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PPCUG NEWS

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Monday, April 12, 2004

Tips for Selling on eBay

Scott Marshall

This "How I sell on eBay" talk will cover both the basic methods of selling on eBay and the advanced and sometimes subtle strategies of maximizing your chances of a making a good deal. Scott will discuss each step from selecting items to sell, researching the best way to present them, photographing, writing titles and descriptions, selecting from the myriad of options, launching the auction, maintaining "your baby" in the selling arena during bidding, negotiating terms with the winner after the gavel falls, shipping, managing feedback, and maintaining one's reputation as a seller. The subtle and frequently misunderstood customs of proxy bidding and sniping in the land of eBay will be explained. Some of the peripheral businesses to eBay marketing like PayPal, banking, the Post Office, and UPS will be discussed.

Scott Marshall has bought and sold on eBay for several years. Recently he was certified by the auction site as a "Power Seller" and he sells for several clients on commission. He has been a software developer for over twenty years and an independent consultant to many companies.

Lawrence Library

Meeting Rooms 1 & 2

US Alternate Route 1 South & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, NJ

*Meetings of an organization at any of the facilities of the Mercer County Library System
in no way imply endorsement of its programs.*

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Email addresses: If, oops, when you change your email address, please send a note to Paul or Don so the club records can be updated. Your address must then be changed on a membership list (in Excel), the Yahoo! Group list (private), a PPCUG web page (encoded), and in an Outlook file used for mailings. Many of you have multiple email addresses but you should pick one that you'll use for all PPCUG related communications.

Coming Events

May 1&2, 2004 - Trenton Computer Festival

May 10, 2004 - Monthly Meeting - Topic TBA

About PPCUG

General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library, Alternate Route 1 and Darrah Lane.

7:00 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner

7:30 PM: Meeting comes to Order

7:45 PM: Featured presentation

For information about upcoming meetings or joining PPCUG, see our web site:

<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>

Board Meetings

Board meetings are open to all members. Notice of an upcoming meeting will be posted on the web site.

Board Members

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Annual Dues

Dues are \$30 per calendar year with a mailed newsletter or \$20 per year with online access to the newsletter. New members pay \$2.50 or \$1.75 per month times the number of months remaining in the current year.



March Meeting Minutes

The meeting opened at 7:45 with a question about why Run and Search should be missing from the Windows XP Start menu, a recommendation to watch TechTV if it is available on your cable system. Members were reminded to volunteer to staff the parcel pickup stand at TCF on May 1 or 2 as it is an important fund raiser for the club.

The main presentation was of Pinnacle's Liquid Edition, a high end movie-making program. Carlyle Gordon was very effective at demonstrating most of this complex product's features. More information is available at <http://www.pinnaclesys.com/>. A representative of Unique Photo (uniquephoto.com), a Pinnacle distributor, was on hand with some product for sale and literature. Jenna Battistini of Pinnacle was present and donated 3 software packages for a raffle at the end of the evening.



Review: FlipAlbum Suite 4.2

Paul Kurivchack – PPCUG

With the explosion of digital camera use over the past two years and the growing pile of digital images being stored on your PC, organizing them into albums has been as tedious as in the days of film photography (I still have photo prints in the same envelope that they came back from the developer, stored in countless boxes). I know that I should have put the best shots of my kids, vacations and other events into albums so the photos could be shared with family and friends. But who has the time? Well the same thing is happening with digital photography as well and the need for a quick and easy way to view, organize and share has never been greater.

But what do you do? Do you use the digital photo editing software that came with your camera or other photo editing application to touch up the photos and then print them out as contact sheets? Wouldn't it be nice to layout all your photos on a digital light table to sort, edit and add to an album that can be shared either on CD or the Internet? Well E-Book Systems has a solution with its product: FlipAlbum Suite 4.2.

FlipAlbum Suite 4.2 offers everything a digital camera user needs to create great looking 3D photo albums in one complete package including photo editing plus much more.

