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YOU KNOW YOU HAVE A BUSINESS ON EBAY WHEN . . .

It's the most commonly asked question at my eBay University presentations around the country: "I've been selling on eBay for a while, but I don't know if I should treat it as a hobby or a business." Sooner or later, every eBay seller has to make the fateful decision: should I do this only occasionally for the fun of it, or should I consider making a part-time or full-time living doing this? Sometimes the decision is made for you, as when so many people are asking you to sell their stuff on eBay that before you know it you've made \$50,000 or more in profits and you almost have to treat it as a business.

Here are 20 signs, David Letterman-style, that your eBay selling activities are getting a wee bit beyond the "hobby" stage.

20. You've run out of things in your attic and basement to sell on eBay, but you're continuing to sell stuff from . . . somewhere.

19. After putting your garbage out by the curb on pickup day, you drive around the neighborhood to see if anybody is throwing away anything interesting.

18. You've taken out classified ads in the local newspapers and have placed one-page "flyers" in all of your neighbors' mailboxes offering to help other people clean out their attics and basements on eBay – for a fee, of course.

17. You begin haunting local funeral parlors, like Paul Newman in *The Verdict*, offering your eBay selling services to bereaved relatives who just can't bear the thought of cleaning out Mom's house.

16. You're personally acquainted with every estate, divorce and bankruptcy attorney in your community.

15. A hedge fund wants to invest in what you're doing.

14. You consider building out the shed in your backyard, or adding a third story to your center-hall colonial, so you'll have more room to store your inventory.

13. You keep your Chihuahua chained to your eBay inventory at night so you can deduct him as a "guard dog".

12. The first things you read in the newspaper every morning are the liquidation and creditors' notices in the "legal" section of the classified ads page.

11. You carry rolls of hundred dollar bills to garage sales, arriving just as the homeowners are putting out their stuff, and offer to buy everything they have, sight unseen.
10. You own the complete works of Janelle Elms, Marsha Collier, Joseph Sinclair and Jim “Uncle Griff” Griffith (if you don’t know who these folks are, you probably aren’t quite “there” yet).
9. You’re on a first name basis with every employee of your town dump, the head of the local trucker’s union, and every freight liquidator, customs broker and factory outlet within a 50-mile radius.
8. You arrive at 6 a.m. for your local library’s annual book sale with 36 empty liquor boxes and three illegal-immigrant “day laborers” to help you pack up your truck.
7. You have so many student interns helping you create eBay auction pages the local community college has named a faculty chair after you.
6. You know exactly where you can find motor vehicles that were “formerly owned by drug dealers”.
5. You know which brands of perfume, housewares and other consumer goods are being discontinued by their manufacturers within the next six months – and which distributors are likely to have overstocks of these items.
4. The talk show hosts on eBay Radio (www.wsradio.com) have your home phone number on speed-dial.
3. The local kids can’t play basketball in the street anymore because they’re too busy dodging UPS trucks going to and from your home office.
2. You’re setting up a charitable foundation to teach convicts in your state prison system how to use TurboLister, SellingManager Pro and Blackthorne.

And last but not least . . .

1. You make at least one penny in profit each year from your eBay selling activities.