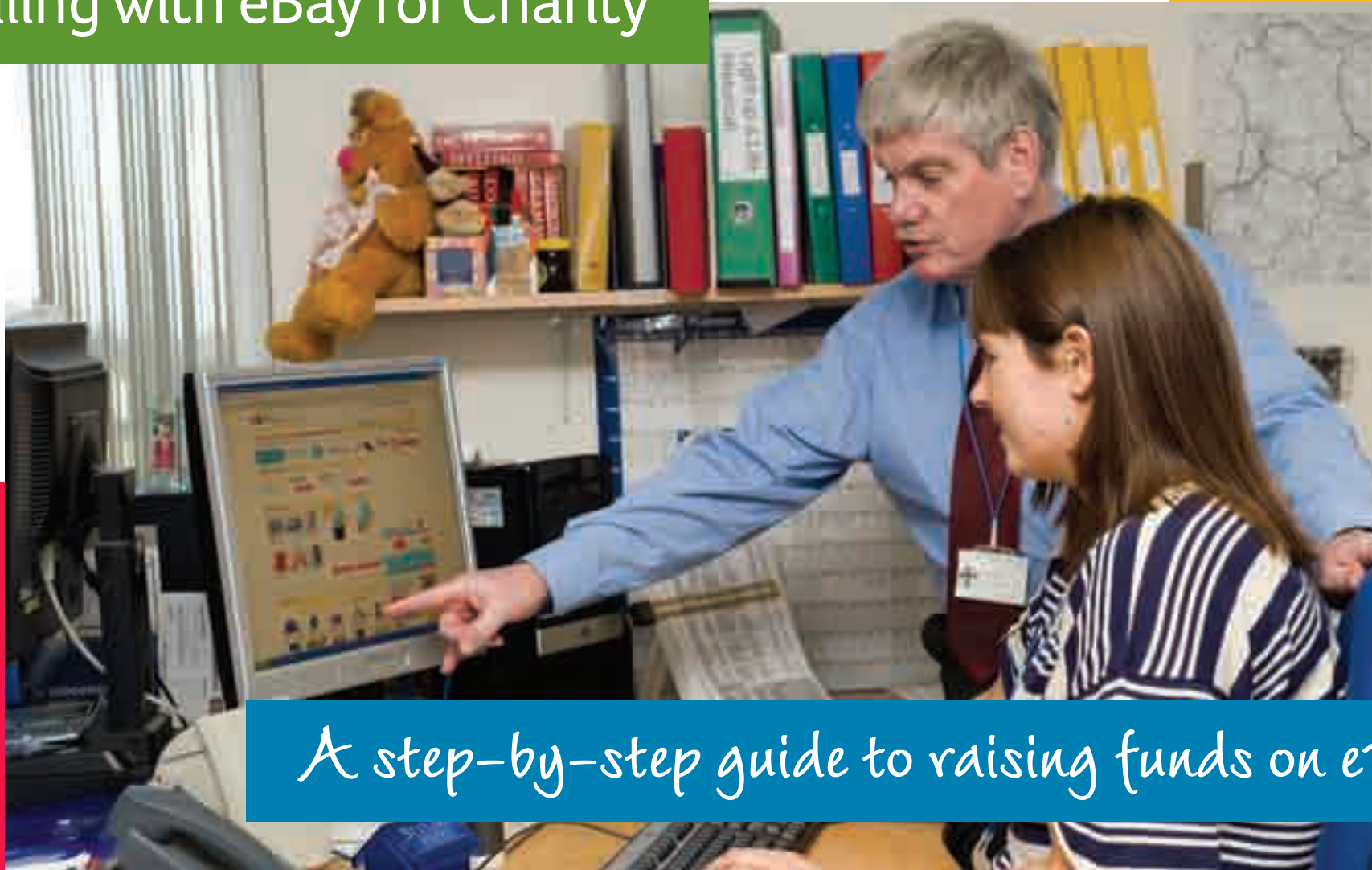


Selling with eBay for Charity



A step-by-step guide to raising funds on eBay

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Introduction from Help the Hospices

With over 1,400 hospice shops across the UK, generating a profit of £33.1 million for their hospices¹, it is clear that retail operations play a vital role for many hospices. Moreover, hospice shops not only generate this much needed source of income but they are also the ‘face’ of the hospice on countless high streets in communities across the UK.

So when MissionFish, eBay’s partner charity, approached Help the Hospices to explore how we might support hospice retail operations, we were delighted to be able to work together.

Following the success of the Boots retail toolkit produced in 2009, and after consultation with the Hospice Retail Steering Group and the team at MissionFish, it was felt that hospices may benefit from a guide specifically designed to help introduce them to selling items through eBay for Charity.

Many hospices across the UK are already benefiting from selling on eBay, as it does not have the overheads of a shop on the high street and is relatively simple to use – often hospices have volunteers who assist and run the eBay operation.

We are extremely grateful to Nick Aldridge, chief executive officer, and Ria Fleming, marketing manager, at MissionFish, who have shared their knowledge and put so much time and energy into creating what we hope will be an enormously useful resource for people working in hospice retail operations. We would also like to thank Lynwen Truesdale at St Giles Hospice, Steve Rose at the Peace Hospice, Lesley Blencowe at Iain Rennie Hospice at Home, Jane Williams at Sense Trading, Kevin Souter at The Martlets Hospice and Kate Ward at CLIC Sargent for contributing to this guide. Finally, thanks to the members of the Hospice Retail Steering Group, who have advised and guided us along the way and whose input to the project has been so valuable.

