone is looking at or bidding on another book in the mystery category.

Trick #64: Encourage Add-On Sales

It costs less to sell additional items to an existing customer than it does to attract a new customer. That is, after you have someone hooked, additional profits come easily—if you can sell more items to that person.

To that end, it's in your best interest to encourage add-on sales. Instead of selling one shirt to a customer, try to sell two shirts instead—or a shirt and tie, or shirt and shoes, or whatever. Adding extra items to an existing sale doesn't cost you any more money in terms of promotion; it's a quick way to boost your profit per sale.

How do you encourage add-on sales? Here are some tricks to employ:

- Make sure to present your customers with a prominent link to your other eBay listings. This should be more than the default link that eBay creates; place a bigger link or clickable button within the body of your listing.
- Make it just as easy for the customer to view the listings in your eBay Store. Then, within your Store, make sure that you offer items that are complementary to the item the customer just purchased. If you're selling shoes, for example, your eBay Store should offer socks and shoe polish; if you're selling DVD players, offer connecting cables in your Store.

tip

Another reason to drive additional sales to your eBay Store is that eBay's Store listing fees are much lower than auction listing fees.

- Offer a combined shipping discount so that when the customer decides to purchase a second item, he doesn't pay double the shipping. Instead, offer some sort of deal, such as "\$1.00 shipping for each additional item purchased."
- Offer a discount on additional items purchased. Maybe you offer a 10% discount on any items added to a purchase, or something similar—anything to encourage customers to add more items to their shopping cart.

However you accomplish it, the goal is to turn a \$20 sale into a \$30 one. The higher dollar value per sale, the higher your profit margin.

Trick #65: Optimize Your Listings for Search

Here's the deal: Fewer than 10% of customers find your listings by browsing. Fully 90% of eBay buyers find items by using eBay's search function. That means you need to optimize your listings so that your items show up when customers are searching for similar items.

There's another reason why you want to optimize your listings for search. You see, your listings show up not only in eBay search results, but also when web users use Google, Yahoo!, and other sites to search the Web. If your listings are heavy with the right keywords, they'll show up in Google and Yahoo! search results—which is free publicity for your items.

For eBay's search results, it's the title you need to focus on. That's because eBay's search function, by default, searches only listing titles. (There's an

advanced option to search the listing description, but not all buyers use it.) So, you'll need to cram as many relevant keywords into the listing title as you can.

Web search engines, on the other hand, search your entire listing—title *and* description. So, you have more to work with there. How do you optimize your listings for web search engines? Here are a few tricks:

- **Include appropriate keywords**—What goes for the listing title is also important for the item description. You want to make sure that your item description contains the keywords that customers might use to search for your item. If you're selling a drum set, for example, make sure that your description includes words such as *drums, drumset percussion, cymbals, snare,* and the like. Try to think through how *you* would search for this item, and work those keywords into your content.
- **Create a clear organization and hierarchy**—The crawler programs used by Google and Yahoo! can find more content on a web page if that content is in a clear hierarchical organization. You want to think of your item description as a mini-outline. The most important information should be in major headings, with lesser information in subheadings beneath the major headings. One way to do this is via standard HTML heading tags, or just normal first-, second-, and third-level headings within your listing.
- **Put the most important information first**—Think about hierarchy and think about keywords, and then think about how these two concepts work together. That's right, you want to place the most important keywords higher up on your page. Search crawlers crawl only so far, and you don't want them to give up before key information is found. In addition, search engine page rank is partially determined by content; the more important the content looks to be on a page (as determined by placement on the page), the higher the page rank will be.
- Make the most important information look important—Many search engines look to highlighted text to determine what's important on a page. It follows, then, that you should make an effort to format keywords in your description as bold or italic.
- Use text instead of or in addition to images—Here's something you might not think about. At present, search engines parse only text content; they can't figure out what a picture or graphic is about unless you describe in the text. So, if you use graphic buttons or banners (instead of plain text) to convey important information, the

search engine simply won't see it. You need to put every piece of important information somewhere in the text of the page—even if it's duplicated in a banner or graphic.

tip

If you do use images in your description (and you should), make sure that you use the <ALT> tag for each image, and assign meaningful keywords to the image via this tag. Search engines will read the <ALT> tag text; they can't figure out what an image is without it.

