

Shmanners 391: E-Commerce

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Travis: Hello, internet. I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: Listen, this is, I've just— We figured out what we're gonna do for the upcoming Max Fun Drive bonus episode.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: And I'm so excited about it. We're gonna talk about emojis, but I'm gonna try to figure out a way if we can have, like, a video element to it.

Teresa: Ooh.

Travis: Because I want— So in case you missed, I think it was last week's episode when we talked about wax seals, right? We were talking about the color code of the wax seal and how there was, like, a flower code and there used to be, like, a fan code.

And then I made the realization that the new version of that is, like, emojis and how they all have secondary meanings. And I'm excited about the possibility of quizzing you, holding up emojis and being, like, what do you think this one means?

Teresa: And I'm not going to prepare on purpose so that I can bring the goofs.

Travis: I love that.

Teresa: Maybe we could do, like, a bespoke, like, YouTube link. Like if we just share it.

Travis: I think— I mean, we do video hosting on the Max Fun bonus stuff.

Teresa: They do?

Travis: Like there's a paid— Yeah, me and Justin and Griffin have done videos to—

Teresa: Okay, well then they know how to do it, don't worry.

Travis: Also, I'm not going to say what it is, but we came up with the ideas for the My Brother, My Brother, Me, and the Adventure Zone bonus episodes.

Teresa: And you'll have to join us to find out.

Travis: So wicked excited. But, but...

Teresa: Join the Max Fun fam.

Travis: That's not what we're talking about this week.

Teresa: Okay, okay.

Travis: What are we talking about this week?

Teresa: This week we are talking about e-commerce.

Travis: Yes, my name is Eric Commerce.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And this is my son Dot Commerce.

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: Get it? Yeah.

Teresa: That's great.

Travis: Com's not short for commerce, right?

Teresa: What?

Teresa: That's great.

Travis: Com's not short for commerce, right?

Teresa: What?

Travis: I don't know. I was just thinking about how everything is like dot com, right? It's computer, right? It's gotta be short for compute.

Teresa: I don't— I did not— I don't have that particular information. But—

Travis: I will say, this is a very interesting episode for me.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: So I was thinking the other day, right? By which I mean all the time. Now that we have children, everybody talks about, like, the things that are, like, oh, this generation, this next generation will never know about, like, landlines.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Or only having four channels. And there's random things. Like, I think about kids these days when they hook up a video game system...?

Teresa: Oh, they don't need to blow into the cartridge anymore.

Travis: Well, so I was gonna say, they don't have to turn to channel three or channel four.

Teresa: Oh, because it's HDMI.

Travis: And we didn't have multiple inputs and stuff like that. People talk about DSL. The one that— Or dial up, you know. The one that occurred to me the other day is, like, below a certain age, they've never lived in a world where there were, like, hood ornaments on every car.

Teresa: Yeah, you were talking about that.

Travis: Right, and also, in talking about this one, having lived through the dot com bubble, right, the idea of one, being able to buy things online, and two, having, like, every business has a website, is not, that was— Like even, in the days of the internet, like, throughout its entirety, that has not always been true, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: This idea of, like, if you don't have a website, what are you doing? And even then the dot com bubble came from, like, well, it's not even— There's no brick and mortar. So you can't even go into the store. Everything, get this guys, you can go on your computer and shop on your computer and then they send it to you. What?

Teresa: Yeah, I know, right?

Travis: I remember when I worked at Best Buy, being there, like, I worked at Best Buy for, like, three years, and it was from, in that three years, the transition from everybody being mad when someplace like Walmart or Best Buy or, like, these big box stores, right, moved into town, to then everybody

being, like, we have to save our stores like Best Buy and Walmart from this Amazon.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, in the three year, that flip happened. And then Best Buy being, like, I guess we need to start selling our stuff online more. I remember people would come into Best Buy, and we were always on the lookout for this, you would help them answer all their questions. They would take a picture of the thing. And sometimes even you'd see them pull up Amazon on their phone and just order it from there.