Mike Palfreman, Director of Fundraising

¹ Help the Hospices. Hospice accounts – Analysis of the accounts of UK independent voluntary hospices 2005-2008. London: Help the Hospices, 2009.

Introduction from eBay

The recent recession has created a challenging environment for charity shops, with many experiencing a dramatic fall in donated goods, mirroring falls in cash donations. At the same time, the demand for charities' services is higher than ever, making them understandably reluctant to trim delivery budgets.

In this context, charity shops and traders are under pressure to raise the most they can from every single item. Some, such as Sue Ryder Care and indeed many hospices, have innovated by claiming gift aid on the sales of donated goods. Others are experimenting with upmarket charity 'boutiques' in affluent areas.

A growing number of charities now recognise online trading as a significant opportunity. In November 2009, UK shoppers spent £5.3 billion online, 11% up on the previous year². Consumers are rapidly embracing the convenience, choice, and comparability that online shopping brings. While eager to target these consumers, many charity shops are held back by a lack of infrastructure, the stock-control challenges posed by unique and one-off donated items, and the expense and difficulty of generating significant buyer traffic to their websites.

eBay for Charity gives charity shops a way to tackle these issues, placing e-commerce at the heart of their trading strategies. Through eBay for Charity, charities can sell donated items on ebay.co.uk to raise unrestricted funds, benefiting from an online marketplace of almost 18 million active users. eBay for Charity fee credits mean the costs of trading on eBay are virtually zero for charities, and charities' items receive extra promotion and visibility on the site.

Since eBay for Charity launched in 2006, more than 4,000 charities have registered to benefit, raising more than £15 million in unrestricted funding. The leading charity shops are turning over in excess of £100,000 per annum, with many hospices experiencing rapid growth.

We hope this guide will encourage and enable many more charities – and their beneficiaries – to benefit from the significant opportunities presented by a dynamic and exciting marketplace. To get started, visit MissionFish at www.missionfish.org.uk

Carrie Bienkowski, Head of Charity and Sustainability, eBay (Europe)

Nick Aldridge, CEO, MissionFish

1. Why use eBay for Charity?

Quite simply, eBay for Charity can help you reach more customers, sell more items and generate more income for your charity.

eBay.co.uk is the UK's number one e-commerce site, with 17.7 million unique visitors per month, 21 million UK customers and 17 million live listings. There are now more than 123,000 online businesses operating on ebay.co.uk, selling everything from shoes to vehicle parts.

By using eBay, you should be able to:

- reach a bigger customer base than a high-street shop
- find the right buyers for unusual or specialist items
- raise funds and awareness for your charity by trading in a busy marketplace
- save money on overheads – eBay will credit back your fees, and you do not need round the clock staffing.



Advantages and benefits

Charities receive advantages and benefits through eBay for Charity, which makes trading on eBay even more effective for you.

Charities do not pay insertion fees or final value fees on items that sell. eBay will credit back your fees for every item you sell through eBay for Charity.

Also, charity listings get extra promotion on eBay and are marked with the eBay for Charity ribbon. This means they enjoy more interest, more bids and higher selling prices than other items on eBay.



Which charities can benefit?

The types of charities that can register with MissionFish and benefit from eBay for Charity include:

- charities registered with the Charity Commission
- exempted and excepted organisations
- charities registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)
- subordinates and local branches of large charities
- schools, hospices and small charities (under £5,000 in revenue) that are registered with HM Revenue & Customs.

What profit margins are achievable?

The most successful eBay for Charity operations are turning over more than £100,000 a year. They can achieve profit margins of 70% to 80% on their sales, compared with a typical 20% to 30% margin for physical shops. They also find that some items can achieve far higher prices on eBay than in a physical shop, particularly branded, niche or collectable items.

Hospice eBay figures

Iain Rennie Hospice

- eBay sales now contribute 15% of the hospice's retail income.

Peace Hospice

- In 2008–2009 it made a £28,000 profit.
- In four years, it has almost doubled its profit margins.

St Giles Hospice

- It saw a 19% growth from April to June 2009.
- Turnover for 2009–2010 is expected to be about £55,000.

2. Getting organised

While it is quick and easy to start selling on eBay, you need to make sure you are fully organised first if you are to achieve long-term success. This section gives advice on the resources and skills required before you start selling on eBay.

Leadership and commitment

Leadership and commitment are vital for a profitable eBay operation. Having someone in charge of the eBay operation full-time has proven beneficial to many charities. CLIC Sargent – a charity caring for children and young people with cancer – is among those reporting that their sales began to take off when they appointed a full-time manager with a passion for eBay selling.

People who may have the skills to become your eBay manager include a former shop manager with an interest in eBay, a full-time volunteer with eBay expertise or someone from the charity's head office with a good understanding of the internet and e-commerce.

Recruiting volunteers or part-time staff to help run your eBay sales is also vital as a small team is needed to increase your eBay business. Having volunteers helps keep overheads low while building the business and deciding whether the charity can afford to employ staff. Many charities have found it is relatively easy to recruit volunteers for their eBay operation, as it is an exciting project to get involved with and gives people the opportunity to develop business and marketing skills.

Skills required

Selling on eBay is easy; millions of people use eBay every year to turn goods into cash.

The most important skills for success in online commerce include:

- enterprise – the ability to spot and seize opportunities
- customer service – providing excellent care for your customers so they return
- marketing and market research – to make sure there is demand for your items
- photography and copywriting – to produce great listings
- administration – organising and monitoring an inventory
- bookkeeping and accounting – keeping track of sales, costs and profits.

Many charities have found it helpful to recruit volunteers with expertise in certain types of items. Having an expert in coins or books drop by every week or two can be a great way to identify valuable items among your stock.