To start off, FlipAlbum will work on just about any PC running Windows 9x and up with nominal memory (64 MB RAM) and hard drive space (120 MB) and installations is a breeze. It also offers a very extensive online help system to answer any questions that come up should you get stuck, which you shouldn't.

Launching FlipAlbum for the first time brings up the album create / open window. This serves as the launch point for creating that new album or working on an existing one.

But here is where a little pre-planning comes in real handy in managing your stored digital photos. It is what I call file management 101, proper management of all documents on your PC. When downloading your photos from the digital camera, it is important to create a folder name and then to rename each photo and if possible add a sequence number to each. Why you might ask? Well, when creating a FlipAlbum for the first time, you can point to the folder containing your photos and FlipAlbum will automatically create a thumbnail view, table of contents page and place one photo on each page of the album. The sorting or most of it is all done for you in this first step of creating a new album. This is a powerful and cool feature that will save you a tremendous amount of time. This one feature won me over instantly as I was thinking of the drudgery of importing photos one at a time and why I never considered album type applications in the past.

Now that most of the work is done, you can turn your attention to tweaking the sort order, any photo editing (Cropping, color correction, etc.) and just dressing up the album before uploading it to the internet or burning to CD. This is truly the fun part of using FlipAlbum.

Starting on the thumbnail view page, tweak the automatic sort by simply dragging the thumbnail photo from its current location to another. Need to add a photo from another file location? Do it here also. This is the first step in creating your 3D photo album.

Want to edit or enhance the photo? Just double click on the thumbnail image to bring it up full size then right click on the image to open up the menu where you can select "Edit". This launches you into the FlipAlbum editing application. The photo editing tools are quite complete and simple to use for the beginning user. It contains the normal list of tools from brightness and contrast, cropping, red-eye removal and a number of color enhancing tools. All tools operate in real time, so as you make changes you see the results and there is a convenient reset button to take you back to the untouched image when the results are just not what you were looking for.

Dressing up the album is quite interesting and fun. This is where you can be as creative as you want and go crazy, stick with one of the standard themes offered or somewhere in between. Add a frame to the individual photo in a variety of shapes, colors and styles. Pictures always look better in a frame. Superimpose the image into a background image and even change the page color or texture from the many supplied backgrounds. Then there are the album themes for travel, wedding and anniversaries, to birthdays, plus many more. All include unique album covers and matching page colors. Automatically the album is transformed into a piece of art. You can even change the color and type of binding for again a different look and feel.

Remembering who, what or where the photo was taken is just as easy. Adding a title or note to your photo is as easy as right clicking on the page and adding the text to detail the event. It's a nice touch.

Speaking about another nice touch that FlipAlbum offers is

that you can add background music to your album. How boring were those old slide shows of past that we all endured listening to the drone of the projector? FlipAlbum includes a number of canned music tracks that can be added to the full album or an individual photo which will make sharing your album that much more enjoyable.

Lastly, after all your work on creating the best looking album, test it out by running the slide show view. Here is where you can manually flip through the album or set up the automatic page flip timing. All of the FlipAlbum tools are easy to find and use either from the menu bar or the toolbar.

I have not had the chance to burn an album to CD yet, but based upon everything I have seen with FlipAlbum, I do not expect to see any issues with performing this function. One nice thing is that you can add multiple albums to a single CD so you only have one CD to share with family and friends.

In conclusion, FlipAlbum Suite 4.0 version 4.2 is one of the easiest and most fun products I have tested in a long time. I think I will be using it for a long time to come.

Contact www.flipalbum.com for additional information and pricing.