Trick #66: Create an Email Mailing List

Savvy sellers keep good records of all their past auctions—and past buyers. Then you can create a list of buyers who want to be contacted when you have similar merchandise for sale. (Make this an opt-in list; you don't want to spam anyone.) When you have new items for sale, send out emails to interested customers, and watch the orders arrive!

The easiest way to create an email mailing list is through eBay. If you run an eBay Store, eBay offers free email marketing; it's a nice perk, and it really works. eBay lets you add a Sign Up for Store Newsletter link to all your listings, and then create up to five different mailing lists to target different types of customers or product categories. You can even use eBay's email marketing tools to measure the success of your email newsletters, which makes it easier to fine-tune your promotions in the future.

All eBay Store owners can send a total of 5,000 free emails a month to subscribers. If you want to send more than this, you'll pay an additional penny per email for each message above the base 5,000.

Creating an Email Mailing List

To create a new email mailing list, follow these instructions:

- 1. Go to My eBay and click the Marketing Tools link.
- **2.** When the Marketing Tools: Summary page appears, click the Email Marketing link in the Store Marketing section.
- 3. When the Email Marketing: Summary page appears, as shown in Figure 7.5, click the Create Mailing List button.

Email Marketing: Sun Promote your Store by creating co marketing techniques. Or, you ca Create Email	ompelling emails and				-	more about <u>ema</u> : this month: 500
Pending Emails (0 Pending Er	nails)					View al
Subject	Status	Scheduled Send	Date	Fre	quency	Action
Sent Emails (0 Sent Emails)						<u>View al</u>
Subject	Sent	Opened	Date Sen	ŧ	Charge	Action
Mailing Lists (2 Mailing Lists)						View al
Mailing List				Total S	ubscribers	Action
General Interest					<u>6</u>	Edit 🚩
Used DVDs					0	Edit 🚩
All Mailing Lists					<u>6</u>	
Create Mailing List						

The Email Marketing: Summary page.

4. When the next page appears, enter a name for this mailing list, and then click the Save button.

That's it; your mailing list now appears on the Email Marketing: Summary page.

Adding Subscribers

You can't manually add subscribers to your mailing lists. Subscribers have to opt in of their own accord, which they do from your item listings and eBay Store pages. Whenever users add you to their favorite sellers list, they have the option of subscribing to your email newsletter. In addition, they can sign up when they visit your eBay Store by clicking the Sign Up for Store Newsletter link at the top of the page.

Once someone has subscribed to your newsletter, they appear in the subscriber list at the bottom of the Email Marketing: Summary page. You can manage the list of subscribers by clicking the Email Marketing Subscriber Lists link; the resulting page lets you block subscribers from receiving emails.

Sending Emails

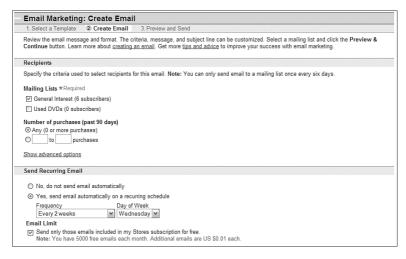
To create an email newsletter and send it to your subscriber list, follow these steps:

- 1. Go to My eBay and click the Marketing Tools link.
- 2. When the Marketing Tools: Summary page appears, click the Email Marketing link in the Store Marketing section.
- 3. When the Email Marketing: Summary page appears, click the Create Email button.
- **4.** When the Select a Template page appears, as shown in Figure 7.6, pull down the Type of Email list and select what type of newsletter you want to send.

Select a Template 2. Create Email 3	Preview and Send						
egin building an email with one of our templates mplates can be customized on the next page. L arketing.							
pe of Email							
pe of Email							
ems On Sale Email	M						
iyout							
 Show items in Showcase and Gallery Show items in Showcase view Show items in Gallery view 							
Preview in your Store colors	Preview in your Store colors	Preview in your Store colors					

Selecting a template for your email newsletter.

- **5.** Still on the Select a Template page, select a template for your email newsletter, and then click the Continue button.
- 6. When the Create Email page appears, as shown in Figure 7.7, enter the necessary information: which mailing list(s) you're sending to, whether to send emails on an automatic schedule, whether to display your Store header, the subject of the newsletter, the message of the newsletter, which items you want to showcase or list, and whether to display your feedback. When finished, click the Preview & Continue button.



Creating your email newsletter.

7. The next page displays a preview of your newsletter, as shown in Figure 7.8. If you need to edit anything, click the Edit Email button. If you like what you see, click the Send Email button to send the email to your selected recipients.