Location and logistics

If you only have a single shop it makes sense to base your eBay operation there. You can take advantage of the storage space and facilities, and the location will make it convenient for your shop staff and volunteers to participate in the operation. You will need to make sure the shop has the right equipment, such as a computer with broadband connection, a franking machine for post and a digital camera to photograph the items.

If you have a network of shops, one option is to centralise your eBay operation, selling items donated to several shops through a single eBay account. You may want to base such an operation in a warehouse or somewhere with enough space to hold your inventory.

If you plan to centralise your operation, you need to think about how you will transport stock between your shops and the eBay 'warehouse'. If you are not geographically near your shops, you could designate one shop to collect all the stock and then have it transported to the 'warehouse' once a week.

Another option, if your larger shops have access to the internet and people with the right skills, is to encourage them to sell items themselves through individual eBay accounts.

Whether you plan to centralise your eBay operation or allow each shop to manage their sales, space is vital. You will need somewhere to both store and pack the items that you are selling.

A system for sorting stock is also vital. Your team needs to be clear about which items are ready to list, which are currently listed and which are ready to post to the buyer.

Sourcing stock

It is likely that the majority of the items you will sell on eBay will come from your hospice shops. Therefore, it is important for whoever is leading your eBay operation to build close relationships with the managers of the shops.

Make sure you educate shop staff about what sells well on eBay. You could even produce a manual listing brand names and items to look out for (see the 'Selling and listing' section for tips on what sells well on eBay). Focussing your eBay sales on a niche market, like clothing or jewellery, would make it even easier for shop staff to know what to send.

You could encourage your managers to pass on items by crediting them in some way for sales, making sure the sales count towards their weekly/monthly targets. Another option would be to return any profit you make from the sale of an item to the account of the shop that provided it.

Other sources of stock could include wholesalers who you may have relationships with and even famous patrons, who could donate a valuable item or piece of memorabilia. For example, one hospice made £4,500 selling a first edition of a Harry Potter book that had been signed by the author. It was donated to the hospice by the author's niece, who was a volunteer.

Accounting and finance

When one of your items sells, you will receive payment directly from the buyer. PayPal is the most widely used payment option on eBay.co.uk and sellers must have a PayPal account. You can also choose to accept other forms of payment, such as bank transfer or personal cheque, but PayPal is now an essential tool.

When receiving payments and accounting for funds, you will need to decide what level of central control is necessary and appropriate.

If you decide to centralise your eBay operation, you will only need to set up one PayPal account. Even if you decide to let each of your charity shops manage their own eBay operations, a single PayPal account linked to each of the eBay accounts may still be appropriate, allowing you to control and monitor funds centrally. There is no limit to the amount of eBay accounts you can link to a single PayPal account.

If individual shops have their own bank accounts, you could also set them up with their own PayPal accounts, giving someone from head office access to all the accounts.

Details of how to set up a PayPal account can be found in the 'Registering' section.

A centralised approach

- Sense Trading has adopted a centralised approach to selling on eBay.
- Shop managers select items to send to Sense's eBay operation.
- Each shop uses carbon paper to include a note that details the item and its shop code, so that both the local shop and central office can keep track of it.
- The eBay team receives and lists items on eBay, with as low a starting price as possible.
- Between 80% and 90% of items are sold the first time.
- Once sold, items are packed by the team.
- Royal Mail comes to the office at the end of each day to collect the items (this costs extra, but allows more time to list items).
- Once the money is received from the buyer, the funds are transferred back to the shop that donated the items.
- Sense now has five thriving eBay shops, specialising in antiques, jewellery, retro clothing, books and bargains, which are turning over £100,000 a year.
- The eBay manager organised training days with shop managers and attended local meetings to encourage shop managers to donate stock to sell on eBay. Now all 68 Sense charity shops are sending items to the eBay team.

3. Registering

Once you are ready to start selling on eBay you will need to register with MissionFish, register a seller account on eBay and set up a PayPal account. This section gives a step-by-step guide to registering and offers tips on how to protect yourself against fraud.

Register your charity with MissionFish

MissionFish vets every charity that wants to join eBay for Charity to make sure they are a valid UK charity. Registration is free and simple and allows you:

- inclusion in the database of charities
- control over which items are listed on eBay in support of your organisation
- a dedicated page that describes your organisation and lists all the eBay for Charity items benefiting your organisation
- reports that track your proceeds from public donations.



To register with MissionFish you will need:

- to be a registered charity
- a working email address
- an electronic copy of your logo (jpg or gif format, 50kb maximum)
- a mission statement of about 40 words
- proof of your charitable status
- a voided organisation cheque or paying in slip from your organisation's bank account.

Visit the MissionFish website to register:
www.missionfish.org.uk

Register for an eBay seller account

To sell items on eBay you need to set up an eBay seller account. To do this, go to www.eBay.co.uk and click on the 'Register' link.

You have the option to register as an individual or business. While the option is yours, most charities register as a business so that they can use the charity bank account details, rather than a credit card.

You then need to add your eBay ID and password as a 'Direct seller' in your MissionFish account. This tells MissionFish and eBay that your eBay account belongs to a charity and that

they do not need to collect the donations from you. To add your eBay ID as a direct seller:

1. sign in to your MissionFish account
2. click on the 'Manage direct sellers' link, found in the 'Edit my profile' section
3. complete the information in 'Adding a direct seller to your account' and click 'Go' (you will be taken to an eBay sign-in page)
4. enter your eBay seller ID and password.

You will be returned to the MissionFish site to confirm that your direct seller has been added.