Ed. Note: PCWorld and Wugnet have a special running now which includes fully licensed versions of FlipAlbum 5.0 Standard, PhotoMeister 2.0, ACD FotoAngelo 1.0, 2 PC World Super Guides on Digital Photography and Image Editing for \$19.95. Look here for more info: <http://www.wugnet.com/affiliates/pcworld/cdreferral.html>



Microsoft Announces Ads for BSOD

Brian Briggs and Reinhard Gantar

Redmond, WA - In an effort to boost sagging revenue growth, Microsoft today announced it will begin selling advertising space on the company's world famous Blue Screen of Death (BSOD)© on April 1. The screen, dis-



played whenever Windows cannot recover from an error in the operating system's core, until now has historically served as a display of unintelligible diagnostic data that has not made any sense to anyone, ever, according to a survey

conducted by the Gartner Group. In addition, the BSOD has scared most users because it was composed mainly of hexadecimal digits that, which in extreme cases, can lead to hallucinations, epileptic seizures and homosexuality in primates and rats.

"Past efforts to make the blue screen more helpful by adding animated characters and changing the hue to a more user-friendly beige or aqua have failed," said head of BSOD Development Kate Verban. "When we failed to make the BSOD user-friendly, we decided that at least it could generate revenue. Displayed more than a billion times a day globally, the blue screen has a captive audience, with over 90 percent of the computer desktops in the world. This makes it an excellent platform for advertisers, comparable only to the Super Bowl and makes watching the blue screen just about as exciting."

Tom Gordon, Director of Marketing for Anheuser-Busch, confirmed today that the beverage giant will be among the first advertisers, "We think it's a tremendous opportunity," said Gordon. "Picture this, you're working late at night on a crucial project. Your computer crashes. You've lost all your important work. It's definitely time for a beer, and we'll be there to remind you that the beer should be a beechwood-aged Budweiser."

For earlier versions of Windows, the BSOD ads will be installed using the Windows Update feature. However, Windows XP systems connected to the Internet will automatically install the new software in the middle of the night when no one is looking.

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Accessing the PPCUG Yahoo! Group Don Arrowsmith

I have received questions from several members about accessing the PPCUG Yahoo! Group. This Group was set up to ease the Board's task of sending notices to the membership. The email address that you supplied when you joined or renewed is subscribed as a Group member. From that point on you will receive all messages sent to the Group. If, for some reason, you don't wish to receive them, either let me know or see the unsubscribe instructions at the end of each message.

It is not necessary for you to become a Yahoo! registered user for you to receive the group mailings. However, if you would like to access some of the extra features (viewing the message archive, viewing the calendar, changing your message delivery method, etc.), you will have to register with Yahoo!. If you are already a registered Yahoo! user, skip to point 4. below. For newcomers, here is one way to register:

1. Locate the PPCUG group to join. On the front page of Yahoo! Groups (groups.yahoo.com), search for us by entering "Princeton PC" in the box.
2. Click on the "Join This Group" button on the upper right side of the front page of the group.
3. If you do not have a Yahoo! ID, click on "New to Ya-

hoo!/? Sign up now" to get your ID and password.

Note: You can decline to take a Yahoo email address. You can decline to accept Yahoo marketing emails. You can decline to enter a Profile. You must enter the email address that you gave to PPCUG. It must first be verified by Yahoo! sending you an email with a confirmation number. That message will have a link for you to click to finish the confirmation.

4. You can now log in at groups.yahoo.com. Click on "Don't see all your groups?" in the left pane and Yahoo should identify that you are already a member of the PPCUG group. You can then click on the group name on the left pane to get to our group.

5. Set your membership preferences. When you join, you can choose a profile you'd like to display to the group, select the email address at which you'd like to receive group messages, choose how you receive group messages, and more.

This sounds complicated but it will flow quickly and you only have to do it once. The next time you can just go to Yahoo! Groups, login, and then select PPCUG from your customized, left pane.

Finally: Remember, you don't have to do any of the above to just receive our normal reminder and announcement emails. If you have any questions, email me.



For Sale

LEXMARK X1150 Printer/Scanner/Copier \$70
4800 DPI, 14 ppm, 48 bit scanner, up to 600 x 1200. Comes with one black and one color cartridge. NEW IN BOX - NEVER OPENED! Came with new computer I bought and is selling in Staples and Best Buy for \$100.

