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My First e.Bay "burn"

Message #1 Posted by *Scuba Diver* on 4 July 2003, 2:40 p.m.

Well, I figured it would happen sooner or later.

I bid on an auction for an HP-28S. Here's the description of the item.

"This calculator has been in it's box since I bought it for college but never used it. If you are a collector it doesn't get better than this. It was always stored at room temperature/humidity. I just installed new bateries and it looks and runs like new."

The one thing that I noticed was that although he had a couple of positive feedbacks, his account was less than a month old. The other issue was that the auction was ending in a couple of hours...bad combination!

I sent the seller an email asing "if the item was never used, then are the manuals still shrinkwrapped?" There was no reply, so at the last moments of the auction, I went against my gut and put in a bid...it was high, but I thought it would be worth it for a calculator that is as mint as the seller described.

A couple of hours after the auction, I received a reply from the seller "it's used". Hmmm...I'm a bit dubious...so I ask him how "used" this calculator could be, since he said it was bought for college but never used. His reply was that he opened it to try out the features but that was all.

At this point, I knew I was in trouble, but I had already won the auction.

Anyhow, the item arrived yesterday. The inside of the clamshell is covered in dirt and dust, the rubber feet are worn, and there is a scratch on the top right hand corner, with a small chip missing from the plastic near the battery door.

I gave the seller the benefit of the doubt and wrote him, telling him that I wasn't satisfied, that I don't think he described the item accurately, and that I want my money back. His reply was curt (to say the least), but he agreed. So I asked him to send 1/2 the money now, I'll ship it, then he could send the other 1/2 when it arrives.

Well, he said that he won't send any money until the unit arrives back, because he wants to check the condition! I can already see what the outcome will be...he'll get it, say that it was pristene when he sent it, and that I must have dropped it, and then I'm out both the calculator and the money. He has done nothing thus far to show me that he's trustworthy or that his is a man of his word, so why would I start to trust him now?

I figure it's a case of I said, you said...and there's nothing that can be done. I told him that none of this would have happened if he would have just been open and honest...someone would have gladly paid \$80 US for this calc...he went to all of this trouble to lie just for what, an extra \$40? It's very sad...if this person thinks that it's worth treating people like that for \$40, then they must be really hard up.

I just hope he realizes that what goes around, comes around.

If anyone has any other ideas, I'm listening! Oh, and keep your eyes open on the Classifieds for a "mint" 28S that I might be selling soon! :)

B.

Re: My First e.Bay "burn"

*Message #2 Posted by **Matthias** on 4 July 2003, 3:13 p.m.,
in response to message #1 by Scuba Diver*

I also had problems with sellers. Perhaps some tips for you:

1) Never bid on a item without seen a picture of the item. 2) Don't trust the word "mint". 3) Don't big on a item, when you are not absolutely shure, that you get what you want. Not in the last minute.

For now, you could send the seller some pictures, holding the calc. So he can check it's condition. I wouldn't give him a negative feedback, cause he will change his user name at ebay and you will get a negative feedback too...

Sorry, that's all I can do for you, but I feel with you as I has the same probleme one year before...

Matthias

Re: My First e.Bay "burn"

*Message #3 Posted by **Scuba Diver** on 4 July 2003, 3:28 p.m.,
in response to message #2 by Matthias*

Thanks Matthias!

I know...usually I ask all of my questions days in advance, get closeups, etc...but this time I didn't and it obviously burned me.

Live and learn, right? B.

Re: My First e.Bay "burn"

Message #4 Posted by **Ernie Malaga** on 4 July 2003, 4:30 p.m.,
in response to message #1 by Scuba Diver

I've been advocating against eBay ever since I knew of its existence. You're trusting someone you've never met, who lives you-don't-know-where, who can lie and deceive with impunity by way of fictitious descriptions and phony photographs.

I know that there are many satisfied eBay customers. But, contrariwise, there are many who got burned the way you just did. I have no idea what legal recourse you may have, but I suspect you have none. That's the risk you take.

People, please always remember that eBay is an auction carried out by anonymous people and that there will always be crooks waiting for an unsuspecting fellow to fall in their nets. These crooks can disappear anytime by simply changing their email address, and (pobably) can be anywhere in the world.

I'm sorry you got burned. I hope you won't use eBay ever again.

-Ernie

Re: My First e.Bay "burn"

Message #5 Posted by **Scuba Diver** on 4 July 2003, 4:40 p.m.,
in response to message #4 by Ernie Malaga

Well, 98% of my transactions have been completed to my satisfaction. I think that most people are honest, but there will always be people out there who are liars and cheaters who take advantage. When they were kids, they probably wrote the answers to tests on their arms and now that they've grown up (physically, not emotionally or cognitively), they continue.

