

Title:

How to Avoid Unpaid Items

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It's an all too familiar scenario: an item sells and you send the high bidder their invoice. You don't hear anything back immediately but you're not worried - many buyers take a day or so to pay. A day passes; two, three, and still you hear nothing from them. By the time a week has gone by with no contact and no payment, you are fed up and send them an email demanding payment. Still nothing. You set up an Unpaid Item Dispute with Ebay, for which you have to wait another week. The buyer still does not respond.

By the time the dispute is settled in your favor, you are left with just your listing fees and a very bad taste in your mouth. Sure, you got to leave them negative feedback, but that was no compensation for the time and irritation it cost on your part - not to mention loss of income. If they didn't intend to pay, you grumble to yourself, why did they bid in the first place?

There are many reasons why a buyer may decide to back out at the last minute and not pay; none of them are really justified. If they couldn't pay or didn't want to pay the price they bid, they really should not have bid in the first place. However, there will always be buyers who balk when it comes time to pay, so how can you minimize the chances of ending up with an unpaid item? Thankfully, there are several things you can do to minimize the risk.

1.Offer payment by PayPal

Although there are fees associated with offering PayPal as a payment method, the benefits are many. Firstly, it takes away the hassle of processing payments - the trips to the bank to deposit checks and money orders, waiting for them to clear, the time it takes to keep track of who's payment has cleared and who's is

still pending. Time is a priceless commodity in any business, and the more of it you can save for important tasks, the better. Secondly, buyers who have the option of paying through PayPal generally pay quicker than those who have to write a check and mail it to you. They are more likely to put off the latter than the former - it takes just a few seconds to send a payment via PayPal. In fact, three out of four buyers say they actually prefer PayPal to any other payment method. If you offer PayPal as the sole method of payment, your chances of a quick payment go up even more. No more time spent writing emails to find out which payment method your buyer is going to use.

2.Offer eBay Checkout

This was a great idea on eBay's part. By checking the eBay Checkout option when you are setting up your listing, the high bidder will be presented with a Pay Now button once the auction ends. Putting this option right under their nose prompts many more immediate payments, and far less delays.

3.Use the "Immediate Payment Required" option on Buy It Now items

Sellers should use this option as standard in their Buy It Now listings. If a buyer wants to buy an item NOW, then they are also prepared to pay for it NOW. If you give them the option of waiting to pay, you are encouraging delays. By choosing a Buy It Now item, they have already shown that they are ready to pay immediately, so using this option is really a no-brainer.

4.Pre-set Buyer Requirements in 'My eBay'

Using this option is an excellent way to pre-screen bidders and block those that carry a high risk of non-payment. You can block bidders from countries you don't ship to, bidders with a certain number of feedbacks, and bidders with a certain number of Unpaid Item strikes against them. This is a very valuable tool particularly when you come to sell high-ticket items that tend to attract disreputable buyers from other countries. Even better - you only need to set these options once and they will automatically apply to all your listings. The Buyer Requirements options can be found in the My Preferences section of My Ebay.

5.Make sure Shipping costs are clear in the listing

It's amazing how many sellers do not specify the shipping costs of an item, either because they forget or because they prefer to wait until they know who and where they are shipping to. Whatever the reason, if you don't clearly state shipping costs in your listings, you are asking for trouble later on.

Some high bidders will quibble over payment even when they DID know what the shipping costs were - if the costs weren't clear, you are asking for a buyer to complain that they didn't know the costs would be 'that high' and refusing to pay unless you lower the shipping charges. Stating the shipping costs up front in your listings (even if it takes you a few extra minutes) will save you much irritation and time later on with non-paying bidders.

Even if you religiously apply all the above, you will probably still have the occasional buyer who drags their feet about paying. Remember to focus on the problem, not on the person. Don't allow your irritation with the situation to treat them badly. The customer is not always right, but they are always the customer, and remembering that how you treat them may have a bearing on whether they will recommend you or not should help you keep control of yourself.