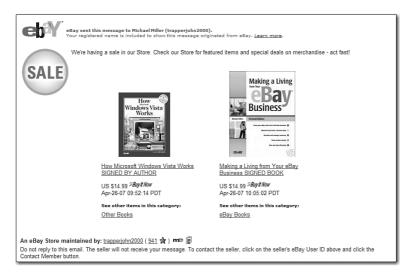


FIGURE 7.8

Your email newsletter, ready to send.

Trick #67: Gain Exposure by Writing Reviews and Guides

Here's an interesting way to promote your business and your listings. You can use eBay's Reviews and Guides to establish yourself as an expert in your field, and thus gain more exposure for your business.

You might not be familiar with the Guides and Reviews features; they're both relatively new. eBay Reviews are product reviews, written by eBay members; you can find product reviews for CDs, home audio receivers, golf clubs, and so on. Guides are more detailed how-tos that present useful information and buying advice; these are available for a number of different topics, and include both buying guides and more informational guides (Techniques for Drumset Recording, How to Plan the Perfect Vacation, and so on).

Anyone can write a Review or Guide—including you. And when users read your Reviews and Guides, they're likely to click through to your item listings or eBay Store.

Writing a Product Review

Writing a product review is quite easy. You don't have to bother supplying product details, such as model number, or dimensions, or whatever; all you have to supply is your opinion. Just follow these steps:

1. Go to the main Reviews & Guides page (reviews.ebay.com), shown in Figure 7.9.

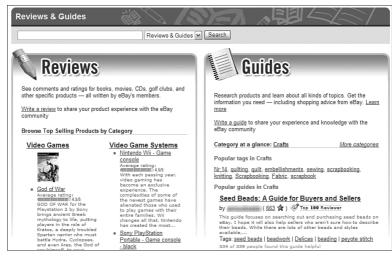


FIGURE 7.9

eBay's Reviews and Guides.

- **2.** Use the search box at the top of the page to search for the particular product you want to review.
- **3.** When the list of matching products appears, click the link for that product's review page.
- **4.** When the product review page appears, select the Reviews tab and then scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the Write a Review or Be the First to Review It link.
- 5. When the Write a Review page appears, as shown in Figure 7.10, enter a title for your review. The title can be up to 55 characters in length.

Reviews & Guides					
Write a Review					
Casino Royale (2007, DVD)					
Tell us about this product and share your opinion with others. This is your review of the product and not a review of any sel you this product. If you need more information, see our <u>writing guidelines</u> .	ler that might have sold				
Review title	Important review tips				
55 characters remaining.	Things to consider: • Be descriptive.				
Rating	Describe why you feel a certain way. Feel free to mention how this product rates in comparison to others. Write clearly. Use proper punctuation, spelling, and grammar.				
What do you like, love, or dialike about it? Why did you decide to buy it? <u>See example</u> .	Things to avoid: • Off-topic comments. Inappropriate remarks or profanity. • Contact information such as your phone number, address, etc. Links outside of eBay or HTML.				
3500 characters remaining.	eBay reserves the right to remove any review that doesn't comply with				

Writing your own product review.

- **6.** Give the product a rating, from 1 to 5 (5 being excellent; 1 being poor).
- 7. Type your full review into the Review box. The review can be up to 3,500 characters long.
- 8. When you're done with your review, click the Submit Review button.

That's it; your review will now be listed among the other reviews for that particular product.

Creating a Guide

The process for writing a Guide is similar to writing a Review, although here it really helps if you're an expert or otherwise uniquely experienced with the topic at hand—that is, if you know enough to write a useful Guide. (Ideally, of course, you will be an expert in what you're selling.) Follow these steps:

- 1. Go to the main Reviews & Guides page (reviews.ebay.com).
- 2. Click the Write a Guide link.
- 3. When the Write a Guide page appears, as shown in Figure 7.11, enter a title for your Guide. The title can be up to 55 characters in length.

Reviews & Guides	
Write a Guide	
Share your thoughts and ideas with people all over the world on almost any topic. Give advice on everything fi to plan a wedding. Find out more about <u>creating a guide</u> .	om how to buy a digital camera to how
Guide title	Important guide tips
55 characters remaining. Guide Text: Normal M I 臣至君 注目信律。物 Add: <u>Picture Link</u>	 Things to consider Write a short introduction explaining the purpose of your guide Your first 200 characters will appear when people search for your topic. Insert pictures or links to almost any eBay page. Things to avoid Copying and pasting from other documents. Inapropriate comments and profanity. Links outside of eBay. Personal information such as your email, phone number, etc. eBay reserves the right to remove any guide that doesn't comply with our policy.
Give some thought to your topic and how best to present your information. <u>See example</u> . Enter Tags Tags help you and others find similar guides. For example, if you write a dog accessories guide, your tags minit be leash dog, dog hone, collar.	