COMPAQ DESKTOP COMPUTER \$85
Complete system - Works fine. 15 inch Compaq monitor, 2 GB hard drive, 350 Mhz, 284 MB RAM, Windows 98, MS Word, MS Works, Norton Anti-Virus, CD-RW, speakers.

DELL 17 inch Monitor \$20
Works fine

Call Martin Mosho at 609-490-0508



Defend Your Computer - Please! Vic Laurie

Over the years I have written many articles on the various dangers that a computer user might face on the Internet from viruses, hackers, spyware, and so forth. Because the number of security problems continues to escalate, I am coming back to this subject yet again. For reference, some of those previous articles are at <http://pages.zdnet.com/hampsi/computers/id9.html>. The web links cited in the older articles may not all still work but the general principles remain the same.

It may seem repetitious to keep writing about computer se-

curity but, quite frankly, an awful lot of people either don't understand the problems or just ignore the subject. If the only damage that resulted was to those who took no precautions, that would be one thing. However, all of us are affected. For example, the whole Internet suffers from the much heavier load caused by all the traffic generated by worms being spread from those who get infected from carelessness or ignorance. I have seen one estimate that on some days half of all e-mail is worm related. Everybody has to waste time getting rid of the worm-carrying messages that pile up in the mail boxes. (And that is in addition to all the spam, which is another subject.) I get tired of receiving virus mail from infected people who happen to have my name in their address book and from their friends and friends of friends who got infected in turn. Even more irritating is the mail that goes out from these infected systems purporting to be sent by me, some of which is then bounced to me as undeliverable. For a while I was appearing to be a big tout for a Japanese porno shop. It can be virtually impossible to find out who the infected people are without having access to ISP logs. Sometimes these machines stay infected for months and keep on mailing out one virus-laden message after another under many different names. Somebody with a dial-up account at the now defunct ISP Nerc bombarded me (and many others no doubt) for months using a host of faked names. From the e-mail headers, I could get a time stamp and their various IP addresses (which of course were temporary) but Nerc refused to do anything about it.

Another problem to us all is that sometimes important web sites are brought down by malicious attacks that make use of Trojan horses planted on the machines of unwitting PC users. Even those who are careful can get caught because new worms and Trojans seem to come out every day and the malware authors are getting more and more clever at using tricks to get people to open infected mail. In addition, hackers are using Internet connections that are poorly guarded to plant Trojan horses directly on machines through open ports.

That was the bad news. The good news is that a typical home user can defend his or her computer with some straightforward precautions. The first line of defense is common sense. It utterly baffles me why otherwise intelligent people click on e-mail attachments from strangers who write in broken English. In fact, these days you should never click on any attachment, no matter what the source, unless you know for sure what it is. The source of e-mail is easily faked. That attachment from Aunt Matilda may be something she doesn't even know has been sent. She may have a Trojan horse. Send her an e-mail asking about it before opening. Or call her on your cell phone. Maybe you can help her clean up her computer. If dear old straitlaced Dad who is 85 years old suddenly sends you an e-mail about pictures of nubile young girls, alarm bells should go off and I don't mean about Dad. Anything that is out of character should be treated as a possible worm or Trojan. Also note that Microsoft and other software companies never send patches or updates by attaching them to e-mail.

In a related area, never give account numbers, passwords, or

other sensitive personal information in reply to any e-mail. Such information should only be entered on secure web sites. Internet service providers, banks, stock brokers, and the like do not ask for personal information to be sent by e-mail. A scam technique called "phishing" is growing whereby various e-mail tactics are used to inveigle credit card numbers and account passwords out of gullible PC users.

