

Online Marketing: Online Auctions

By Aaron Turpen

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Many people have not considered the value of using online auction houses, such as eBay and Yahoo! Auctions, to promote their own businesses. No matter your business, with a little creativity, you can use this tool to market yourself.

There are three important pieces to the marketing puzzle when using auction websites: your user name, your profile, and your products.

When signing up, pick a user name that reflects your business. Your business name is preferred, but anything close (even your website name: yourbusiness.com) will do well. For example, my username on eBay is "AaronzWebWorkz."

The next focus is the "profile" page, which you will set up as a part of the signup process with these auction websites. In this profile, you are able to talk about yourself (read: "market yourself") and link to your website. This is fairly straightforward. Make sure that your links are correct and that you haven't made any spelling or grammatical errors. Short and sweet works best. The majority of those who do come to this page will read your information. If you make it too long, though, they might skip it. After all, most people who load these profiles are looking for other auctions, not your life story.

The final issue to deal with is your products. Even if you sell services (as I do), you can use these auction sites. If you are new to the auction site, read several other auctions and go through the posting process (without

hitting the final "post" button) to see how the auctions are structured. Once you have an idea of how you should go about posting your items and what kind of knowledge you'll need, start writing your product information. Do this by typing them into a text editor (Word, Notepad, etc.) and running them through a spell checker. Then re-read them once or twice to make sure you didn't miss anything or fudge the description. Once you're ready, go back to the auction site and post your ad. I'd suggest no more than one or two to get started. Once you have a handle on things (and have made a couple of sales), you'll be ready to post more often.

The auctions themselves are unimportant. I usually take a service that I perform for a minimal cost and post it at a bare minimum cost. For example, I do domain name appraisals normally at \$5 each. I post them on eBay at \$1 each as the starting bid. These don't take much time to do and are something that many people look for. Even selling at only a dollar, after eBay fees, I usually make about sixty cents profit. That doesn't sound like much, and it isn't, but I'm not in it for the money. A look at my server logs says that the thirty minutes a week I'm spending on my auction marketing is sending about 200 visitors to my site. This number has been steadily building since I began using this form of marketing a few months ago. The more you market, the more referrals you'll receive!

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Aaron Turpen is the proprietor of Aaronz WebWorkz, a full-service provider of Web needs to small businesses.

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