

Setting Up an eBay Store

Is it time to expand your listings and move into a virtual eBay Store? Follow this advice for setting up shop.

By Joel Elad

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For the past seven years, Lynn Dralle (eBay User ID: thequeenofauctions) has made a living buying and selling on eBay. While she averages approximately 100 listings per week, she has about 2,500 items that never see any frenzied bidding but bring in thousands a month.

Dralle is one of some 336,000 entrepreneurs worldwide who operates an eBay Store, a virtual online storefront where anyone can sell items on eBay across several listing formats, including auction-style, Fixed-Price and Store Inventory. Store owners can customize their virtual storefronts, adding colors, logos, featured items for sale, and their own set of categories. More important, eBay gives Store owners a complete platform to present and sell goods, with the power to cross-sell and upsell while reducing listing costs and gaining marketing exposure.

Unlimited Shelf Space

Most sellers start with eBay auction-style listings, then add eBay Stores to the mix when they have more merchandise to sell. Opening a Store offers sellers the "ability to have a central, professional-looking web store within eBay," says Darlene Clementz, senior marketing manager for eBay Stores. "They also sign up to get access to tools that help create a customized and unique shopping experience, and to attract and retain buyers. eBay Store sellers also have the option of listing via the Store Inventory format, which has a longer duration and can be more cost-effective."

Dralle agrees. Since she opened an eBay Store, she's generating an extra \$1,000 to \$2,000 in revenue per month. "I have sold rings at \$65 that I couldn't get \$9.99 for at auction. The beauty of [an eBay Store] is items can get the exposure they need to sell at a very [cost-effective] listing price."

An eBay Store gives customers a familiar place to return to every week to see items, and it provides sellers with a permanent web address. eBay shoppers can bookmark Favorite Sellers with a Store or join a Store seller's e-mail marketing list. "When I find a good eBay seller, I like to go back to their Store first when I need something new," says computer specialist Anthony Choi. "That peace of mind makes it easy, and even fun, to keep shopping with that person."

Promotion Is Key

eBay Stores require promotion to bring in virtual foot traffic. Most Store owners use regular auction-style or Fixed-Price eBay listings to remind people of merchandise available in their Stores. "To truly take advantage of the eBay Marketplace, we recommend having a blend of live listings across several listing formats," says Clementz. Store owners can also cross-sell or upsell additional merchandise to winning bidders and offer deals like shipping discounts for multiple purchases. Within the Store and throughout the shopping experience, eBay offers Store sellers tools that help cross-promote every Store Inventory item to increase overall sales.

eBay also reaches out to every internet user by optimizing eBay Stores descriptions so they show up on major search engines. And eBay maintains a special Stores Directory and displays Store Inventory when a customer's search for item listings on the main eBay site turns up 20 or fewer results. Some Store plans come with eBay Keyword Advertising credit to help Store owners reach out to targeted eBay consumers.

Setting Up Shop

Any eBay user with a valid PayPal account, a feedback score of 20 or ID Verified status can open an eBay Store. The first step is to choose from one of three monthly subscription plans:

1. The basic store plan (\$15.95 per month), a starter package with the customizable Store platform, offers access to various reports and the chance to start branding a business on eBay. Subscribers also receive free phone support and free access to Selling Manager, eBay's online sales management tool.

2. The featured store plan (\$49.95 per month), a more comprehensive solution for mid- to high-volume sellers with more marketing and reporting options, such as eBay's Selling Manager Pro sales organizer software, gives the seller better placement in search results and priority placement in select on-site promotional areas.

3. The anchor store plan (\$499.95 per month) is a solution for high-volume sellers who need maximum exposure. It works just like an anchor store at a mall, giving maximum visibility in searches for a certain category and within the category's individual pages.

In addition to the monthly fee, Store owners can gain access to the Store Inventory listing at just 2 cents per listing per month. It offers a longer listing duration at lower Insertion Fees, says Clementz. eBay collects a final commission when a Store Inventory item sells (a percentage of the item's sales price), similar to other sales.

Any eBay seller can open a Store in seconds. Just go to www.ebay.com/stores, and add the Store subscription of your choice. Then choose from dozens of custom templates to create your storefront. Store owners can define up to 20 custom categories to fit their inventory, such as "My Homemade Purses" or "Items Under \$9.99."

Proper Upkeep

Once your eBay Store is open, you can add Store Inventory to be listed for 30 days or sell items as Good 'Til Cancelled, which means those items will stay in Store Inventory until someone buys them. When Dralle first opened her Store, she didn't use the Good 'Til Cancelled option. "This was a mistake because we would then have to relist and relist," says Dralle. "With [Good 'Til Cancelled], I leave those items in the store for one to two years, and then if they don't sell, I take them out and donate them to charity."

Clementz recommends that Store sellers focus on setting up and using eBay Store features like custom categories, searchable Store descriptions, custom listing headers and cross-promotional tools. Says Clementz, "Many sellers do not realize the breadth of branding and customization tools available to them."

Add Up the Receipts

In the end, eBay Stores are designed to increase revenue, move slower merchandise and raise profit potential. For Dralle, an eBay Store opened up a new world of possibilities. "Things that I couldn't give away online [in auction format] will sell for a good price this way," she says. In one recent example, while selling pieces of a china collection, her auctions were only getting bids up to \$26, so she moved the rest of her inventory to her Store and quickly sold several pieces for as much as \$40 each. Dralle says buyers like the Store because "they are assured of getting the item and [the] immediate gratification."

Joel Elad is the training and special accounts manager for Net2Auction, an eBay drop-off store company in Southern California. He is co-author of the Amazon.com bestselling book eBay Your Business