Teresa: [gasps]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because it's cheaper.

Travis: Because it was cheaper. Anywho, we're talking about e-commerce.

Teresa: That's capitalism.

Travis: That's— Hey babe? It's all capitalism at this point.

Teresa: That's true.

Travis: It's hard not to find capitalism. It's hard not to find it.

Teresa: Okay, so—

Travis: It's like dog hair, it's everywhere.

Teresa: [laughing] It's everywhere. I have a question for you.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: When do you think we started selling things online? Give me a year.

Travis: Like you would go on your computer and order something and it would come to your house.

Teresa: Someone would be on the other end of a computer to sell things to you.

Travis: Oh, okay. See, I feel like this is a trick question, but I'm gonna answer my gut says.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Like 1998.

Teresa: No, way before that.

Travis: 1962.

Teresa: After that, 1970.

Travis: See, I knew it was gonna be a trick because I knew there was gonna be, like, a "But not how you're thinking about it." I knew it because that's what you do. And we can have this conversation offline.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, okay...

Travis: What's interesting about that is that dynamic is completely different in real life. Off the show I'm like, "Hey, what do you think this— Where— Who do you think did it?" You're like, "I couldn't possibly know."

Teresa: [laughs] That's true. Um, so people have been selling things online since the '70s, but consumers buying things from the internet...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... didn't happen 'til much later.

Travis: I assume that the '70s thing was, like, a corporate, like, you're placing a huge bulk order...

Teresa: Not just that. Just the idea that the computers weren't in people's homes in the '70s, right? So online shopping as we know it did not exist at that point, but let me give you a brief history of computers, very stupidly brief, okay?

Travis: I love that.

Teresa: We're just gonna talk about the programming that made online retail possible, okay?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So the very first modern computer was invented by an English polymath named Charles Babbage, with great help from brilliant mathematician Ada Lovelace.

Travis: Yeah, she often gets excised from the history of it. She's very important.

Teresa: Now listen.

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: Babbage only lived from 1822 to 1871.

Travis: Okay, 49 years.

Teresa: And in this time, he designed three different computers, which he referred to as difference engines.

Travis: Yeah, much cooler name, by the way. Much cooler name.

Teresa: Didn't have a lot of funding, so these were never actually constructed, but the ideas are credited, right?

Travis: And, he later, uh, there was a now-defunct video game store named after him, so there you go. Babbage's.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: I don't know, I say video game store, it might've just been like a computer store called Babbage's.

Teresa: Could be.

Travis: But that's how I knew the name forever, and I didn't know Charles Babbage was a dude, and so I did not know why it was called Babbage's. And then there was just one in the mall and I just always thought it sounded like cabbages.

Teresa: [laughs] Which sound like computers?

Travis: I have no idea. I didn't even go that far. I think I was like eight years old and I was, like, "Yeah, cabbages, whatever."

Teresa: But when people think of computers, what they think of is the Colossus, which was shown to be working as early as 1944.

Travis: That's the one where it's, like, as big as a football field or whatever, right?

Teresa: Kind of, right? So the Colossus II, which was the second prototype, worked just in time for the Normandy landings on D-Day, and 10 colossi were in use by the end of the war, and an 11th was being commissioned, right? So, like, we're talking about huge machines.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: This is where you think about that they took up so much room, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: And the machines allowed the allies to obtain a vast amount of high level military intelligence, right? So it wasn't just that they were computing, you know, like, computations, they were storage as well for data, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so the switches and plugs and all this kind of stuff...

Travis: Do-dads, the tubes.

Teresa: ... held a fully programmable electronic digital computer.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Which is amazing, right? The work of the Colossus and Babbage and all, and, like, people mention Alan Turing, who did— Actually, so Alan Turing was responsible for the, like, the mathematics that go into the code breakers, right? But not the Colossus, this is different, that was a different computing machine.