I think that my lesson learned here is to apply lots more due diligence before making a bid.

B.

Re: My First e.Bay "burn"

Message #6 Posted by **Patrick** on 4 July 2003, 8:25 p.m.,
in response to message #4 by Ernie Malaga

I have made some 50+ transactions through eBay with purchase amounts ranging from a couple of dollars to \$340. I have had just a few disappointments so far. In most of those cases, the seller has offered to make amends, usually by refunding my money or by re-negotiating a smaller sale amount.

If I had stayed away from eBay like you suggest, there would have been no practical way for me to amass the wonderful machines I now have in my collection, and which continue to give me a great deal of pleasure. I have also met and had wonderful email conversations with a great many of my sellers. There are a lot of very good and kind folks who offer their wares through eBay.

Yes, the possibility (more like probability) exists that I will also get burned one day. Amortized over all of my eBay transactions, it is not much different financially than buying insurance and having the insurance company reimburse my loss. Even Scuba Diver's loss, while disgraceful and lamentable, apparently amounted to only \$40.

I personally feel that staying away from eBay is akin to flushing the baby with the bathwater.

Re: My First e.Bay "burn"

*Message #7 Posted by **Valentin Albillo** on 4 July 2003, 8:56 p.m.,
in response to message #6 by Patrick*

I fully agree with Patrick.

I've made 60+ transactions through eBay, always for amounts of \$100-\$300, and never once have I suffered any obvious scams or attempts to deceive, which would have been even easier in my case, being an international buyer. Should the seller decide not to send the item, or send a faulty one, there's nothing at all I can do from 6 thousand miles across the ocean.

Despite that hard fact of having to purchase entirely on faith, I've had only two very minor incidents, the worst being the seller specified that the machine included new cells and a manual, and the machine came with no cells and no manual, but otherwise cosmetically perfect and working.

On the contrary, I've found a number of extremely honest and helpful sellers, which didn't mind my check taking up to two weeks to arrive (before I got a Paypal account), which were eager to establish an agreed Buy-It-Now price when I asked if they would, that would deliver items much better than described (even new !), that would take all care to package items properly so that they could withstand the long, hazardous journey. Most of them were also extremely kind and friendly, and left wonderfully caring feedbacks.

I don't think this is just pure luck, but even if it is, I agree with Patrick: there was no practical way for me to get the wonderful machines I now have, and even if one transaction would come off bad every 60 (or even every 30) excellent ones, that's a risk I'm willing to take, and it won't certainly keep me from taking advantage of such an incredible treasure trove as eBay offers every day.

Take care, Scuba, I hope your actual disillusioned state wears out as soon as you get some wonderful machine from an honest, friendly eBay seller, they are the vast majority for sure. I agree that if HP calc prices continue skyrocketing, that may attract an increasing number of scammers and dishonest people in the future, but right now it isn't that bad at all, and if you stick to a number of well-known, large-positive feedback sellers, *and refrain from hunch-driven, impulsive bids on dubious products offered by unknown sellers*, your success rate will improve dramatically and will stay so.

Best regards from V.

I got gypped once... Scuba Diver is missing something

*Message #8 Posted by **Norm** on 5 July 2003, 3:57 a.m.,
in response to message #7 by Valentin Albillo*

eBay is too fantastically powerful a tool to dismiss using it because of the usual human dirt that are out there.

I got gypped once on a portable oscilloscope.

The guy says 'its in great shape' and the photos were arranged to conceal how messed up it was.

The thing shows up.... the lid is taped on with duck tape !! And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

So I'm feeling gypped and I am ready to leave negative feedback but it says 'give the seller a chance to make it right'.

So I talk to the seller, he says "fine send it back and I send you the money back". So I sent it back, and along the way, a cashier's check shows up in the mail. I was surprised how willing they were (even a crooked seller) to cancel the transaction.

Now, here's where Scuba Diver is missing something. He should not fear the other guy. He should not fear that he will say 'you did all that' etc etc. and do not fear that he will not refund the money.

Send it back, and cross your fingers. Why ?????? Because of NEGATIVE FEEDBACK. Negative feedback can be a powerful tool. I suppose its not if the guy is a total fake. That's why you can get real suspicious with sellers who aren't here long term..... who don't have 40+ items of pos feedback.

So the guy accepts the merchandise back, and doesn't refund? Post negative feedback and move on.

