



Buying Websites on eBay

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Introduction

Buying an established website is a great way to own a ready-made web presence. If the website is good you can enjoy the benefit of a strong position in the search engines and capitalise on an instant flow of traffic.

An established website gives you the chance to “jump the queue” as you don’t have to wait months for the search engines to rank you for your chosen keyword and niche.

eBay is becoming an increasingly popular venue for traders to sell their websites because keen buyers looking for an established, profitable website are ready to snap them up.

A quick look at eBay Pulse in the [UK](#) and the [USA](#) reveals that people are looking for “established”, “profitable” “website” “businesses”.

Unfortunately there are unscrupulous sellers who are listing rubbish and attracting bids of hundreds, if not thousands of pounds for websites not worth a fraction of that amount.

This guide has been created to help you determine what website’s are worth bidding on or purchasing and which one’s are best left well alone.

The guide looks at several aspects of a website that makes it valuable, such as:

- domain name
- content
- search engine position
- revenue

While this is not a definitive list of what makes one website more valuable than another, it should be enough to give you an idea to distinguish behind something worth spending your money on and something worth ignoring.

Domain Name

First of all, does the website on sale even have a domain name?

I have seen plenty of websites being sold for hundreds of pounds which **do not have a domain name**, meaning you are forking out **way over the odds** for something which is merely a “**template**” rather than a **unique** website.

This means if you want to put the website onto the internet, you will need to purchase a suitable domain name yourself.

Admittedly there is no great expense in doing this, but you should not be paying hundreds of pounds for something that:

- Is not indexed or even acknowledged by any search engines
- Will cost you a lot of time and money before you see any sort of return
- Can potentially be resold countless times by the seller, eliminating any possibility that what you have bought is “unique” in terms of content
- You could have produced yourself for a fraction of the asking price.

That is **not** to say you should completely ignore “template” websites of this type. If one features a subject you are interested in and can be purchased for **under £100** then it can give you a good basis from which to work from and develop yourself further.

If the website you are interested in buying does have a domain name attached then there are some other points to consider and we will look at each of them in turn:

- Age
- What the domain name actually is, e.g.

- Is it a memorable / generic keyword?
 - Length
 - Whether it contains hyphens
- Google PageRank value

Age

Put simply, older is better. The search engines look more favourably on older domains than freshly registered domain names for competitive subjects.

If the website listing in eBay does not state when the domain name was registered (or if it does and you want to double check) just visit www.whois.sc and type in the name.

Here you will see the exact date the domain name was registered and who by as well as the date of expiry.

Memorable & Generic Keywords

Does the website feature a memorable or generic set of keywords or is it something completely irrelevant to the content of the website?

For example, a website selling PS3 games which has the domain name **www.ps3games.com** would be more valuable than something like **www.welovegames.com**.

Both are quite short and memorable, but a website focusing on PS3 games which also features the keywords “PS3 games” in the domain name is a far better choice.

This is because it has better potential to rank higher in the search engines for “PS3 games” type search requests due to it being included in the domain name and also within the website content itself.

The term “PS3 games” is also quite **generic**, so may even benefit from “type in” traffic. This is where users simply type in a phrase and then suffix into the search bar of their browser to see if a website can fulfil their requirements.

If you think an available domain name is quite generic you can visit <http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/> and type it in.

For example, if we type in “ps3 games”, almost **31,000 monthly searches** for a similar term “ps3 game” is returned.

Searches done in January 2007	
Count	Search Term
30896	ps3 game
2417	new ps3 game
2094	upcoming game ps3
1742	ps3 game review
1734	date game ps3 release
1606	ps3 video game
1457	best game ps3

With over **1,000 searches** being performed **every day** for “ps3 games” there is a strong likelihood that some people are typing in **www.ps3games.com** straight into their browser to see what comes up.

Type in traffic gives you a great opportunity to make money from **free, laser targeted visitors** and puts you in a great position to resell the website for a profit at a later date.

Length of Domain Name & Use of Hyphens

Ideally, you want a domain name that is as **short** as possible.

Pretty much all of the three character domain names, e.g. **www.sun.com** have been registered and to purchase one would cost thousands of pounds.

It is unlikely a domain name of this calibre would ever appear on eBay but if you have a choice between two similar websites, go for one with a shorter, more memorable domain name as it will have better **resale value** later on down the line.

Do not be put off if a domain name uses **hyphens**. If it is just one separating a couple of words or two in between three then this is fine.

In fact, use of hyphens may even assist with **search engine optimisation** as they separate the keywords used in the domain.