Vigilance and good judgment will avoid many problems but we also need to have some software guardians. Most people know that anti-virus software is a necessity and most computers come with some form of anti-virus program already installed. (By the term "virus" I will be referring to any type of malware including viruses, worms and Trojan horses.) All the major programs check e-mail as well as scanning your system. However, new viruses appear every day and anti-virus programs are only as good as their database or definitions of viruses. A program can't recognize a new virus unless it has been kept up to date. Anti-virus programs contain update features and these are automatic in the newer major programs. However, the big vendors like Symantec and McAfee no longer give unlimited free updates but start to charge after some initial period ranging from 3 months to 1 year. Very often people do not subscribe to the new updates and let their protection lapse. This leaves the computer open to any new virus that comes along. Personally, I am not keen on having to pay \$15 or \$20 a year to Symantec either but all things considered it is a relatively small operating cost. An alternative is one of the free programs like Grisoft's AVG. In the past, Symantec's Norton has always seemed to get much better reviews for efficacy against infection than the freebies but a recent review by the magazine PC World (<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,113462,tk,sbx,00.asp>) indicates that there are several free programs that now provide acceptable levels of protection. There is a download site at <http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/collection/0,collid,1259,tk,sbx,00.asp>. I have no personal experience with it, but I have seen quite a few favorable comments about the AVG program. One way or another, however, it is essential to use an updated anti-virus program. (OK, I admit, if you are a computer wizard and really, really know what you are doing, you can get away without one but most people should not take that chance.)

The second piece of defensive software that everybody should have is a firewall. Firewalls keep uninvited visitors from the Internet from accessing your computer. They also keep an eye on which programs on your computer try to make Internet connections. Unless they had a broadband Internet connection, I used to tell people that they probably did not need a firewall. However, hacking has reached the point where everyone, even those with dial-up connections, needs a firewall. My firewall keeps a log of attempts to probe my computer and once in a while I check it out of curiosity. The attempts are unceasing and come from all over the world. (I know because I look up some of the IPs.) Even my wife's dial-up AOL account is probed all the time. Many of these probes are not malicious but I see no reason

to take chances on the good will of all these strangers.

The present version of Windows XP has half a firewall built in. Unfortunately, it monitors only incoming traffic and therefore is of no help in warning about programs on your computer that call up Internet sites without telling you. Also, note that that you have to specifically enable it. I recommend a more robust program. If you want to, you can go for one of the commercial suites that include a firewall together with a variety of other programs. However, there are several very good free programs. I like and use ZoneAlarm but there are other good choices. The magazine PC World has a good discussion at <http://www.pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,112920,00.asp>.

Not quite as important is separate software specifically for removing spyware and other Trojans. This function is included in the better commercial suites. Good anti-virus programs should stop most Trojans but won't help with spyware. A firewall will warn you if something on your system tries to call out and alert you to Trojans and spyware. However, if you download and install a lot of programs or you want another line of defense, you might want a separate program specifically for detecting and cleaning out Trojans and spyware. There are at least two good free programs, AdAware (<http://www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware/>) and Spybot Search and Destroy (<http://www.safer-networking.org/>).

Proper defense of your computer also involves some configuring of the system and regular application of security patches. I will discuss these measures next month.



Trenton Computer Festival May 1&2

Free \$15 admission! Well, free for you if you volunteer to do a shift at the PPCUG package pickup area. Paul is handling the volunteer scheduling for the package pickup area. Please sign up for a shift at the April meeting or email Paul if you can't attend. This is a major fund raiser for the PPCUG - We average over \$500 in donations. Show attendees drop off items that they have purchased and we keep the items safely separated and issue claim stubs for the owners to retrieve their goods when they are ready to leave the show. TCF is planned for May 1&2 in Edison, NJ. More information on the show itself is at <http://www.tcf-nj.org/>.



Web Link of the Month

Everyone loves to get free stuff! Free After Rebate points you to stores that sell products that end up being free after you send in for a rebate. They also have a good page with a "Guide to Getting Free Stuff" that has tips on how to make sure that your rebate claim is honored. Have you had rebates rejected? Go to <http://www.freeafterrebate.info/>.

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