Anyway, the work of countless other scientists and mathematicians led to the development of the electronic data exchange. This goes back to the 1960s. So 20 years after the war, 20 or so years after the war, we've got this exchange that can replace traditional mail and facts by allowing digital transfer of data from one computer to the other.

Travis: Yes, but this is still decades away from. people using it on a personal basis, right?

Teresa: At least a decade, okay? So people use the devices to transfer orders and invoices and other transactions in a digital format without human

interaction, right? Lines of code. And that made it possible for the first personal computer to be available as early as 1973. E-commerce, though...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... really got its start in 1979 because Michael Aldrich, who was a British entrepreneur inventor, wanted to streamline their weekly grocery shop.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So he thought it would be—

Travis: He said, "Send me a watermelon through my computer."

Teresa: Sort of.

Travis: I want it to come out of the disk drive in edible slices.

Teresa: He modified a domestic television to a real-time multi-user transacting processing computer. So he was able to use his telephone line to order groceries from their supermarket without having to leave the house.

Travis: Okay, now listen. I live in the year 2024. Compared to then, right? We're talking, what, 50 years-ish, right? And still, I hear you describe what he did, and I'm, like, that's science fiction.

Teresa: [laughs] He called this teleshopping, which makes sense, it's distance shopping, right? Yeah. but it was used in about 1980 as a business to business system in the UK, in Ireland, in Spain, and all that kind of places, right? And so—

Travis: Isn't there— There's a word for, and I can't think of it off the top of my head, but for when something, like, the etymology of something is, like, the origin of it traces back, like, eight different times, because you think about like, television, from telephone, right?

And I was like, yeah, but then it just means, like, visual versus phono, versus hearing, and it all develops off of that for, like, teleshopping, it's like, okay, cool, man.

Teresa: Telescope and all this kind of stuff, right? It's about distance. So then the first real, as we know it, online shopping experience happens in 1992.

Travis: I was closer with that, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I said '98.

Teresa: Yeah, you were, you were. Charles M. Stack started Bookstacks Unlimited.

Travis: Selling books online? That's not gonna take.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Which began as a dial-up kind of bulletin board, right? Where you're, like, posting things, right? And this was three years before Amazon was founded.

Travis: That's another thing, by the way, just occurred to me, that kids these days will never experience, of one, first started for me of checking the newspaper for movie times, and then calling a hotline where it was just a voice recording, like, "Come see Batman, Batman and Robin at 9, 12, 2." And like, and then if you missed the one, like, ugh, hang up.

Teresa: Hang up and call again.

Travis: [crosstalk] Okay, stop talking. Uh, yeah.

Teresa: [laughs] And so in 1994, it became Books.com, which was eventually acquired by Barnes and Noble. Rest in peace.

Travis: Oh my God, yeah.

Teresa: [laughs] So then as the 90s kept going, right, more and more people had access to home internet. That's when we got ours, at the end of the 90s, at my house. And, you know, over the 1990s, over seven million homes have Minitel terminals. And in 1991, they, Tim Berners-Lee, and Robert... [sounding it out] Kyle?

Travis: No, take a run at it. Don't second guess it, do it. Just say it, say it quick, don't think.

Teresa: Cailliau [kah-yow].

Travis: Okay, sure. Caillou.

Teresa: [laughing] No, that's a cartoon child.

Travis: Oh right, that's a whiny cartoon child, got it.

Teresa: Invented the World Wide Web as a publicly available service on the internet. So now the concept of computers was kind of, like, a widely available tool now.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Like I said, not just, like, someone using it for like data processing. Right? You got to use it for a lot of different things, like blogs or emails or shopping.

Travis: Playing Ski Free.

Teresa: I played that.

Travis: Playing that game, Mine Sweeper, playing Mine Sweeper. Solitaire.

Teresa: Nobody knows how to play Mine Sweeper.

