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## HOW TO BUILD YOUR ONLINE CONSIGNMENT BUSINESS

Get the Word Out!

Consignment is a simple concept—taking other people's products and selling them for a percentage of the sale. According to Skip McGrath, of <http://skipmcgrath.com>, a successful eBay PowerSeller, “[Consignment selling] is the fastest growing phenomenon on eBay.” The key to successful online consignment is marketing your services. You really have to promote your business, and McGrath shares some techniques for doing just that. There are four areas you'll use: advertising, public relations, networking, and creating a website.

1. Advertising: the market you're in will determine your course of action here. The Retail Market—selling products for ordinary people:

- Door hangers
- Classified ads in small to medium-sized market newspapers
- Flyers
- Posters
- Radio spots
- Attorneys—estate executors and bankruptcy processors

The Business to Business Market—selling excess inventory for retailers and manufacturers:

- Classified ads in business journals
- Direct mail
- Attorneys—bankruptcy processors
- Local charities and not-for-profits—rather than always asking their supporters for money, they can ask them to donate products you know will sell. So you can build a relationship that's profitable for both of you.

2. Public Relations.

- Write a press release, print out a copy and mail it to all your local newspapers—they'll promote your new business in hopes you'll advertise with them.

- Community groups—the Lions, the Jaycees, your local chamber of commerce. These are especially useful for business marketing. Your chamber of commerce should have a newsletter that you can advertise in and every chamber member in town will get.

If you sign up for a community group, volunteer for something. You'll make more contacts and be taken more seriously than if you just show up to the meetings to gain more contacts.

3. Networking

- The McGrath 3-foot Rule. Explains McGrath, “I always have business cards on me...and anyone that gets within 3 feet of me [is] going to learn what I do.”
- Cold call on potential customers. Walk around the business section of town (or your neighborhood for retail) and let them know that you can help them liquidate their surplus merchandise. If businesses seem reticent, offer to let them give you one or two pieces as a trial and then make sure you do a good job selling those.
- Build a database of your customers. Collect business cards and stay in contact periodically. Send an email, send a Christmas card. Retaining customers is easier than finding new ones.

4. Create a website

- Try to include your city and the word “consignment” in the title—these are very popular search terms right now.
- Have a link from your site to your consignors so they can check the status of their own auctions.
- Send out emails or newsletters through your website to your customer database.

You may find some methods work for you better than others, but the main thing is just to let the world know you're there—get the word out!

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