Google PageRank Value

PageRank is a form of link analysis that assigns a numerical value by Google to domain names which have been linked to by other web pages and documents – zero being the lowest and 10 the highest. There is a good explanation of PageRank on Wikipedia:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagerank>

While PageRank should **not** be the be-all-and-end-all when looking to purchase a website, a higher value generally shows the current owner has made an effort

to get other websites to link to theirs which is a positive sign in terms of search engine optimisation and traffic.

If you can achieve a PageRank of **five or above**, then you have an opportunity to make an additional income **selling text links** on your website as other webmasters are keen to have high PageRank links pointing to their own websites.

This brings its own pitfalls. More unscrupulous sellers may “**fake**” their website domain name’s PageRank to make it appear more valuable than it actually is.

You can **check** to see if a domain name has legitimate or fake PageRank on this website:

<http://www.database-search.com/sys/pre-check-en.php>

Website

After giving you plenty of food for thought regarding the domain name (if any) now we can look at the actual website itself to see whether it is worth you parting with your hard earned money.

Some points to consider are as follows:

- Design & Navigation
- Maintenance, e.g. Content Management System
- Content

Design & Navigation

The concept of web design is so vast it is worthy of an entire guide of its own. However, the purpose of this guide is to give you some ideas on what to look for when buying a website on eBay.

In a nutshell, when purchasing a commercial website, it should adhere to these rules:

- The design of the website should compliment the topic and content
- The content should be relevant to it's target audience
- The website should be user-friendly with a simple and reliable navigational structure
- The style should be professional, consistent throughout and be relevant to the content and target audience
- The visibility of the website's text should take priority as that is what the visitors are looking for.

If you are not a web designer and are unable to redesign the website yourself then what you should look for is a **clean, professional design** throughout the website and one which is **easy to navigate**.

More information on web design can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Website_design

Modern websites also need to be **accessible** to people using a wide range of software and not just standard web browsers, especially those with disabilities such as visual impairments.

This is another consideration you must be aware of when purchasing a website on eBay. Further information can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_accessibility.

Maintenance

Both visitors and search engines alike love **fresh, new content** so you will need to be able to **update** your website regularly to keep it **interesting** and **useful**.

This is the **downfall** of many websites for sale on eBay.

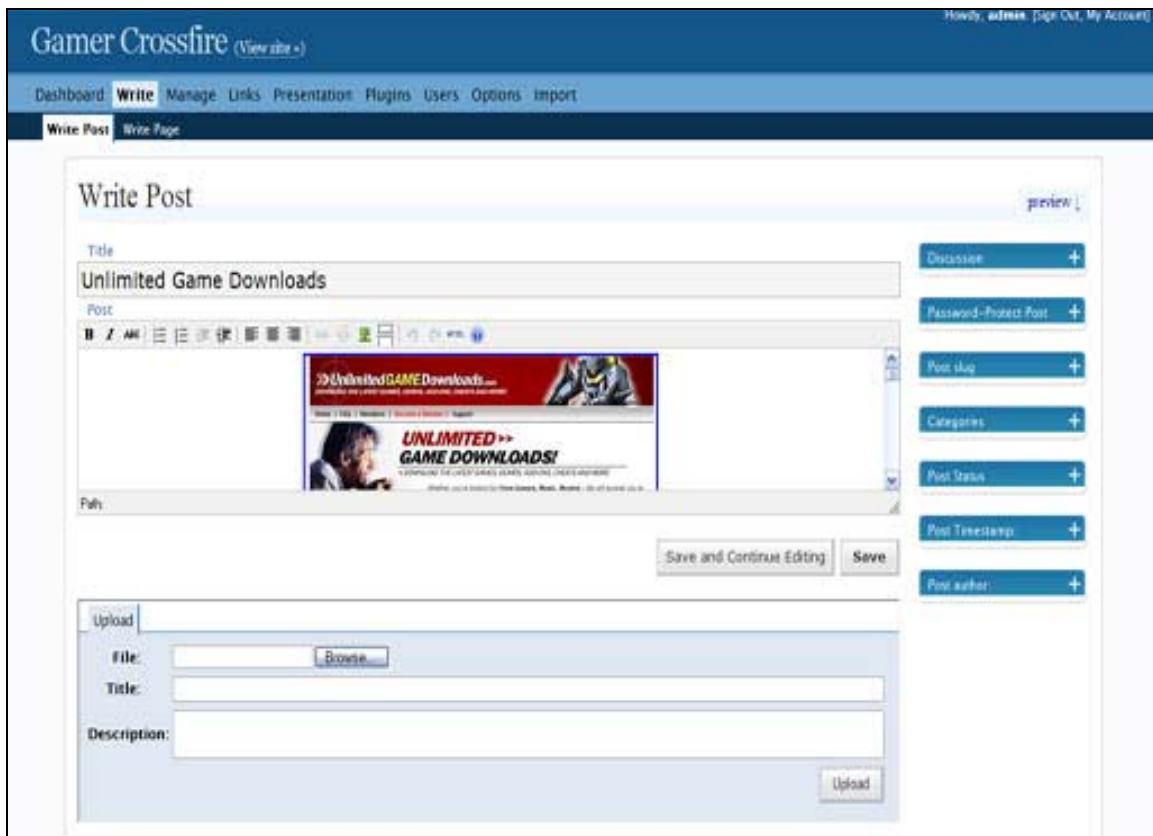
Sure, they may look OK and the listing says you “**only**” need an html editor such as Frontpage or Dreamweaver to update it **but** what they **don’t** tell you is this type of software **costs** hundreds of pounds to buy and you need to **learn** how to use it!