Travis: I know how to play Mine Sweeper. I used to do it constantly.

Teresa: I don't—

Travis: [crosstalk] I used to do that and Ski Free.

Teresa: I always put it on, like, the biggest one, where it had the most empty spaces so that I wouldn't lose all the time. Because I didn't know how to play it. [laughing] I'd just click.

Travis: Okay. You didn't spend enough time shirking your Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing classes like I did. In my computer class when I was supposed to be doing Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing, I would alt tab when the teacher wasn't around to play whatever games were on the computer. That's how I played hours and hours and hours of Sim Hotel.

Teresa: Good for you.

Travis: And look at me now, a hotel maverick—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Monarch, whatever. Magnate, that's the word.

Teresa: That was what you were looking for. Okay, so this is when... When e-commerce took off, people started worrying about the security of their information, which led to the development of a security protocol called Secure Socket Layers, which was an encryption certificate. And that made it possible for browsers to identify if a site could be trusted, to safely transmit personal data, still used in web security today.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: The mid-90s, we've got Amazon in '95. We start to have, um, let's see, we start to have eBay in '95.

Travis: Pets.com I think was around then.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Rest in peace.

Teresa: The eBay specifically was to create, quote, "A space dedicated to bringing together buyers and sellers in an honest and open marketplace." There was a rumor for a long time that eBay was started to help find PEZ dispensers. That's... That's not true.

Travis: How oddly specific. If anything, I would have guessed Beanie Babies.

Teresa: Oh, really?

Travis: Wasn't that— That was about the same time, right? I associate, like, eBay and Beanie Babies very closely in my brain. If one did not beget the other, I would eat my hat. Right?

This idea of like, collectible, I'm gonna get— Oh! Because especially at the time— So eBay represented this idea of, there are people like my dad, right? When you're a collector of something, and not just, like, "I wanna have a complete collection."

But you're like, "Oh, I can see where this complete collection of this thing is going to be worth something someday, specifically for that purpose."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Then eBay became an easy way without having to lug everything to, like, swap meets and flea markets and garage sales or whatever, being able to just say, like, hey, if you want it, I'll ship it to you.

Teresa: Yes. The first sale on eBay was a broken laser pointer to a Canadian man named Mark Fraser in 1995.

Travis: Why? Mark, why did you buy that?

Teresa: I don't know. And the next year they had sold a whopping \$7.2 million of products on their site.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: September of 1997, eBay is official, right? Because before that it was called Auction Web.

Travis: Which, if we're being honest, makes a lot more sense. I think bay— It's bay like you're opening up, I don't know, the loading bay or whatever and throwing stuff out? It's, like, eBay?

Teresa: I don't know what that comes from, but Auction Web makes more sense to me as well.

Travis: Yeah. E-auction, that's a little clunky. E-ction, nope, [laughs] that's not it.

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: I don't know.

Teresa: I don't know. Um, and now, as late as 2019, the site reported a gross merchandise sale of over \$4.97 billion globally.

Travis: Interesting.

Teresa: Now we have Etsy and Craigslist and Poshmark and, you know, Facebook Marketplace and a million tiny stores. Anybody with a website these days feels like they could, you can potentially sell with the right kind of, like, software on the site, right? We've mentioned several in the way that we do our ads.

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: Right? Here are some etiquette tips to remember.

Travis: I would love to hear them, but first, how about a word from another Max Fun Show?

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Jeremy: The Eurovision Song Contest. Hundreds of millions of people watch it every year.

Dimitry: It played a part in a democratic revolution in Portugal, it introduced the world to Riverdance, and it launched Celine Dion's career.

Oscar: But you might have never watched it.

Jeremy: It's got so much history and so many storylines, that it can feel overwhelming to get into.

Oscar: Mm-hmm. It's like a Real Housewife season, but everyone's a better singer.

Dimitry: Eh, sometimes, but that's where we come in. I'm Dimitry Pompée.