Out of about 100 eBay transactions, I've had about 3 total klinkers (person never shipped, drastically worse than said, etc). A few more than that were duds, but the seller made it right in the end.

The biggest losers I've had involve sales of small-time music CD's and maybe a few low-budget DVD's. Those \$5 transactions are the WORST for somebody not fulfilling their obligations.

YES, be real cautious and bid with caution and really STUDY that seller before you decide that he's worth it. How much feedback, what other auctions, and trade some e-mail with him. If the jerk won't trade substantive e-mail before the sale, then maybe he won't trade email properly afterwards either.

In the end, eBay is a blast. Back around 1990, I could NEVER have predicted that the internet could create such an extraordinarily powerful tool. Now, if we could just relocate Carly and Bill Gates to their wonderful new residences on the surface of Mercury (use one-way rockets).

- Norm

Re: I got gypped once... Scuba Diver is missing something

*Message #9 Posted by [Iqbal](#) on 5 July 2003, 6:21 a.m.,
in response to message #8 by Norm*

Sorry for your bad experience Scuba Diver. My first and hopefully only bad experience on ebay was a little more costly than yours. There was a photo of a Sokkia Set 5F total station with a buy it now feature for \$1500. The guy said it was great condition but didn't have a battery to try it out. No problem, I was prepared to have it serviced anyway. I sent a cashier's check, and for the first time in my life I was told that there were problems at the bank and I had to wait 7 days for it to clear. Well at that point I knew something was wrong. Anyway, one week later he shipped it out. To add to the start of my woes, I had to pay duties on entry to Trinidad, West Indies. "It was junk" was the description a service technician gave me. The major chassis was forced open and bent beyond repair. The telescope couldn't make a complete 360 degrees. Any child could see the physical destruction of the instrument. The guy replied to my negative feedback and said that he didn't know anything about surveying. The idiot.

However, ebay is not always a sad story. I did get some good stuff there.

I did learn a "valuable" lesson though. Never pay more than \$250 for anything on ebay unless you're positively sure of the seller's description.

Re: I got gypped once... Scuba Diver is missing something

*Message #10 Posted by [Scuba Diver](#) on 5 July 2003, 8:14 a.m.,
in response to message #9 by Iqbal*

Thanks to everyone who has been posting replies to my "rant".

I wanted to clear something up; I am going to continue to use eBay to purchase items, because to be honest, I can't be bothered going to garage sales and hunting for old calcs.

I will, however, be leary of people who don't have long-term accounts and high feedback rates. This guy's account is less than a month old and has 3 positives; I doubt that some negative feedback will stop him. He'll just close up shop and open a new account...

I'm going to see if he's willing to refund part of the money, otherwise I'll probably just list it on eBay (honestly, of course) and see what I get...

Unless, of course, someone wants a mint 28S...if you're a collector, it doesn't get any better than this! :)

B.

Re: Limitations of Negative Feedback

*Message #11 Posted by **Paul Brogger** on 7 July 2003, 5:24 p.m.,
in response to message #8 by Norm*

From the perspective of someone who sets up a SINGLE eBay account for all his dealings, and who wants to build, over the long term, a reputation as a trustworthy buyer and/or seller, eBay feedback is a powerful tool and incentive.

It sounds, however, as if this seller's account is relatively new. I'm not sure, but I imagine that someone with a number of scams to pull will simply create a new account as soon as the negative feedback starts accumulating.

I don't know what eBay's policies are with regard to multiple accounts to the same person, and/or whether there's a way to abandon an account with a bad reputation and start anew. (But I suspect there is.)

I've seen that an item listed by an established seller with a good reputation can command a significant premium over a similar item offered by a new seller. Bargains are available from the newbies, but **Communicate**³ before sending money!

False descriptions are VERY common now

*Message #12 Posted by **Mike** on 5 July 2003, 7:07 p.m.,
in response to message #1 by Scuba Diver*

I'm finding more and more auctions that have calculators that are nothing like the description. Be careful...

There is even one seller, that sells lots of HP calculators that offers a DOA guarantee and sells non-working or partially working calculators and refuses to honor the DOA "because it's not 100% dead."

Here are some **calculator buying tips**.

Never buy a calculator without asking questions. Some givens.

- MINT calculators are almost never MINT
- Any calculator that has a card reader, will have a defective reader, unless the seller says it has been tested.
- Any HP computer that has a tape drive, will be defective, unless the seller says it has been tested

- Phrases like "Worked last time it was used" is code for "probably doesn't work now"
- DOA guarantee that does not cover all forms of non-working calculators, is WORTHLESS

You can find great stuff on eBay but you MUST ASK QUESTIONS.