FIGURE 7.11

Creating a new Guide.

4. Type the text for your Guide into the Guide box. Remember that the first 200 characters of your Guide will be all that appears when people search for Guides by topic.

tip

Use the formatting controls at the top of the Guide box to make your Guide more readable and visually appealing. You can also use these controls to add pictures and links to your Guide. Click the Preview button at the bottom of the page to see how your formatted Guide looks.

- 5. Enter up to five "tags" that other members can use as keywords to search for your Guide.
- 6. When you're done with your Guide, click the Save and Continue button.

Fairly easy, although I recommend composing and editing your guide offline (in Microsoft Word, perhaps), and then cutting and pasting the completed text into the Guide box. This way you can take your time writing and researching, and just paste the final result into the eBay page.

Trick #68: Use Google AdWords

There's nothing to stop you from advertising your eBay listings on other websites outside of eBay. Perhaps the best way to do this is with a web placement service, such as Google AdWords. The AdWords program lets you "buy" keywords, and then display a "sponsored link" on the search results pages for that keyword. For example, if you buy the word *Hummel*, your sponsored link will appear on the results page anytime a Google user searches for the word *Hummel*. (Figure 7.12 shows some typical sponsored links.)

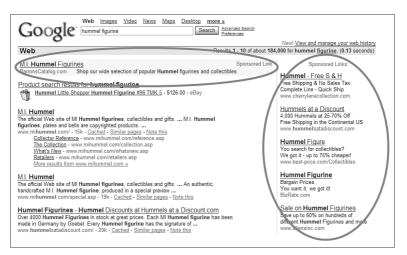


FIGURE 7.12

Sponsored links on a Google search results page—at the top and on the side.

In addition to the sponsored links on its own website, the AdWords program also places ads on third-party websites that feature similar content. (Figure 7.13 shows a typical AdWords ad.) This ensures that your advertising reaches qualified consumers who are interested in what you're offering; you're not blanketing the market blind, you're targeting specific consumers.



FIGURE 7.13

A typical Google AdWords website ad.

You can purchase ads for your eBay Store or for individual item listings. To do so, you first have to sign up for the AdWords program, which you do at adwords.google.com.

Determining Your Costs-And Choosing a Payment Option

Advertising with Google AdWords isn't like a traditional advertising buy; there are no contracts and deadlines and such. You pay a one-time \$5.00 activation fee, and then are charged either on a cost-per-click (CPC) or cost-per-thousand-impressions (CPM) basis. (You can choose either payment method.) You control your costs by specifying how much you're willing to pay (per click or per impression) and by setting a daily spending budget. Google will never exceed the costs you specify.

How much does AdWords cost? It's your choice. If you go with the costper-click method, you can choose a maximum CPC click price from \$0.01 to \$100. If you go with the CPM method, there is a minimum cost of \$0.25 per 1,000 impressions. Your daily budget can be as low as a penny, up to whatever you're willing to pay.

If you go the CPC route, Google uses AdWords Discounter technology to match the price you pay with the price offered by competing advertisers for a given keyword. The AdWords Discounter automatically monitors your competition and lowers your CPC to one cent above what they're willing to pay. You can opt to prepay your advertising costs or to pay after your ads start running. With this last option, Google charges you after 30 days or when you reach your initial credit limit of \$50, whichever comes first. Google accepts payment via credit card, debit card, direct debit, or bank transfer.

Creating an AdWords Ad

It's surprisingly easy to create and activate an AdWords ad. You need to determine which keywords you want to buy upfront, of course, but from there it's a simple matter of filling in the appropriate web forms. Here's how it works:

- 1. From the Google AdWords home page (adwords.google.com), click the Start Now button.
- 2. When the next page appears, as shown in Figure 7.14, choose either the Starter Edition or Standard Edition option. (If this is your first time listing, I recommend going the Starter Edition route—which is what I'll discuss throughout the rest of these numbered steps.) Also check the I Have a Webpage option, and then click Continue.