Oscar: I'm Oscar Montoya.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy Bent, and we're the hosts of Eurovangelists.

Dimitry: If you're new to Eurovision, we'll tell you everything you need to know to start enjoying the world's most important song competition.

Oscar: And if you're already a fan, we'll dive deep on its wildest moments, like when Ireland sent a turkey puppet to sing for them.

Dimitry: Eurovangelists.

Oscar: New episodes every Thursday.

Jeremy: On MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

Jordan: I'm Jordan Crucchiola, host of Feeling Seen, where we start by asking our guests just one question. What movie character made you feel seen?

Speaker 1: I knew exactly what it was.

Speaker 2: Clementine from Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.

Speaker 3: Choi Wang/Jobu Tupaki.

Jordan: That one question launches amazing conversations about their lives, the movies they love, and about the past, present, and future of entertainment.

Speaker 4: Roy in, uh, Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

Speaker 5: I worry about what this might say about me, but I've brought Tracy Flick in the film, Election.

Jordan: So if you like movies, diverse perspectives, and great conversations, check us out.

Speaker 6: Oof, this is real.

Jordan: New episodes of Feeling Seen drop every week on MaximumFun.org.

[ad break ends]

Travis: Okay, etiquette tip. Ee-tiquette.

Teresa: Ee-tiquette. E—

Travis: E to E, electronic etiquette.

Teresa: [laughs] And, you know, buyers and sellers—

Travis: Beware!

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Yes, this is, it's an interaction.

Travis: I didn't mean to make it— I'm sorry, that sounded like I was threatening you guys. "You wanna sell and buy the internet? I'm coming for you."

Teresa: It's an interaction, so you wanna be fair and courteous from both ends, right? First, let's talk seller etiquette. It's important to take high quality pictures of the item that you are selling, showing it from different angles, maybe measurements, and making the buyer aware of any imperfections. You were talking about collectibles, right? It's important that the collectibles be represented in their actual state, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And I don't think that it's such a bad idea to use a stock image. as long as your regular, like the actual image is included in the kind of, like, carousel, right?

Travis: Yeah, I would include function in that as well, not just, like, aesthetic, but if you're selling it as is, right, include what that as is means.

Teresa: Exactly, exactly. And so, like, you wanna detail any kind of, you know, scratches or color imperfections or things like that. And the more detailed you can be, the more I think that people will relate to you as, like, an honest kind of purveyor of goods. And that gets you, in turn, more better reviews, it makes your business go better...

Travis: And you get return business. That's the number one thing in any commerce thing.

Teresa: Return business too, yeah.

Travis: You need returns.

Teresa: So I don't think that it's necessary—

Travis: I mean, not returns like people sending stuff back. You get what I mean.

Teresa: Right, right, right. Returning customers is what you mean.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So although you'd want to have a great buyer experience, don't make that at the expense of honesty.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? Let's see. Be clear about what you're charging and why, right? If it's a place, like, eBay, right? They have a buy now option, which is—

Travis: Yeah, they also have minimums. Yeah.

Teresa: And they have minimum bids. Some people are willing to go as low as something or, you know, I am— I think that I might be an eBay seller's dream because I do not want to spend multiple hours on the site being outbid. So I almost always just buy now.

Travis: Yeah, same.

Teresa: If that's what I want, I will just pay for what someone has decided to sell it to me for.

Travis: Well, especially if there's a specific thing that I'm looking for that either I need or it's for a collection. Mostly it's, like, uh, I just thought of the perfect present to get this person. but they don't make it anymore or it's hard to find or it'll be like, I need a prop for something.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it's a time thing. That's usually what it gets me is, like, well, this auction doesn't end for two weeks and the thing's coming, I'll just buy it now.

Teresa: Yeah, I need it now.

Travis: But I still, that said, even if it's a buy now option, don't pay more than you think the item's worth just to get it right away.