Set up a PayPal account

To set up a PayPal account, go to www.paypal.co.uk and click on the 'Sign Up' link.

You will need an email address to set up a PayPal account. To allow for staff turnover, a generic email address for your charity may be best, eg eBaySales@mycharity.org.uk

You should choose a business account. Make sure you enter a person's name as the account holder and the name of the charity as the business name.

You should also complete PayPal's verification process, as once you have 'Verified' status you can transfer funds in and out of your PayPal account without limits.



Linking your eBay account and PayPal account

You can link your PayPal account to your eBay account by adding your eBay User ID to it. To do this:

1. log in to your PayPal account
2. click the 'Profile' subtab
3. click 'Auctions' located under 'Selling preferences'
4. click 'Add'
5. enter your eBay User ID and password
6. click 'Add' again
7. to activate automatic logo insertion, click the 'Off' link next to the User ID
8. select the 'On' radio button and click 'Update'.

For the two accounts to stay linked, your eBay User ID has to be kept up to date, as an incorrect User ID may affect your notifications or PayPal log insertions. Allow 24 hours for the changes to take place.

IMPORTANT STEP

If you do not link your eBay account as a direct seller, MissionFish will treat your eBay sales as a member of the public's donation and collect the funds from your PayPal account or credit card.

As you are the charity selling, you do not need MissionFish to do this, so be sure to link your accounts.

Applying for reduced fees from PayPal

If you are selling directly as a charity, you can apply for a reduced rate from PayPal. To do this:

1. open a PayPal business account and select the 'Non profit, political & religion' category
2. send an email to Due Diligence at compliance@paypal.com to ask for the low charity rate, providing the following information:
 - charity name
 - registered postal address
 - Charity Commission or OSCR number
 - mission statement
 - email address registered with your PayPal account
 - letter of authorisation from the main charity (where applicable).

You will receive an email confirming that you are now on a charity rate. You can find out more about the charity rate at www.paypal.co.uk/charity

Protecting yourself against fraud

Keeping your eBay and PayPal accounts secure will help avoid any unwelcome surprises. Make sure you follow these tips:

- Choose complex, hard to guess passwords, keep them secret and change them regularly.
- Make sure you sign out of your accounts if using a computer that others can access.
- Never respond to emails that ask you to confirm your login details, or take you to a website that asks you to do this. Always log in by going to the eBay and PayPal homepages. You can report suspicious emails to eBay directly at spoof@ebay.co.uk
- Keep your antivirus software, spam filter and firewall active and up to date.

You should take particular care in responding to emails about high value items, particularly if the emails ask you to ship the items to an unexpected country, or demand that you post the item before payment has cleared. You can minimise risks by using trackable post for valuable items.

If you are concerned about a particular bidder you can contact them through the eBay 'Contact member' feature. If you are convinced that a buyer is fraudulent, you should cancel their bids and add them to your 'Blocked bidder list'.

4. Selling and listing

Before you start listing items, it is important to do your research to find out what sells well on eBay. You also need to think carefully about how to promote your items and how you will manage the dispatching of items that sell. This section gives tips and advice on all these issues.

What to sell

The easiest way to find out what sells on eBay is by testing it out. Compare items that you are thinking of selling on eBay with live listings. Also, look at completed listings based on category, format and selling price for examples of good listings that you can replicate.

eBay sellers report that easily identifiable items with desirable brands do extremely well. Extremely niche products with a small but dedicated market can also raise substantial funds.

You can check for the most common buyer searches at www.ebay.co.uk/pulse to get an idea of what people want to buy. Commercially available research tools such as Terapeak provide more information about items currently selling on eBay.

The marketplace is big enough that most items will achieve their market value through auction format listings.

Selling branded goods

If you are selling luxury branded goods on eBay make sure that they are genuine. eBay runs a Verified Rights Owner (VeRO) programme, which enables companies to report listings that potentially infringe their copyright, such as counterfeit goods. Find out more about this at www.ebay.co.uk/vero

If you receive an item and are not sure of its origin, try doing some research. If you still cannot determine whether it is a genuine branded good, do not list it as such on eBay. Similarly, if a product is donated to you that bears the name or logo of a company but you are not sure if it is endorsed by that company or if it may be a replica, do not list it on eBay.

Be careful not to cite brands indirectly, eg by stating that a handbag is 'as good as Gucci'. This can be misleading and your item may be removed from eBay because of trademark infringement.

TOP TIP

Research items on the internet, eg using Google, to decide whether the retail value is high enough for them to be sold online.

What not to sell

You should be careful not to sell any items that are prohibited on eBay, such as alcohol, fireworks, lottery tickets or used cosmetics, as this can damage your seller status on the site. If you have a listing taken down by eBay make sure you do not relist the item by mistake.

You can see a list of the items currently prohibited in the eBay 'Help' section under 'Policies'.

TOP TIP – MAKING YOUR ITEM UNIQUE

Do not list a lot of similar auction items at once as people will assume that they are not unusual and so may pay less.

Selling format and duration

Selecting the best selling format for your item is key to ensuring a successful sale. There are two main selling formats on eBay: Auction and Buy It Now.

Auction listing

In an auction listing you receive bids on your item and sell to the highest bidder. Auctions are for single items: each listing is for one item. Your listing will appear in the eBay category/categories you choose and in search results.

Auction listings run for one, three, five, seven or 10 days. You can also include a Buy It Now (see page 15) price, which lets the buyer purchase the item before the listed end date for the auction.

The auction format is good for selling any items that do not have a fixed price attached to them, eg unique or collectable items that are donated to your shop such as porcelain, jewellery or rare books.

