

# Slack Economy Fuels eBay Shopping

By Jim Edwards

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With the current economic outlook appearing fairly bleak for many individuals and businesses, most feel the need to make every dollar count.

But, no matter how bad the economy does or doesn't get for every one of us, one fact remains a constant of human nature: People love a bargain!

This fact came home quite clearly to me last week when I used eBay to turn an expensive business purchase into an almost guilty buying pleasure.

I needed to purchase a very specialized piece of equipment for my home office called a "Mimio Board." It converts a standard "white board" you draw on with erasable markers into a digital board you use with your PC. In short, everything you draw on the board shows up in the computer.

I really wanted this equipment, much like a 5-year old child really wants a new bike! Unfortunately, a new "Mimio Board" cost \$400 minimum. But, unlike the 5-year old who stamps his foot and screams "no fair", I did something about it. I went to eBay!

I did a quick search for "mimio" in hope of finding a used model at a reduced price. Much to my surprise I didn't find a used one, but I did find a brand new one still in the box and available at over 75% off!

It seemed such a great deal that I actually felt a bit skeptical and thought I smelled a "scam." But, like the 5-year old, I really wanted that bike, I mean "mimio board!"

So I enlisted the aid of a professional "eBay Power Buyer" with many years' experience (my wife) to help me evaluate the deal and whether or not to go for it.

As a veteran of hundreds of successful transactions, she gave me this eBay buying advice, which I now pass to you, my new bargain hunting friend:

**Check Feedback** - Every seller receives public feedback from past buyers. Carefully check this feedback and pay special attention to any negative comments. Look for trends and volume of negative comments. You should avoid sellers with lots of negative feedback, especially recent bad behavior indicating a decline in service.

**Check Descriptions** - Carefully read the item description to make sure it's exactly what you expect to receive. Look for any guarantees and always ask the seller questions before bidding. You can email the seller for a particular auction right from the item page.

**Shipping Charges & Insurance** - Before bidding, find out exactly how much it costs to ship an item to ensure the seller doesn't inflate the shipping charges to add profit. Though you must pay for it, always insist on shipping insurance for one-of-a-kind, fragile or expensive items.

**Payment** - Make sure you know how the seller accepts payment and how it affects product delivery time. Some sellers won't ship your product until after your check clears.

Overall, eBay makes a great place to find bargains for both home and business if you shop carefully and use common sense to avoid any obvious pitfalls.

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