If you do not have access to a html editor or do not know enough basic web development to make the necessary changes, a much better option is to

purchase a website which comes with its own **Content Management System (CMS)**.

A good CMS will allow you **full access** and **control** over **all aspects of your website**, enabling you to add and remove pages, content, images and multimedia via an easy to use, intuitive, WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) interface.

As you can see the interface is similar to that of a Word Processing programme, making it easy for you to update yourself. E.g.



Many of the websites available at the [fulltimeonline eBay store](#) are built with [Wordpress](#), an amazing open source CMS which enables non-technical people to get the most out of their website and has a very active and helpful support community online.

If you are not from a web design background or if your knowledge in this area is limited, then you should opt to purchase a website which comes with a CMS every time to save yourself hours of frustration and hundreds of pounds in wasted money.

Content

The **content** of a website is its most **important** component. Indeed, the old adage **Content is King** has never been truer as thousands of new websites enter the World Wide Web every day.

You may have come across websites listed on eBay professing to have **hundreds**, if not **thousands** of pages of content.

However, what they **don't** tell you is these pages are **not original** and the content is likely to have been **copied** from an online article directory.

These websites may indeed have hundreds or thousands of pages but they are **worthless** and as **duplicate content** will not show up highly, **if at all**, in the search engines.

Worse still, some of these websites are created by **automated software** which **scrapes** article directories for content and are frowned upon by the search engines.

The software programme sometimes leave a “**footprint**” which tells the search engines how it was created, leading to **penalisation** or even a **total banning** from appearing in the search engine index.

You may well have spent hundreds of pounds on a website containing thousands of pages of content, but what is the point if **nobody** is ever going to **find it** via the search engines?

If a website's main selling point on eBay is its content, then you should make sure it is **original**.

You can do this by entering the address of any web page into www.copyscape.com and see if there are any other pages with identical or highly similar content on the internet.

Search Engine Optimisation & Traffic

If a website is new, then traffic is going to be minimal, if not zero. This doesn't matter as long as you are not paying hundreds of pounds for an as yet non-established website but you should check to see if it is optimised ready for the search engines as follows:

- Does it have relevant keywords inserted into the "Title" META Tags?
- Does it have relevant keywords and description inserted into the "Keywords" and "Description" META Tags?
- Does it have its main targeted phrase(s) added naturally into the content, but not overly done so it does not read properly or appear "spammy"?
- Does the website have an .xml sitemap?

For the META tags, visit the listed website and click "View" then "Source" in your browser. Towards the very top of the code you should see some which begins with the words "META".

For the sitemap, simply type in **www.the-website-you-are-interested-in.com/sitemap.xml** into your browser and see if one appear.

More information on what a sitemap is can be found here:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sitemap>

Websites with Traffic

What makes a website listed on eBay really valuable is if it has a high position in the search engines for a given set of search terms and as a result enjoys free, natural traffic.

This means you can start making money immediately as you don't have to concentrate so heavily in promoting the website.

A good eBay listing should provide you with screen shots of data relating to the number of daily visits the website receives, if not complete access to their webstats programme.

An important point to consider is there is a **difference** between **hits** and **visits**!

A "hit" refers to a request to the server for any object, including a html page, images or multimedia files. Therefore, if a webpage includes **nine** objects, then that counts for **10 hits** including the page itself.

A "visit" on the other hand, groups together all of the "hit" requests from the same browser. These figures are lower, but are more representative of the actual number of people visiting your website.

I find it frustrating seeing unscrupulous eBay sellers proclaiming their website gets thousands of "hits" per day in an attempt to dupe a less clued up eBay user into thinking they are buying an exceptionally popular and well-visited website.

