

## Going, Going, Gone! eBay Online Auction for MRO

Written by Terrence O'Hanlon, ReliabilityWeb.com  
Sunday, 01 June 2003 12:55

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I have a friend who bought an old farmhouse in rural Nebraska from a family who never threw anything away. Somewhere in those piles, my friend came across some Barbie doll outfits unopened from the 1960s and asked if I could help him sell them.

I decided to list the outfits at an eBay online auction. I set a minimum bid requirement of \$25 (I should have done better research). Within a few hours, my minimum bid was far surpassed and for the next few days I watched as Barbie collectors from around the world fought for ownership. I will not reveal the final selling price, but I will tell you it was high enough to reaffirm every thought I ever had about free enterprise.

Before eBay, we could have held a garage sale or placed an ad in the local classifieds, and sold the item for the \$25 we thought it might be worth. By using eBay, we were able to instantly reach motivated buyers from around the world and get a fair market price for the item, all for a couple of dollars in listing fees.

Recently eBay announced a new focus for maintenance and repair operations (MRO) products. You now can find forklifts, compressors, generators, motors, gearboxes, valves, HVAC units, material handling, tools, and much more available on eBay.

“Our entry into the MRO market was driven by our online community. We noticed that our community began trading all sorts of business goods, including MRO. As a result of this activity, we decided to aggregate all of our business listings into common categories along with MRO and place them in a special section of the eBay.com site at [www.ebaybusiness.com](http://www.ebaybusiness.com),” stated Laurence Toney, category manager for MRO at eBay.

eBay Business is a great online marketplace for any business to purchase the supplies and equipment it needs because it provides access to an efficient secondary market of new and used products at great prices.

In today's competitive, budget-conscious environment, businesses must be on the lookout for creative ways to reduce costs. Buying used, refurbished, or surplus items enables them

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to equip their businesses for pennies on the dollar when compared with new, top-of-the-line items. Many businesses are too small to benefit from discounts for buying in bulk, and they fall under the radar screen of many traditional distribution channels. Often, they are looking for high-quality used equipment or late-model new equipment. Now with eBay, small businesses have access to a broader selection of products, 24 hours a day, right from their desktops.

How do you know if the eBay seller is reputable? The cornerstone of eBay is the user feedback system that provides buyers with a record of each seller's transaction history. Buyers can see the reputation of a seller based on the feedback of other users with whom the seller has done transactions on eBay. eBay's Toney provides this advice:

- When reviewing a listing, note the seller's positive feedback percentage, featured at the top of the listing. Many sellers exceed 98 percent.
- Click on the "Read all reviews" link to see what other buyers are saying.
- Don't automatically write off a seller with a few negatives. Misunderstandings do occur.

You may even want to consider selling some of your surplus MRO items at eBay. Toney offered a few indispensable tips to be a successful seller:

- Browse the site and get a sense of what prices are for similar items.
- Use the auction format to discover the price of an item or maximize its value. To sell an item quickly, add the Buy It Now feature.
- Include detailed and accurate item descriptions.
- If selling a costly capital asset, include multiple photos that highlight different views, features, and any damage. Photos can make or break a sale.
- Take advantage of upgrades, such as Bold and Featured Plus. They have proved to increase visibility and bidding.

Once you have sold a few items and decide to scale the volume of items for sale, consider using one of eBay's more robust, professional sales management tools, such as Selling Manager, Turbo Lister, and Seller's Assistant Basic or Pro.

In the future, eBay plans to expand the MRO/industrial categories, with 110 subcategories, including industrial automation and control, electrical tools and supplies, plumbing and pumps, electrical distribution, cleaning supplies, and packaging. You can go to [www.ebay.com/mro](http://www.ebay.com/mro)

which will lead to a portal page of all available MRO and industrial items.

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