

Disabled Firefighter Has Business Destroyed by E-Bay AFA Program

The e-Bay Auction For America program has been suspect from the beginning. Now the true cost begins to be seen as small business owners lose their livelihood to e-Bay's corporate greed.

([PRWEB](#)) September 29, 2001 -- e-Bay instituted the "Auctions for America" program about 1 week after the WTC tragedy. From the beginning there were many complaints about the program which seemed to be a stunt to gain publicity and prop up e-Bay's ailing "billpoint" credit card service which has lost about 75% of the marketplace to competitor "Paypal". The e-bay AFA discussion boards have been piled with complaints since the program began. But now the following post shows part of the real problem underlying this program. This is quoted directly from the AFA Discussion board at <http://forums.ebay.com/dws?14@1001617706914@.eed29c3>

Disabled Firefighter Having Business Destroyed by AFA
west_coast_vintage (2630) (view author's auctions)
10:02pm September 26, 2001

When I became disabled in 1998 I thought my life was at an end. I was always the big, strong guy who as a firefighter and extrication team EMT had been the first to go in and the last to come out. I carried many victims out 2 at a time from fires. I cut more people from wreckage than I can remember. Now, due to a spinal cord injury I walk with a cane and can't lift more than 10 pounds. Well, while going through initial recovery and wondering what to do with my broken life, I started playing around with selling some things on e-Bay just a few items at first, mostly relating to old cars, as that was always a hobby. As I began to learn the system, I started to see that this could be a real business. E-Bay proudly touted the "Powerseller" program for full time businesses working through e-Bay. I believed I had found something I could do. Since I am in the "Worker's Compensation" system, I didn't have much money to work with. I took the approximately \$9,000. I got for re-education expenses and started West Coast Vintage.Com. I was able to get it up and running. It has been a marginal business, but it pays our bills, and it allows me to take the breaks I must take every hour or so to allow the spasms to subside.

Well, we have worked on within the "Powerseller" program, we have dealt with the numerous changes to e-Bay's listing rules that cost us hours re-working templates, and changing re-listing code. We have lived with the non-existent customer service that provides canned answers that often have nothing to do with the question. We felt like it was just the cost of doing business. e-Bay offers the only real auction venue for our type of products, so we had to work with what we were given.

That all changed a little over a week ago as e-Bay instituted the "AFA" program. When the attacks happened on September 11th, I nearly died inside. I had to sit here and watch firefighters going to their deaths in those buildings. If I were able I would have been in a car on my way to the site, where I would be working until they made me leave. But that option was taken away from me. The only thing I could do was start making donations to the Red Cross, whom I had worked side by side with so many times in the past. I knew they did the most practical things at the point of the problem, so at least donating to them was something. We set up a nightly donation of 10% of our gross sales for the day starting the night of the 11th. I contacted e-Bay to see if there was any way to encourage other sellers to do something similar, and I was told that perhaps I should make a post to the "Helping" board, or the newsgroups. Imagine my surprise when after a week e-Bay launches the "AFA" program with no input from or warning to the full time sellers.



We do not and will not use e-Bay's Billpoint service. We tried it, it was a nightmare, we tried to stop using them by unchecking the option box, they went in and added the billpoint option back to all of our auctions. We finally had to call and have them cancel the service and remove our name for the abuses to stop. Paypal on the other hand has been helpful, they have a suite of features that really help our business, and they even give us promotional help. e-Bay's insistence on the use of the "Billpoint" system (despite Paypal's repeated offers to help) for the "AFA" auctions excludes us automatically. Add to that the strong ethical objection I have to them using the lives of the people who died to bolster their expensive and unpopular "Billpoint" membership, and there is no way I will participate in this program. Well, the auctions that have run concurrent with the "AFA" promotion and its exclusionary system have been closing and our business is down between 30-50% depending on the day. It is far down from even the week directly after the attacks. 100 days of this will probably push us under. Consequently our nightly donations are dwindling as well.

E-bay had the opportunity to be ethical and do the right thing. Just because it is for charity is not an excuse to be unethical and slant it all for corporate gain at the cost of more suffering. If someone were robbing the elderly and giving it to charity, it would not make it right. Just because this is raising money for charity does not excuse these actions. We pay e-Bay an average of \$1000.00 per month to use their service. We are paying the same amount while they exclude us with the "AFA" only search box. We can't go anywhere else. We built our business here and were then betrayed by this program.

Last week we watched the networks, who are the most vicious of competitors, band together to have a telethon. E-bay can't even put greed aside to let paypal help the effort to raise funds. I don't really think that would make a difference now. The damage is already done.

I know no one cares about one more person who will just be seen as complaining about the great and generous e-Bay. But as our little business disappears, I felt I wanted to leave some record of what happened. I hope e-Bay is very proud of the true cost of this publicity stunt.

Sincerely,
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