TOP TIP

End auctions between 7.30pm and 9pm as this is the peak time people access eBay across the UK. Sunday and Thursday evenings are especially busy.

When listing items make sure you:

- aim for an end time when many people are online, eg early Sunday evening, remembering that auctions can only run for one, three, five, seven or 10 days
- set a starting price as low as you dare (this encourages maximum interest and bidding) and avoid reserve prices
- if you are listing a high profile item, and working to generate press coverage for the auction, schedule the start time based on when you are likely to get maximum attention and publicity (you will need a payment method on file with eBay to schedule items).



Buy It Now

Buy It Now allows you to list your item(s) at a fixed price so that your buyers can purchase right away without bidding. You can offer one item or multiple items for sale at the Buy It Now price anytime during the listing. Your listing appears in the eBay category/categories you choose and in search results.

Buy It Now listings can run for three, five, seven, 10 or 30 days, or 'Good 'Til Cancelled'. 'Good 'Til Cancelled' renews automatically every 30 days until the item sells or you end the listing.

The Buy It Now format is good for selling items that you have in bulk and usually sell at a fixed price, eg catalogue items such as Christmas cards, gifts or books.

If your item proves popular and sells in quantity, it may automatically receive higher visibility in search results.

Staying profitable on eBay

Bulk listing tools, eg Turbo Lister

The standard listing forms on eBay are easy to use and contain all the features you need. However, you will find that it takes some time to list each item, and this time can eat into your profit margins.

As soon as you are listing more than a few dozen items each month you should start to use a bulk listing tool. These tools enable you to enter the details for multiple items and upload them to the eBay website in bulk. If you are listing many similar items, you will find that a bulk listing tool can save you a lot of time. They also allow you to back up your data easily.

One of the most widely used tools is eBay's own listing tool, Turbo Lister, which is free to download from the eBay website.

Other listing tools used by charities include Auctiva and ChannelAdvisor. You can usually request a free trial or demonstration to see which tool works best for you.

Reducing your spend on listing fees

When you list an item on eBay in the Auction or Buy It Now formats, you are charged:

- an insertion fee based on the item starting price or reserve price
- feature fees, if you select optional features to increase your chances of selling successfully when listing the item
- a final value fee (if the item sells), which is based on the item's final selling price.



REMEMBER

To use Buy It Now you need to have:

- a feedback score greater than zero (see the 'Customer service' section for further information on feedback)
- PayPal as an accepted payment method on your listing.

eBay credits insertion fees and final value fees back to charity sellers when they sell an item through the eBay for Charity programme. This makes eBay an extremely cost-effective selling platform for charities. The fee credits will appear automatically on your first eBay invoice after the item sells.

Please note that charity sellers are not credited for:

- feature fees
- the insertion fee if your item does not sell.

You can reduce or avoid these fees by listing only items that have a reasonable chance of selling, keeping start prices low on auctions, and avoiding optional features unless you are sure they will generate a good return on investment. Successful charity sellers can end up paying nothing, or almost nothing, in eBay fees.

eBay fees are subject to change. You can view the latest fees on eBay's help pages under 'Selling and seller fees'.

Titles, categories and descriptions

Writing a good title and description and selecting the appropriate category will significantly increase the likelihood of your item being found and bought.

The title is vital

If people cannot find your listing, they cannot buy it. Make sure your title is descriptive and contains as many relevant keywords as possible.

When writing a title, apply these tips:

- Use descriptive keywords that clearly convey what you are selling.
- Include the item's brand name, artist or designer.
- State exactly what your item is, even if your title repeats the category name.
- Do not include words such as 'wow' or 'look' as buyers do not search for them.
- Do not state anything that is untrue or misleading to buyers.

The category counts

Help buyers find your items by selecting the category that best describes your item. The easiest way to figure out what category to use is to look at what other sellers have used for similar items.

Search tips:

- Be specific. For example, a search for 'Royal Doulton teacup' returns more precise search results than a search for 'teacup'.
- Be careful when using 'and', 'or' and 'the' as keywords. eBay searches for 'and', 'or' and 'the' in listing titles rather than as logic for keywords. Use these words only when searching for item names containing them (like 'Diana Ross and the Supremes').
- Do not search by the category name. Searching by category (eg 'collectable') searches for items where sellers have included the word 'collectable' in their item title, eg 'vintage collectable belt buckle'.

A good description

This is where you seal the deal. Make sure your description is accurate.

Here are some questions you may want to consider when writing your item description:

- What is the item?
- What material is it made of?
- When was it made?
- What company/artist/designer/author made it?

- What condition is it in?
- Is the item new, used, or still under warranty? Be sure to mention any flaws or repairs.
- What are its dimensions?
- What country/location is it from?
- Does it have any notable features or markings?
- Does it have a special background or history?

Many sellers have found that adding a creative, human approach to their descriptions boosts bids and sales. If there is a story behind the item, tell the buyer.

You can describe an item by its brand, designer, model, product, style name or its celebrity endorsement in a listing, as long as the information directly matches what you are selling.

One thing not to include in listings is keywords that are unrelated to your item to try to lure buyers searching for these words. For example, do not say, 'If you like Ralph Lauren, you will like these towels'. This is known as keyword spamming and is against eBay's listing rules.

Remember to proofread your description for spelling errors.

Photographs

Clear images will help to encourage bids, give your buyers a more accurate picture of what the item looks like and will distinguish your listing from others.

Here are some easy, inexpensive ways to improve your photos:

- Invest in a good digital camera or borrow one if you are just starting out.
- Set up an area just for photographing your items. It does not have to be elaborate, but you should create a clutter-free space.
- Use a solid and simple background so that the emphasis is on the item you are selling.
- Buy a mannequin (or borrow one from your shop) if you plan to sell clothes.



