

## TURN YOUR BROWSERS INTO BUYERS

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By Heather Reimer

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The day is coming soon when every web wanderer goes shopping online without a care. A day when nobody hesitates for even a microsecond before entering their credit card information and clicking on "BUY".

But at the moment, only 40% of all Internet users are doing so. The other 60% still want to have their purchases firmly in hand at the cash register before opening their wallets.

So how do you, as an Internet entrepreneur, overcome the ultimate e-challenge? How do you reach out and comfort the nervous and the hesitant?

The answer is surprisingly simple and inexpensive, but rarely used to its best effect: communication. Specifically, the things you communicate to your customers about your service/product and the WAY you express them.

Think about the atmosphere that makes you feel comfortable when you go shopping... how the staff treat you at your favorite store... how did they win your trust and your business?

Most online shoppers are attracted by a casual style of information presentation. Imagine how you would pitch your product if the client were seated right in front of you. Actually trying this with a friend or coworker can help clarify your thoughts. Then write it that way (preferably without the ums and ahs!) Get the text proofread carefully... nothing diminishes respect like a page full of spelling mistakes!

Want to really connect with your visitors? Introduce yourself or another key person in the company by using a real name and photograph. This brands the site as belonging to a real, live person and creates a subtle bond.

An "About Us" page is the perfect place to build on that feeling. Here's where you explain what compelled you to start your e-business, what your goals are, your business ethic and why customers should deal with you instead of your competition. In fact, a short 3- or 4-line version of that same text

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can be displayed on the bottom of each page of your site as a sort of signature.

And never forget the best free confidence–builder ever invented: the testimonial. Include as much information as you can about the source of the testimonial: first and last names, city of residence, business name or URL if applicable. (Get permission first) This lends much more credibility than, for example:

"Loved your online underwater basket weaving course!"  
JB, USA.

Then put those quotes in high traffic locations. Don't make your customers search high and low for them because most won't bother.

Brag a little... If your site is affiliated with or has been recognized by other organizations, get permission to use their logo on your index page. Same goes for any awards you've received. Those little official–looking buttons and logos breed trust because they ARE official looking and because respected institutions stand behind them!

Take into account fraud fatigue. Remember, most of us who were around before the advent of online shopping have had the message drilled into us: Don't give out your credit card number over the phone (or in this case, phone lines). We need to be reassured that in the 21st century, it's okay to break this old rule.

Susan Grant, of Internet Fraud Watch, says it really IS okay: "Paying with a credit card is the safest way to shop online. Federal law protects credit card users if they don't get what they were promised or if unauthorized charges are made on their accounts."

Now, pass on that reassurance to your visitors. Outline your credit card security policy. Emphasize how safe the new encryption technology is.

If you have a customer satisfaction policy, define it. If not, write one and stand behind it. Brick and mortar commerce has survived into the 21st century because of its customer service ethic. E–commerce has to keep the pace.

Back this up with your own privacy policy. There's an incredible appetite out there for targeted e–mail addresses and other personal data. And there's no shortage of online vendors who have no qualms about selling that information. If you want your customers' confidence (and their return visit), spell out exactly what will happen with their personal data after they entrust it to you.

Don't forget about technical matters. A recent survey said the majority of consumers who abandoned their online transactions did so because their sessions were interrupted. That means we have to pay more attention to making the purchase process easier; fewer pages and smoother site performance are vital to keeping customers.

Now you're ready to deliver the coup de grace: Tell your visitors about your great customer service

department. Splash it all over your website, because this is the stuff that trust is made of. Consumers need to know there's a place to go or a number to call if they're not satisfied. Just the fact that you're spending money on customer service staff proves you're not a fly-by-nighter.

By breeding trust in these ways, you can slowly but surely turn your window shoppers into e-shopaholics... giving you more time and money to go shopping yourself!

Heather Reimer has been involved in print and electronic journalism for over 15 years and is currently the Copy Editor for iGlobalMedia.com, a leading edge affiliate management company. iGlobalMedia Group works with over 30,000 webmasters and promotes some of the best gaming sites online. You can visit them and learn more about their affiliate program at [www.iglobalmedia.com](http://www.iglobalmedia.com)

### **Build eBay Profits with a Powerful Category Strategy**

**By Paul Talbot**

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Sometimes it's tough to tell where your buyers are. You're not sure which category is the best place to list your item.

Not everyone has the benefit of an item to auction with a perfect eBay category waiting such as "Barbie Contemporary."

Here's a simple research process you can use to increase your chances of success. Search for similar items and see what categories they're in. If they're scattered across a few different categories, look for the categories where bids are being made. Bids matter, listings don't. Just keep in mind that the bids could be the result of other factors such as price, desirability and condition. Also, look at the performance of the seller. If she's a power seller she probably has an understanding of which categories work best for her auctions.

But what if your item doesn't seem to fit anywhere? What if nobody else is auctioning something similar? Get to know eBay's "Everything Else" category. Is there a fit for your item in "Gifts and Occasions" or one of the three subcategories in "Weird Stuff?"

These areas get high levels of traffic. Specifically there are a lot of browsers and your item may catch some attention here.

The "Slightly Unusual" category typically delivers more traffic than the other two. Study this area of eBay and you'll find everything from Weather Balloons to Tarot Cards.

Run tests of different categories. Run auctions with "Second Categories." Use the free Andale tools to keep track of page views.

Why should you test a second category? You may discover that bidders are where you least expect

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them. And if this happens, don't feel sheepish. Professional marketers armed with years of discipline and piles of research are trying to learn the exact same thing.

When Kimberly Clark first put Kleenex on the market the product wasn't designed for people with runny noses. Kleenex was advertised as a cold cream remover. Sales were terrible until the firm discovered their product was being used as a disposable handkerchief.

Once Kleenex wound up in the right category it flourished. It's the exact same scenario on eBay. Even with eBay search, getting your item in front of a prospective bidder is essential. Keep in mind that search will cover up a lot of listing shortcomings. But if you rely solely on search for your prospective bidders, you're losing a sea of browsers, impulse bidders who are a crucial segment of your market.

So if your auctions need a jolt, don't assume that the problem is price. Pay attention to your category. Even a great description in the less than ideal category can't turn browsers into bidders.

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Paul Talbot is the author of "Confessions of an eBay Power Seller." Learn more about successful selling on eBay at <http://www.onlineauctioninformation.com>



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