Google [™] Lt's All About Results™
Pick the solution that's right for you
O Starter Edition Advertise a single product or service with simplified options. Recommended for those who are new to Internet advertising. Move up to the Standard Edition at any time. <u>Sign-up demo</u>
O I have a webpage.
I don't have a webpage. Help me create one.
 Standard Edition Use our full range of AdWords features and functionality: advanced bidding options, multiple campaigns, conversion tracking, and more. Recommended for experienced Internet advertisers and medium- or large-sized businesses.* Sign-up demo
* A website is required to sign up. Don't have one? Choose Starter Edition.
Not sure? <u>Compare options in greater detail</u> .
Continue »

FIGURE 7.14

Choosing either the Starter Edition or Standard Edition solutions.

- 3. When the next page appears, enter your location and language.
- **4.** Scroll to the Write Your Ad section, shown in Figure 7.15, and enter the following information: the URL of the website you want to add to

link to, your ad's title (25 characters max), and two lines of text (35 characters max each).

What site will your ad link to? Users who click your ad will be sent t	o this website.	
http:// 👻		
Example: http://www.AdWordsExample.c	om/products/item.htm	
What will your ad say?		
You can write your own ad, or start wit		
The five keys to powerful ads Editoria	I Guidelines	
I'll write my ad	Give me ideas	
	Olde me ideas	
All text ads contain a title, two lines of	of descriptive text, and a display URL. Ma	ake sure to include information
that will help customers understand y	our business.	
that will help customers understand y	rour business.	
	rour business.	
that will help customers understand y	our business.	
that will help customers understand y	our business.	
that will help customers understand y	our business.	
that will help customers understand y		
that will help customers understand y		max
that will help customers understand y		max 35 max
that will help customers understand y	< Enter headline here > 25	

FIGURE 7.15

Entering information about your ad.

5. Scroll to the Choose Keywords section, shown in Figure 7.16, and enter up to 20 keywords that you want your ad linked to. (Enter one keyword or phrase per line; a "keyword" can actually be a multiple-word phrase.)

3. Choose keywords 🕐							
Who will see your ad? When people search Google for the keywords you choose here, your ad can show. Keywords must be directly related to your ad. (Don't enter 'real estate' when you're selling cars.) Enter 20 or fewer keywords for best results. Top secret keyword tips							
Enter as many specific words or phrases as you like, one per line:	Want more? Enter any word to see related keywords: Search Advanced option: match types						

FIGURE 7.16

Entering the keywords you want to purchase.

- **6.** Scroll to the Choose Your Currency section and enter the currency you'll be paying in.
- 7. Scroll to the Set Your Budget section and select your monthly AdWords budget—\$50, \$100, \$250, or a custom amount.
- **8.** If you want to, scroll to the Future Contact section to sign up to receive Google promotional materials.
- **9.** When you finish entering information on this page, click the Continue button.
- **10.** Google now prompts you to sign in to your Google account or to create a new AdWords-specific account. Follow the onscreen instructions to proceed.
- **11.** Google will now email you with instructions on how to set up billing information for your account. Follow the instructions in this email to activate your account and launch your ads.

If you chose a Standard Edition campaign, you have a few more options to consider. In contrast to the Starter Edition, the Standard Edition lets you:

- Create multiple ads (instead of the Starter Edition's single ad)
- Choose from a variety of pricing options, including keyword-specific bidding, content bidding, ad position preference, and so on
- Target specific websites for ad placement
- Utilize a variety of advanced planning and reporting tools, including the AdWords traffic estimator, conversion tracking, and a variety of sophisticated statistics and reports

As I said earlier, the Starter Edition is probably the best way for most eBay sellers to get started. After you have a few ad campaigns under your belt, you can graduate to the advanced options available with the Standard Edition.

Monitoring Your Ads' Performance

When your ad campaign is underway, you can monitor performance from the main AdWords page. After signing in to this page, select the My Ad Campaign tab, shown in Figure 7.17. You can view the performance of each keyword you selected, in terms of impressions, clicks, and total cost to-date.

				Starter Edition 🦸
How-to books by popular author Computers, music, eBay, and more! Language		e <u>Pause</u> of Your ads are showing as the (You won't see your ad on <u>Why not?</u>)		
Statistics for All time - May 11, 2006 to Apr 2	24, 2007 change		Key	words Graphs
+ Add more keywords Customize columns				
Keyword [?] Search terms that trigger your ads		Impressions [?] Times your ad has shown	<u>Clicks</u> ▼ [?] Visits to your website	Total Cost Charges in this period
books	Delete	1,787	1	\$0.38
Bay	Delete	2,481	1	\$1.00
Vichael Miller	Delete	15	0	
nusic	Delete	455	0	
Computers	Delete	44	0	
drums	Delete	24	0	
ome theater	Delete	7	0	
music theory	Delete	4	0	
composition	Delete	3	0	
drumming	Delete	3	0	-

Viewing the performance of your ad campaign.