- Use good lighting so the colours in the photo are accurate.
- Edit the photos on the computer if necessary, eg crop the picture so that only the item for sale is in the photo.

Once you have taken a good photo you can upload it to eBay as part of your listing. You can include at least one free picture with each listing. The picture appears in your listing and next to your item's title in search results. You can add up to 11 extra pictures for a small per-picture fee.

eBay has four photo-uploading tools that you can use, or you can use self-hosting to display pictures that are stored on a server or website other than eBay.

TOP TIP

Invest in a good digital camera.

Borrow a mannequin from your shop.

Things to remember when uploading photos to eBay:

- eBay recommends that all images be at least 1,000 pixels on the longest side.
- If they are in JPEG format they should have a quality of 90 or greater on the standard 0-99 JPEG quality scale.
- You can display pictures in the following formats: JPEG, BMP, GIF, TIFF, PNG.

TOP TIP

Before you start to upload photos to eBay, rename the files with names that will help you remember what they are, and collect them in a central place on your computer so you can find them quickly and easily.

Dispatching goods

Making sure your item gets to the buyer in good time and in good condition is vital to a successful eBay business and will encourage repeat customers.

Postage

When you list an item, be sure to specify how and where you will deliver it, eg by standard post, registered post or courier. Decide whether you are prepared to ship the item overseas. You may wish to offer bulky items on a 'collection only' basis. There are several things you can do to make postage easy for you and keep your buyers happy and coming back.

Offer free or discounted postage

Encourage buyers to purchase more items from you by offering free postage or multiple-item discounts.

Make sure your postage rates are reasonable

Excessive postage costs will put buyers off, so be sure to offer sensible rates. You can check the actual cost of postage directly on the Post Office website.

Consider pickup services from couriers

Save time with pickup services from companies such as Parcelforce or Royal Mail – some are free.

Many charities have also organised a deal with their local Post Office, where they have a designated time to go in and drop off their items without having to queue.

TOP TIP

If you use a Royal Mail online account to price your packages, you can put in an average weight price for your parcels, which is ultimately much cheaper than individually pricing them.

Print postage labels

Do not waste time writing out the address of each buyer by hand. Use the tools in 'My eBay' and PayPal to print postage labels from your office.

Printing labels from My eBay

- Sign in to My eBay and click on the 'Sold' tab.
- Tick the box next to each item you want to post.
- Click the 'Print postage labels' button.
- Log in to PayPal.
- Select the service options you want.
- Enter the package weight and verify the 'Post from' and 'Post to' information.
- Click the 'Print' button.

Posting internationally

It is advisable to include information about the postage service (Royal Mail or courier) that you are planning to use and the cost for international postage, as items with this information will attract more buyers.

There are several things you need to consider when posting internationally:

- Postage costs – costs to send to other countries can vary greatly depending on the distance and postage methods. Most sellers specify that buyers pay the postage costs for international sales.
- Insurance – if you sell valuable items consider purchasing insurance. Check with your carrier for insurance options, or contact a third-party postal insurance provider for insurance coverage.
- Customs and documentation – all international packages must clear customs in the destination country, so you will need to complete the appropriate customs forms.

TOP TIP

Create a chart that breaks down the costs of sending packages through Royal Mail locally, nationally and internationally so that everyone in your team knows the correct postage.

Packing

You are responsible for items until they arrive safely in the buyer's hands, so it is important to package your items with care. It is just one way to make sure you have satisfied customers and it can help you avoid negative or neutral feedback and low detailed seller ratings. Good packaging often leads to positive feedback and comments from buyers. See the 'Customer service' section for information on feedback and seller ratings.

Stock up on inexpensive supplies

You will always need packing supplies so make sure you have plenty in stock. Packaging can end up being quite expensive if you buy in new materials, so it is worth reusing boxes that come into the shops, reusing bubble wrap and asking volunteers to bring in old boxes. Also, look on eBay as you can often pick up packing materials cheaply from other sellers.

Make sure the packaging is secure

You do not want the item to arrive broken, so make sure that you use enough packaging and bubble wrap where necessary.



Generate repeat business and promote your charity

Include a note of thanks from your charity and eBay team to encourage the bidder to look at your items again. Also, consider including some literature about your charity so that the buyer is aware of the work you do and that their money has gone to a good cause – they may decide to support the charity in other ways.

5. Customer service

Having a good seller reputation is vital to selling successfully on eBay. Therefore, it is important to look after your customers and generate positive feedback on the service you offer. This section looks at how to achieve this.

Looking after your customers is fundamental to the success of any retail operation, and the same applies online. eBay is constantly improving and updating its policies and processes to keep buyers coming back.

Apart from meeting eBay's standard requirements, try to go the extra mile and offer the best possible customer service. Outstanding customer service will help you stand out from the crowd and encourage your buyers to come back for more. In an online marketplace, the following principles will help you keep your customers happy:

- **Avoid disappointments** – make sure your listing is absolutely clear about the nature and condition of the item, and how long it will take you to post it.
- **Post promptly** – try to dispatch all items within two business days, or sooner if you can. Customers are always impressed and pleased by prompt delivery.
- **Communicate** – keep your customers informed about the progress of their item using automated emails. This is particularly important if there are any disruptions to your delivery service, such as industrial action. Try to respond to all emails from buyers within 24 hours.

- **Stay calm** – as in any shop, you will sometimes meet customers who seem particularly demanding or difficult. Do your best to meet their expectations, stay polite and helpful at all times, and do not get involved in lengthy disputes.

