

## The Life of a Taobao Seller

Written by Administrator TaobaoNow

Saturday, 09 May 2009 00:47 - Last Updated Saturday, 09 May 2009 12:58

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It's been several days since my last post.

I have always wanted to share the experiences as a Taobao agent. But your love for our service have always kept me so busy that I don't even have time for proper sleep and meals. Some of you will notice that my responses are round the clock, and yes, I have very little sleep recently.

But today, I can no longer suppress the little voice in my heart. And for the good of everybody, including you, I have to take time off to write this post.

Recently, I received more and more orders requesting us to bargain with the sellers. I can totally understand that as buyers, we often wish to get the biggest bang for the buck. In fact, if you order a large quantity of the same item from a seller with at least a "Crown" on their reputation, I would often ask if they have any wholesale price. If they do, as many of you already know, I would not silently swallow it without your knowledge. I would pass on the savings to you.

But many sellers on Taobao are just beginners or part-time businesses. The average income of a worker here is only around a few hundred yuan to just over a thousand yuan per month. This is the very reason why you find the prices on Taobao are so attractive, because the factories are able to hire hardworking workers with relatively low cost. The current economic downturn has affected many factories and businesses, which in turn laid off many workers. Quite a few of these jobless workers struggle to survive. A resourceful few may turn to Taobao to see if they can make ends meet by selling the items they have bought cheaply from bankrupt factories (or even given by their employers as compensation, that's rumours though).

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Taobao is a cut-throat market place for sellers. It's a buyers market. All items prices are listed and search results can be sort by prices, as many of you have often used that feature. This convenient feature for buyers is in fact a killer for the sellers. Everyone with the same item try to outsell each other by lowering the price, it also has the side effect of encouraging sellers to sell items that do not match the description or photos on their listed pages.

The famous Taobao reputation system, is a two-edged sword. Those who have high reputation, have too many customers that their customer service quality is below the average novices or beginners. They have already attained the heavenly status so they hire robots as their customer service representatives. Their process is efficient, their replies are quick, their responses are cut-and-paste pre-defined scripts and if you try to chat with them thinking that they are human beings, you will get very confused responses as if you asked the computer to divide something by zero. I had more successful conversation with [Alice the robot](#).

The beginners or novices or veterans or even some "Your Highnesses" are very accomodating. Their service is personal, and they would bend their backs 180 degree backwards just to make you happy. As a professional Taobao buyer, I am always very understanding if they admit the mistakes they made, and they often will do it right so as to avoid the black flower, which is like a thorned whip on their backs. Many of those who attained the heavenly status never admit their mistakes as they have the die-hard believe that robots don't make mistakes, and their status earned them the immortal elephant skin on their backs because a tiny black flower whip, with no matter how many thorns on it, have absolutely no effect on their astronomical good reputation number (it's a simple mathematic ratio thing).

In the beginning, I had advised buyers not to trust sellers with lower reputation. But as my experiences grow, now I have to admit I was at least partly wrong. I have the smoothest transactions with novices and veterans, slower responses from beginners (who are mostly part-time or their business volume is too low to warrant full-time attention), but the highest ratio of unsatisfactory transactions are from those heavenly beings. Anyway, enough about these deities. Lets talk about the real human beings.

These novices and veterans, are very hard working. They often were labourers before, who dared to venture out to the online world to make a living. Their expectation of their businesses is simply to replace what they've been making as labourers, maybe more, but not by much. Most are simply just breaking even so as to get more sales volume to gain more reputation, and thereby, have a easier time selling on Taobao. With the transparent pricing (as oppose to eBay's bidding system) and cumulative reputation system, these sellers are not making huge profits from their sales. Instead, they maybe making a decent living but you wouldn't be too

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eager to have their jobs.

I appreciate your continual support for our service. Not only because you are giving your businesses to me, but also because you are making a difference in the lives of these hardworking sellers who bring you the best prices in the world. I implore you not to ask me to bargain with them. Judge me if you will (because I cannot deny that there is a conflict of interest here, but if you do think that I am saying this only because of this conflict, I can sincerely tell you that it is an absolute insult to my character), call me soft hearted if you will, but please don't tell me to bargain with them. If you find that I am unreasonable, you are welcome to seek other agents (I don't deny their existence and I respect competitions).

They deserve the little profit they are trying to make. Believe me, if they can really make some decent profit, their service will be better and better. In the end, you benefit from it because if returns or exchanges are required, they will be much willing to do so because they can cover these costs with the profits. If you deny them this little income they are trying to make, any return or exchange request will be met with unhappy responses or difficulties.

Thank you for your time for reading this. Your comments and responses are welcome.

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