Most web stats software can also show you other information which will be useful to determine how people are finding the website, such as:

- What keywords and search phrases people are using to find the website
- What search engines are sending the website traffic
- What other websites are sending the website traffic
- What pages people are entering and exiting the website on

If this information is not provided yet the seller claims a good position in the search engines they should give you a list of keywords so you can inspect this yourself.

You can also check yourself if the website is linked to from other sites by entering either **link:www.the-website-you-are-interested-in.com** into the Google search bar or **linkdomain:www.the-website-you-are-interested-in.com** into Yahoo.

If no stats are provided then it is possible the website is not listed very highly in the search engines and has minimal links pointing to it from other websites.

This is not much of a problem if the current webmaster is using pay per click (PPC) methods to drive traffic to the website.

If this is the case a list of all the keywords targeted and some information on their bid amounts should be the bare minimum provided to you so you are not left completely in the dark as to how the webmaster drove targeted traffic to the website.

Revenue

eBay is fast becoming a popular choice for webmasters to sell their established website businesses. If you are willing to pay hundreds of pounds, if not more, for a website then you need to know that it has made money consistently so you will be able to recoup your investment.

There are several types of website for sale on eBay which are earning money, such as:

- Those that carry physical stock
- Those that sell digital information products and downloadable software
- Those that promote affiliate programmes, such as Amazon or Clickbank
- Those monetised by advertising such as Google AdSense

Websites which sell **physical stock** are almost always more expensive than the rest because the stock itself has a cost and you also have issues or **storage** and **order fulfilment** to contend with.

Websites which deal with digital products are often more attractive to beginner internet entrepreneurs as there are few ongoing costs, no storage space required and orders can be fulfilled automatically.

Sellers claiming to make money from their listed websites should be able to provide some **evidence** of their earnings, such as screenshots of their **orders** or **bank statements**.

If the website being sold has a track record for making money over a period of months, you should expect to pay a **minimum** of four to six months worth of income for that website.

For example, if a website averages **£200** a month profit, then you should expect to pay a minimum of around **£1,000**.

If the seller does not think they are going to receive a fair price for the website then they may pull the listing before the auction ends, even if they are not strictly supposed to do so.

Some sellers have advertised websites as currently making hundreds of pounds a week in profit but offer **no evidence to support these claims**.

These listings should be met with caution.

Beware of “Expected Earnings”

Beware of websites on eBay which the seller proclaims earnings of thousands of pounds in the listing title or subtitle but when you read the listing fully you find these are only “expected earnings”.

Essentially you are buying a **brand new** website with **no track record** of making **any** money.

I have seen many websites listed for sale claiming to “**make thousands with a bit of promotion**” and I think of the unsuspecting eBay user who has bid upwards of a thousand pounds on a **complete turkey**.

Usually these are websites based around a **broad** topic such as dieting, stress, golf, parenting, electronics, weddings etc. which have thousands of pages of scraped, duplicate content.

As we have established before – completely worthless.

If the website has **no proof** or track record of earning, yet the seller claims thousands of pounds a year in profit can be made, ask yourself **how?**

Watch Out for Outright Fakes

While there are many excellent website businesses for sale on eBay you should also guard yourself against the fakes.

I have seen several websites listed for sale claiming to be established for a year or more and come complete with screenshot graphics of their Paypal accounts full to the brim with customer orders across a period of several months.

This may look promising but the eBay listing was a complete **fraud**.

A quick trip to our friend at www.whois.sc showed the domain name had been registered **a day before the auction listing began** so it had absolutely **no chance** of making the claimed profits months before it even **existed!**

The seller may have indeed made this money months ago, but it certainly wasn't with the website listed for sale!

Hidden Gems for Fast Profits

With eBay growing in popularity all the time and more websites being listed for sale it is possible to snap up a bargain on the cheap and **relist it for a profit!**

These bargains can be found beyond the Featured listings and in the **regular listing** section of the website category.

Often, these websites never even make it to the first page if there is a slew of featured listings and receive a **fraction** of the viewings compared to those who pay a bit more for the exposure.

This is where you come in.

Trawl the regular listing section and see if you can find any decent websites which have **any** of the selling points described in this document, such as:

- It's already making money
- It's featured prominently in the search engine for a given phrase
- It features unique content
- It is well designed and has an integrated content management system
- The domain name has a PageRank value

Any of these features could make the website a viable resale opportunity. If the listing has received low or no bids or offers then put it on your "watch" list and keep a close eye on it. The chances are it will receive very little interest compared to those on in the featured section, giving you the chance to buy it cheaply and having a great resale opportunity!

This practice is known as [website flipping](#) and can be a great supplemental income!