Communicating with international buyers

Selling to buyers in various countries can mean answering emails at unusual times because of time differences. Usually their questions will be in English, so simply answer as you would with local buyers.

If you do not speak the same language as a potential buyer, you might want to use translation software to translate key phrases. Some translation services are available free on the internet. However, many are not 100% accurate and eBay cannot guarantee their services. If you use such a service, provide simple, grammatically correct phrases, free of abbreviations, to make translations more understandable.

Feedback and your reputation

Every eBay member has a feedback profile, which includes basic information about the member and the feedback that their trading partners have left for them.

For each transaction, buyers and sellers can rate each other by leaving feedback. Each feedback consists of a positive, negative or neutral rating and a short comment.

Leaving honest comments about a particular eBay member gives other community members a good idea of what to expect when dealing with that member. Once it is left, feedback becomes a permanent part of the member's feedback profile.

Receiving positive feedback will help you to build a good reputation on eBay.

Detailed seller ratings

A buyer can also rate the seller on criteria such as accuracy of item description, communication, delivery time and postage and packaging charges. These detailed seller ratings do not count toward the feedback score and are anonymous. This means that sellers cannot tell which buyer left which detailed rating, so buyers can feel free to leave honest ratings about their experience.

Keep a close eye on your feedback rating, including the detailed ratings. The scores you achieve can affect the prominence of your listings in search results and your rating as a seller.



Help – I have had negative feedback

At some stage during your time on eBay you are likely to receive your first negative feedback. This may be for reasons that were not your fault or remain a complete mystery. Do not panic or retaliate with your own opinion of the buyer's character. You should contact the buyer to see if you can resolve their issue. A telephone call may help to improve the situation. You may wish to offer a refund or replacement.

In certain circumstances, feedback may be withdrawn or amended by the member, or by eBay. Check eBay's Help section to see whether this applies in your case.

You may wish to leave calm and clear follow-up feedback for the benefit of other members, explaining the problem and the steps you took to rectify it.

6. Developing your service

Once you have started to build your eBay presence, you may want to think about taking your service to the next level. This section looks at eBay's extra facilities, which could help you maximise your sales.

Selling internationally

By offering your items internationally as well as to the UK and Ireland you can significantly increase the number of potential buyers you reach, helping you sell more items and achieve higher prices.

Buyers in other countries can see your listings if you:

- select worldwide postage when you list your item (eBay sometimes runs promotions across other eBay country sites to promote international trade; in these cases you get wider international visibility by simply adding worldwide postage options to your listing, with no further effort)
- list your items for sale directly on eBay sites around the world (you will need to meet the selling requirements and pay the fees for each country's site).

Requirements for selling internationally

To make items available to buyers in other countries, you might need to be ID Verified. ID verification is used in some countries to prove a seller's identity.

Whenever you sell to buyers in other countries make sure that you comply with the international trading laws in those countries. You should also make sure you are aware of export controls on goods to certain countries.

You also need to specify postage worldwide, or to the individual countries or regions where you are willing to sell.

To sell globally you will need to accept PayPal as a method of payment. In most countries, sellers should be PayPal Verified. In Germany and Switzerland the verification process is PostIdent.

Currencies

Currency fluctuations can dramatically affect interest from overseas buyers. Bids and prices on a listing automatically appear in both the currency you specify and the currency typically used for the country site on which the buyer is viewing the item (the equivalence is approximate).

Customising your eBay presence: design and branding

If you are selling a lot of items on eBay, or running high profile auctions, you should think about smartening up your eBay presence to reflect your charity's brand and work. Ask a web designer to build you a simple template that you can use for:

- your listings
- your 'About me' page
- your eBay shopfront, if you decide to set one up (see below for further information).



Marketing your listings to supporters

Promoting your listings is one of the best methods to raise interest and more funds. Spread the word to donors with email campaigns, web links or direct mail.

Add a link on your website

Add a link from your website (preferably your homepage or 'donate' page), which points to your listings.

Get featured

Send MissionFish your success story and it may promote you on the MissionFish website. It is free and only takes a minute.

Use email

Email newsletters are a great way of driving people to your eBay listings. You could also add a link from your email signature to your eBay listings.

eBay shop functionality and search engines

If you always have a lot of goods to sell you should consider opening a dedicated shopfront on eBay to further promote your listings. Charges do apply.

With an eBay shop you can display all your listings in one place, with your choice of categories. Other benefits include your listings being searchable through search engines such as Google, and the tracking and analysis tools, which will help you learn more about your buyers' behaviour and improve your sales performance.

Most charity sellers trading at significant volumes find that an eBay shop represents good value for money. You also get extra tools and customised pages to develop your charity's brand and encourage buyers to buy more.



Other fundraising channels on eBay

Special auctions

A special auction on eBay for Charity is a great way of turning valuable items into unrestricted funding for your charity. A special auction eliminates the costs and time spent on hosting a live event and allows you to reach a larger audience than any other online auction platform.

Holding a successful auction

The four key parts of every successful eBay for Charity auction are:

1. great items and a compelling story behind the auction
2. generating awareness through public relations and marketing
3. using the eBay.co.uk marketplace effectively
4. good planning and management.

Plan your auction in advance. You should think about the story behind the campaign, branding and what you want to achieve. You will need to secure valuable or interesting items that fit well with the campaign, and work out how best to market and publicise the auction.

Unique and high-value items and experiences do extremely well on eBay: think 'money can't buy' and 'exclusive'. Try to secure a series of special items to grab attention and compel people to visit the auction. For example:

- items or experiences with celebrity association
- unique, rare and in-demand items
- high-value items
- special interest items, experiences or memorabilia.