This page also lets you change the parameters of your campaign. You can add more keywords (by clicking the Add More Keywords link) or delete existing keywords (by clicking the Delete link next to an individual keyword). You can also upgrade to the Standard Edition option at any time by clicking the Graduate to Standard Edition link.

If you buy the right keywords, you should be able to drive significant traffic to your eBay Store or individual listings. That said, the cost of this advertising is such that you probably want to use it only with higherpriced items—or to advertise entire categories within your Store.

Trick #69: Feed Your Store Listings to Google Product Search

Google Product Search (formerly known as Froogle) is Google's search engine for online shopping. Shoppers can use Google Product Search (www.google.com/products), shown in Figure 7.18, to find specific items online and to compare prices between different retailers.

If you're an eBay Store seller, you want your items to appear in Google Product Search results. This way anyone searching Google Product Search for your type of item will see your listing, and be able to link to eBay to make a bid or purchase.

Google Product Search								
Web Images Video News Maps Desktop more n Images Video News Maps Desktop more n Images Search Search Preferences Preferences Search for stuff to buy. Search News News News								
red hat linux	A few of th	sensa pen	und with Google Product	da vinci code				
forceps	baby car seat	kids beds	motorcycle helmet	pearl earrings				
mobiles	party supplies	chlorine	printer cable	<u>coleman grill</u>				
cd burner	air cleaner	pottery wheel	file cabinets	fountains				
<u>desk lamp</u>								
Google Home - Information for Sellers - Help ©2007 Google								

Google Product Search—a search engine for online shoppers.

How do you list your items with Google Product Search? You could wait for Google's crawler program to find all the items in your store and feed that information to the Google Product Search database, but that's a hitor-miss proposition. (This method also takes too long.) A better approach is to manually submit your product listings to Google.

To do this, go to My eBay, click the Marketing Tools link, then click the Listing Feeds link. This displays the Listing Feeds page; check the option to Make a File of Your Store Inventory Listings Available.

You upload this file to Google by going to the Google Base page (base.google.com) and clicking the Bulk Upload link. You'll need to select an item type for your product upload, register the upload with Google, and then perform the upload.

The items you upload are submitted both to Google Product Search and to Google Base, which is Google's version of online classified ads. And the best thing is that both submissions are totally free!

Trick #70: Promote Your eBay Listings in the Real World

Finally, let's not neglect all the traditional means of advertising available offline, in the real world. Although these methods are probably better suited for advertising an eBay Store (or individual categories within your Store), they can be low-cost ways to drive more business online.

The key to advertising in the real world is to use your eBay Store URL. Take that URL and plaster it everywhere:

- On business cards
- On letterhead
- In flyers you post locally
- On promotional materials you hand out to customers and colleagues—hats, pens, notepads, and the like
- In classified advertisements in your local newspaper
- In small display ads in your local newspaper
- In classified or display ads in hobbyist and trade magazines and periodicals
- On the packing slips you send out with the items you sell
- If you have a bricks-and-mortar location, on your store invoices and shopping bags

The key is to put that URL *everywhere* you can. The more people who see the URL, the more people who go online to check out your eBay Store. And, as you know, the more Store visitors you have, the more sales you'll make!

tip

Don't forget non-eBay online advertising. You can include your eBay Store URL in all your personal and business email messages (as part of your signature), in newsgroup and forum postings, in blog postings, and so forth.

eBAY BUSINESS PROFILE

Profile: Balkowitsch Enterprises, Inc.

Business Profile

Business name: Balkowitsch Enterprises, Inc. eBay ID: balkowitsch eBay Store: stores.ebay.com/Balkowitsch-Enterprises-Inc Website: www.balkowtisch.com Type of business: Medical, health, wellness, fitness, and beauty items Owner: Shane Balkowitsch Location: Bismarck, North Dakota

Would you believe that one of the largest businesses on eBay is located in Bismarck, North Dakota? Or that it started by listing three items normally sold from a booth at a local antique mall? Or that it's grown from \$65 in sales its first month to more than \$500,000 in sales a month today—fewer than 10 years later? Or that just six employees handle all those sales?