Don't accept short vague answers. Ask for detailed specifics. Vague terms like "works" does not mean it is 100% functional to most sellers. A classic example on almost every HP-85 sold is the claim that it "works" But most sellers mean "something shows up on the CRT." But 99.99% of these will have defective tape drives and about 50% have printers that are about to die. Both the tape drive capstan and printer belts are prone to disolving. I have yet to find a 100% working HP-85, that hadn't already been repaired and advertized as such.

They all have bad tape drives. eBay is getting really bad. Too many wholesale sellers trying to get collector prices on calculators that aren't even working.

Edited: 5 July 2003, 7:18 p.m.

HP-85 capstan "repairs"

*Message #13 Posted by [Vassilis Prevelakis](#) on 5 July 2003, 9:27 p.m.,
in response to message #12 by Mike*

Mike wrote on 5 July 2003:

> [HP-85s] have bad tape drives. eBay is getting really bad. Too many wholesale sellers
> trying to get collector prices on calculators that aren't even working.

And some of the "fixed" ones are ready to fall apart again.

You can test such "repairs" by doing a

CTAPE

Which does a wind to EOT and then a rewind to BOT, to retension the tape. Most "repaired" rollers will fall apart. Doing a

CAT

on a tape is not sufficient.

**vp

Mine don't (AFAIK) - Good Tip

Message #14 Posted by [Mike](#) on 5 July 2003, 10:38 p.m.,

in response to message #13 by Vassilis Prevelakis

I haven't ever seen any problems with my tape capstan repairs. At least, no one has ever told me about any problems.

Because of your tip, I just checked my latest repair and I performed **5 CTAPE operations**, in rapid succession and there is no weakening of the bond. Still works great. **Great tip.**

I did have one band come off one time but that was on one of my earlier repairs but that was after about 4 hours of continuous tape copying. I think I put that unit through about a tough a test as one could do. After I reattached the band, it worked great. I suspect I didn't let the bonding agent cure well enough.

The secret is to use the proper material and a good bonding agent. I use a precisely cut band and a very good bonding agent. The bond is very strong. I don't like using o-rings, surgical tubing or heat shrink tubing, for this repair.

[Here is a photo of the capstan material I use.](#)

Edited: 6 July 2003, 1:19 a.m.

Re: My First e.Bay "burn"

*Message #15 Posted by **Garry** on 5 July 2003, 10:13 p.m.,
in response to message #1 by Scuba Diver*

Sorry about your "bad" Ebay experience. I've gotten a new "burn" of my own from someone selling eproms off the HP WANT ADS. I think all of us that read the HP FORUM should publish a bad seller's id name, and not buy from these individuals. I also think if a person gets burned buying something off the HP WANT ADS, they should be able to post that person's name, and the person selling not be allowed to use the site to sell.

I don't sell off of the HP Site but...

*Message #16 Posted by **Mike** on 5 July 2003, 10:50 p.m.,
in response to message #15 by Garry*

There is another side to the coin. I don't sell off of the HP Museum site. I try to limit my use of the wantads for "trades." However, I once DID get burnt buying something from the HP wantads **but one can get burnt anywhere.**

The problem with posting names is that I have also had people try to scam me. Someone once bought something from me and said it didn't work. I told them to return the item, for repair, and I discovered that the buyer took out a part that they needed. It was obvious. He tried to get a refund rather than a repair. That was also a giveaway.

I have a real simple process to protect against this now. I take high resolution images of one or two of the screws that hold the cases together. Anyone tampering with them, surely wouldn't be able to get everything back as it was. The photos take only a couple of seconds to take.

Bottomline is that one can get burnt as a buyer or a seller. It would be completely unfair to post the seller's name and allow buyers to scam and hold sellers hostage. With vintage electronics, you can't have "buy and try" which is what some buyers like to try and get away with.

The ONLY real solution is to ask questions and ask for photos.

Re: I don't sell off of the HP Site but...

*Message #17 Posted by **Garry** on 6 July 2003, 1:01 p.m.,
in response to message #16 by Mike*

I didn't post anyone's name on my previous post but my own. I apologize for any bad feelings I've generated in this community with my previous post. My intent was to see if others had similar experiences.

Re: My First e.Bay "burn"

*Message #18 Posted by **Gordon Dyer** on 6 July 2003, 6:25 p.m.,
in response to message #1 by Scuba Diver*

Ask him for a phone number to discuss it with him.

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