



Massage Today

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Did You Know eBay Sells Massage?

By Colleen (Steigerwald) Holloway, LMT

While aimlessly surfing eBay.com recently, I decided to type the word "massage" as a search item. As expected, I found several massage related items such as tables, massage oils and tools.

What I didn't expect to find were massage gift certificates. My interest was peaked. With 32 listings, I was pleased to see there were 32 adventurous people in our industry who were thinking outside the box with their advertising efforts.

I'm always exploring new marketing methods, so I decided to contact as many of the sellers as possible to find out if selling massage gift certificates on eBay was worth their efforts. Thank you to everyone I spoke with.

Overall, it was agreed that the advertisement alone was worth their time. Although none of the items sold at full market value, many contacts were made by random viewers and additional sales were made, making it a worthy investment. The number of viewers for each auction item varied from 25 to 90.

The fee to list and sell a massage gift certificate on eBay runs around \$3 to \$4. If your item does not sell, the fee is less. The therapists I spoke with claimed nearly every gift certificate on auction, sold. Most used a starting bid of around 40% to 60% of the full value.

If you're even slightly interested in marketing gift certificates via eBay.com, here are some valuable tips I learned from my interviews.

If you have a Web site, add the URL to the description area. This allows viewers to obtain more information about you and your business, emphasizing professionalism. One therapist I spoke with did not have a Web site, but he added his wedding photo to the description area so viewers would perceive him as a nice, family man. Now that's smart marketing, especially for male therapists who have to deal with gender issues.

When you do sell your eBay item, you are given the option to contact all of the losing bidders with a "second chance" offer to purchase a gift certificate at the highest bid they placed. Therefore, if the auction item sold for \$60 and the last bidder who was outbid offered to pay \$55 as their highest bid, you can contact that bidder and offer to sell them an additional gift certificate at their highest bid of \$55.

Because eBay.com is a national online auction and your prospective buyers are local residents, it is important to add your city location or multiple close locations in the item description area. Therefore, when buyers are searching for gift certificates and type in "Dallas," for example, they will find your auction item.

Because buyers want to see what they will be bidding on, adding a picture of the gift certificate will increase bids. If you offer to gift box the gift certificate, you will increase the bids even more, as many of the buyers bid on the auction items to give as gifts.

Another way to increase bids is to add testimonials to the item description. Each time you sell any auction item, the buyer has the opportunity to leave feedback on his or her experience. This feedback, whether positive or negative, is available for everyone to see. By making a notation within your description about the positive feedback or simply by adding testimonials from your satisfied clients, you instill confidence in your prospective buyers.

Some sellers added an expiration date to the gift certificate. Others did not simply because state laws prohibit them from using expiration dates.

If you are concerned about your regular clients purchasing the gift certificates, then you can do what one therapist I interviewed does, and add a waiver to the auction item stating that the item is for new clients only, but buyers always can purchase a gift certificate to give as a gift. You also might want to add that the gift certificate is non-refundable for cash and may not be used with any other offers or discounts.

Every auction item I viewed was listed for 7 days, and it was agreed by all that adding the "Buy Now" option, where you list a set price to end the auction immediately upon that bid, did not work. The seller incurs an additional charge from eBay to include the "Buy Now" option.

So how do you start selling your massage gift certificates on eBay? Go to eBay.com and press the "Register" button on the top of the page. Once you're registered, you can begin auctioning your gift certificates.

Happy Selling!

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