It's true. Balkowitsch Enterprises started small, like most eBay sellers, but has grown into one of eBay's true superstars—a Titanium PowerSeller profiled in *Time, Reader's Digest*, and other national magazines.

A Rags to Riches Story

Balkowitsch Enterprises started as Sharon's Collectibles, an antiques and collectibles business run by Sharon Balkowitsch. The business was a parttime one; Sharon's day job with the Federal Bureau of Reclamation paid the bills.

Sharon's Collectibles was run from a $10' \times 10'$ booth Sharon rented at a local antique mall. It was a very small business in a very small town (Bismarck, ND; population 55,000). There were few buyers for Sharon's wares, which kept her selling prices low. In her biggest month at the antique mall, she sold just 15 items, for a total of \$300.

Sharon was looking for a way to increase her sales, and heard about this new online auction site called eBay. She asked her son Shane if he could help her put some items on eBay.

Shane had a business degree, was in the process of getting a nursing degree, and had worked in the computer field. His computer background proved useful, and he helped his mother list three items on eBay.



Shane and Sharon Balkowitsch.

That was November 11th, 1998. The three items Shane listed sold within 24 hours, and the Balkowitsches were hooked. Shane started listing more of Sharon's items, and in their first year on eBay, managed to sell more than 2,000 items.

The business kept growing from there. Within a year and a half, the Balkowitsches reached PowerSeller status and were recognized as one of the most successful small businesses in the upper Midwest. Their eBay business (then named Sharonscollectables) was named Super PowerSeller of the Month in April 2002, with more than 12,000 items sold to that date. They reached Platinum PowerSeller status in September 2003, averaging more than \$25,000 in sales a month.

Today, Sharon's Collectibles is Balkowitsch Enterprises. The business has morphed from selling antiques and collectibles to selling medical and health-related items. (That's Shane's nursing background showing.) Shane is now running the business; Sharon is partially retired, and works just part-time.

How to Grow a Business

From its humble beginnings, Balkowitsch Enterprises has become a very big small business. The business hit \$1 million in sales in 2004, doubled that to \$2.2 million in 2005, and doubled again to \$5 million in 2006; it's on track to hit \$6 million in sales in 2007. That's remarkable growth for any business, let alone an eBay business.

How did Shane and Sharon achieve this level of growth? By "focusing on sales and creating the systems to handle the volume we currently do. We plan every day for the future and we are always looking for new exciting and quality products to sell."

When you're moving \$500,000 worth of merchandise every month, efficient merchandise management is important. Balkowitsch Enterprises represents more than 165 different brands, and the company's sales growth has been fueled by adding new products to its mix. "Finding new product is the key," Shane says, "and not only finding product that sells, but finding product that has profit in it."

Fortunately, as the business has grown, Shane has found suppliers eager to work with him: "As we have been become more of a name in the market place, you would be surprised at how many companies come to us now to ask us to sell and promote their products."

Rapid growth required an investment in systems to manage that growth. Shane notes that before he went into nursing, he was an MIS director and credit manager for a microfilm company in California for nearly 20 years. "This experience has given me the knowledge to develop systems and grow the company," he says.

Growing a business also requires a commitment on the part of its principles. Here's how Shane tells the story:

"I do not want you to think this was part of some master plan of mine, that I had any idea that we would take \$50 in inventory that Sharon found at a garage sale and turn it into what we are today. I would be totally dishonest if I told you I once thought that.

"But at one point in the past eight years, I did identify that we could do much better. What we had to do is quit our jobs, and a charge nurse job here in Bismarck is a very good job, pays about \$40,000 a year, which is a nice salary. But we decided to build the building, quit our day jobs, and focus full-time on what we needed to do to become independent.

"That gamble has paid off in spades. The company has grown three times in the past two years and the future is very bright. We have our struggles, but so far we have been able to adapt, change, and work our way through any problems. My family and I have won the lottery with this company."

Managing the Business

Just because Balkowitsch Enterprises is doing big business doesn't mean that Shane has it easy. He puts in long hours to make sure that everything runs smoothly—70 hours a week on average.

Of course, Shane isn't the company's only employee. Shane's two brothers, Chad and Loren, work full-time in the business; his sister-in-law works part-time; they have a full-time invoicer/receptionist; and Sharon still works part-time in the business. That's \$5 million in annual sales, managed by three full-time and three part-time employees—a very efficient operation.