Promoting your auction

The success of your auction will depend on the level of interest you generate, so PR and marketing are essential. Schedule the start and end time of the auction based on when you are likely to get maximum attention and publicity.

Make sure all your promotional messages include a clear call to action, such as 'Find our auction on eBay on 1 December'. Also, make sure your auction can be easily found from your own website and any other relevant sites.

MissionFish has produced materials to help promote special auctions, including a template press release. Visit the 'Fundraise' page on the MissionFish website for more information. Contact MissionFish if you need any further support.

Community selling

Once you have registered your charity with MissionFish, anyone can donate to your charity whenever they sell on eBay.co.uk.

eBay sellers can donate between 10% and 100% of an item's final sale price to your charity whenever they sell. To make sure donations are cost-effective and meaningful, there is a £1 minimum donation per listing.

Your own 'About my charity' page on eBay will show all eBay.co.uk listings that benefit your charity. You can view your charity page on eBay by clicking on 'Find your favourite charity' from the eBay for Charity hub page: www.ebay.co.uk/charity

Your supporters will receive fee credits whenever they sell an item for your charity. eBay's insertion fees and final value fees will be credited back to the seller, according to the level of their donation. For example, if someone donates 50% of the item's sale price to charity, they will receive a credit of 50% of the basic selling fees.

Every listing that benefits your charity includes your logo and mission statement, promoting your charity on eBay.co.uk, and is marked with the charity ribbon, which attracts extra customers.

How it works

1. Your charity registers with MissionFish.
2. Your supporter lists an item on eBay, choosing a percentage of the sale price to donate to your charity.
3. If the item sells, the seller is paid and posts the item to the buyer.
4. MissionFish collects the donation from the seller, claims gift aid on your behalf and passes the money on to your charity, making a small deduction to cover costs.

With more than 4,000 charities now registered, your donors need to know they can support you. Inform them by:

- adding a link from your website to your 'About my charity' page (which shows all the listings that benefit your charity)
- putting some more detailed information about donating through eBay for Charity on your website.

eBay thanks all those who list for your charity on your behalf. Many donors also choose to share their contact details with the charities they support. Remember to contact them yourself to thank them, and consider sharing more information about your charity. You can download the contact details of eBay sellers who want to hear from you from your MissionFish account.

You have the right to veto any unsuitable listings by logging in to your MissionFish account, browsing the listings and clicking 'Cancel' on any that are unsuitable.

And finally...

We hope this guide has given you a helpful introduction to selling on eBay, the UK's biggest online marketplace. For further advice and support, contact MissionFish at **www.missionfish.org.uk**
You may also receive invaluable advice from those charities already trading on ebay.co.uk.

Do not forget that selling on eBay can be fun as well as profitable. Many buyers value the personal touch and engagement that a charity shop can provide. Over time you will find that some customers become repeat buyers and perhaps even donors to your charity. Good luck!

Appendix: Rules and regulations

Shill bidding

Shill bidding is artificial bidding to inflate prices, ie when the seller or someone they know places a bid on an item to drive up the price.

Innocent activity can sometimes trigger shill bidding alerts on eBay, resulting in account suspensions. For example, one of your volunteers might decide they would like to bid on your item for themselves and do so from a computer in the office. While this activity may not be intended to artificially bid up the price of the auction, eBay's systems will detect bids coming from a computer linked to the seller's account. The item may then be removed from the site and it could result in your seller's account being jeopardised.

eBay's rule is that people who know the seller – such as family members, flatmates, or employees – cannot bid on that seller's items, but they can use the 'Buy It Now' option, which does not involve bidding.

Tax

There may be tax implications for charities that undertake significant trading, ie the provision of goods or services to customers on a commercial basis. For example, you may need to register for VAT. You can visit the HMRC website to learn more: www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/guidance-notes/annex4/sectiona.htm

Business regulations

If you operate as a business on eBay you are subject to a variety of rules and regulations. You should consider yourself a business if you:

- sell items that you have bought to resell
- make items yourself and sell them, intending to make a profit
- are a trading assistant, selling items on behalf of others
- buy items for your business on eBay.

You can visit the eBay Business Centre to learn more about the rules and regulations affecting businesses that operate on eBay. Brief summaries of the relevant regulations, at the time of publication, follow.

The Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000

The distance selling regulations require business sellers to give consumers clear information about themselves and their items when they offer them for sale.

The Electronic Commerce (EC Directive) Regulations 2002

Under the e-commerce directive, business sellers must provide the following information, either in their listing or in their 'About me' page or 'Shop' pages:

- full contact details for their business
- details of any relevant trade organisations to which they belong
- details of any authorisation scheme relevant to their online business
- clear indications of price, if relevant, including any delivery or tax charges
- their VAT number (if their online activities are subject to VAT).

For further information we recommend that you browse the BERR website, particularly the 'Beginners guide to e-commerce regulations 2002': www.berr.gov.uk

Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008

The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 came into force on 26 May 2008. The regulations introduce a general duty not to trade unfairly and aim to make sure that traders act honestly and fairly towards their customers. They also apply to price indications that become misleading after they have been given, and to any indications given about the way in which a price will be calculated.

Pricing

It is an offence under the regulations for business sellers to give consumers a misleading indication about the price of goods or services, or the manner in which the price is calculated.

Business sellers

Under the regulations, business sellers are legally required not to falsely represent themselves as consumers.

We want the very best care for everyone facing the end of life.

We believe that hospice care can help make this happen.

Our six strategic priorities:

- Striving for the best care for all
- Supporting hospice people
- Championing the voice
- Growing stronger together
- Telling the world
- Strengthening our charity

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