Shane uses eBay's selling tools to manage his listings. He uses an outside accountant, although most of the day-to-day work (invoicing, shipping, payroll, and the like) is handled with QuickBooks Enterprise Solutions software. The company's inventory is also managed via QuickBooks. Everything is stored in the 5,400–square foot facility the business built several years ago.



The Balkowitsch office and warehouse facility.

Selling Strategies

eBay isn't Shane's sole selling venue. In addition to traditional eBay listings, Balkowitsch Enterprises also runs an eBay store, has its own e-commerce website (www.balkowitsch.com), and lists some items on Amazon.com. As Shane puts it, "We do not want to be one-dimensional and only rely on eBay."

		Maintainee We are very sold over 10 ourselves in	d by: <u>balkowits</u> proud members 00,000 items onl customer servio	nterpris ch (29194 ∲) s of the eBay TT ine. We deal ex ce. We also acc ts over the phon	ANIUM Power mi ANIUM Pow clusively in h ept Visa, Ma	erSellers pro	
Store Search	980 items foun	d in All Categories	View:	All Items Aucti	on only I Buy	/ It Now only	I On Sale only
Store Search	List View					Price: high	
	Picture	e <u>hide</u> Item Title			Price -	Bids	Time Left
 ✓ in titles & descriptions Search Store Categories Store home 	-	New 90 Gallon La Power Cleaner Industrial Self Con SHIPPING!		US	\$12,495.00	<i>≔BuyIt Now</i>	4d 20h 12m
Health Related (143) Medical Related (292) Stethoscopes (33) Flagpoles (14) Autoclaves /		New 39 Gallon La Power Cleaner Industrial Self Con SHIPPING	•		\$ \$8,475.00	<i>≔Buy It Now</i>	4d 20h 12m
Sterilizers (11) Anatomical Models (48) eBay Help / Success (6)	- 🐖	L&R LE36 SWEE Cleaning System FREE Shipping, Cle Basket		119	\$ \$6,999.00	=Buy It Now	
Category 2 (3) Other Items (430)		NEW Namiki Rab Fountain Pen	bit In Moonlight	Emperor US	\$ \$4,999.99	=Buy It Now	
Display = <u>Gallery view</u> = <u>View ending times</u> (Ends PDT)		NEW 3B Scientific Figure 45-part Brand New In Box, SHIPPING		US	\$ \$4,999.00	<i>≔Buy It Now</i>	
Store Pages = Store Policies = About the Seller		New Burton Xenal Surgery Headlamy Warranty, Free Shi Distributor	2		\$ \$4,999.00	<i>≔BuyIt Now</i>	

The eBay Store for Balkowitsch Enterprises.



The company's e-commerce website.

As to eBay, Shane has approximately 1,000 listings going at any given time. He runs all items as fixed-price Buy It Now listings. Here's why:

"When you are selling new items, you cannot sell things for less than cost, so using Buy It Now is the only way to go. Waiting around for seven days for an item to sell, then for the buyer to come way under cost is a waste of our time and their time. With Buy It Now I can sell 10 of the same item in the same day, which is not the case with the auction format."

Keys to Success

What has made Balkowitsch Enterprises so successful? Shane responds that it's important to "Be honest, deliver the product that is mentioned, and do your best with customer service."

He has this advice for new sellers:

"Start small, do your research, do not get yourself into a large amount of product that you will end up giving away down the road. It is not an easy proposition and we have evolved over eight years to get where we are. Our knowledge and trade secrets would be priceless."

More specifically, Shane recommends that sellers "always let the buyer know who you are—phone number, address, contact information. The biggest pitfall with eBay is that eBay has allowed people to be anonymous, which is the main reason they have so much fraud. If everyone had to tell everyone who they were, eBay would be much better for it."

Shane also notes that selling on eBay has gotten harder over time. "Profit margins are very low on some items because there are so many sellers trying to get a piece of the pie. Many of these sellers have no business sense and they will give items away and profits are not something that they worry about. It is a big problem."

That said, Shane has been able to overcome these and other obstacles to create a large and profitable online business. Shane says he was driven by "a determined willpower to never work for anyone else again. My entire family, including my children, wife, brothers, mother, and extended family all rely solely on our company and what we are able to do."

Shane and Sharon have succeeded in building a business that can more than support their family. Balkowitsch Enterprises is a true American success story, and it all started with three little eBay listings.