Teresa: That is— That's something true. So a friend of ours does a lot of eBay reselling. And one of the things that they said was, there is a difference between what people will pay for an item as opposed to what it is listed for.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Right? So something might be listed on the internet for \$100, right? But if you go a little further, you might find that item is really only selling for

\$50 or \$60. So be realistic as to what you are listing your prices for and what you are willing to take.

Travis: Yeah. And if you have a goal for a thing, one of the nice things about e-commerce and stuff is, like, if the bidding time ends or whatever and it didn't hit the minimum, relist it at a lower price, just like they do with, like, property and stuff like that.

Teresa: Yeah, I think that's fine. Reviews are something that you definitely need to pay attention to. Sites that have the ability for people to leave reviews are often more profitable because I want to be able to read how much people like something and what they use it for and maybe the things that maybe are not quite so good but aren't the seller's fault, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I wanna be able to read about that stuff and if I can't find something that's reviewed, I'm not gonna get it.

Travis: Yeah, this is overall, it's... A good rule for e-commerce is one of the things that you're losing is that in person, go pick it up off the shelf, turn it over, look at it, right, hold it in your hands. So do be maybe a little more cautious, I'm not saying like paranoid about it, but if you're like, oh, this thing is worth \$1,000 and I found someone selling it for \$10, right? Like, so there's something wrong here, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: If a deal seems too good to be true, be a little more cautious. Man, sometimes the listings of things will be, like, 18 paragraphs long, and then the last paragraph, it's like, "Oh, by the way, it doesn't work," or whatever, and you're like, "Okay."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Because then you buy it and you try to turn it, "I did say it didn't work," but I'm like, "Where?"

Teresa: Well, I'll talk about that. That's from the buyer point of view. But from the seller point of view, every once in a while you might get a bad review. If you get a bad review, I think that there are a couple steps that you can take.

You can reach out to the person that left it, see if there's any way that you can rectify the situation. If they refuse to take it down or if someone asks about it, it's important to be honest about what happened.

You can be diplomatic and let them know that, like, "I said in the description that it had imperfections. the buyer was disappointed about the imperfections because they didn't read the description," right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's another thing that I wanna talk about a little later.

Travis: I would also say along those lines, if you're a seller, especially on something like Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace or something like that, being clear about, like, for example, if you are not willing to deliver, if it's, like, you have to come pick it up.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Know that, say that in the listing. Because if I was a buyer and it didn't say that, right? And I was like, "Yeah, great, let's talk about how the best way you can get it to me." And like, "Well, you have to pick it up." And I'm like, "Well, but you didn't— We've gotten so far down the negotiation line and you've never said that."

Teresa: Yeah, and different sites have different rules about it. So like, make sure that, you know, the posting is correct and do what you say you're gonna be able to do. Same thing with how you handle shipping. eBay has its own rules about shipping. Facebook Marketplace might have a different rule.

A lot of the shipping stuff, for example, like I said, our friend who's a reseller, they said that be familiar with shipping and the platform rules because 11 ounces is shipped differently than a pound, right? And sellers have to also figure in the cost of, like, the boxes and the packing and all that kind of stuff and—

Travis: Especially with something fragile and you have to do, like, insurance or special packaging or anything like that.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. And they don't control, like, the post office, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So there's, like, expedited shipping, which is so many days and ground shipping, which is so many days. So like—

Travis: Especially if you're buying something internationally and it's, like, shipping to you from, like, Australia, it's gonna take a little while to get to you.

Teresa: Right, and all of that stuff, better, the more transparency that you have with your buyers, the better, right? Also as a seller, you need to make sure that you figured out what is your, like, what's your stance on holds for items?

What's your stance on paying in installments? What's your stance on, like, is it a first come first serve, right? Or are you, like, for example, on eBay, don't have a buy it now option if you don't want people to buy it for what you've listed for. If you want the auction to happen, don't place it as a buy it now. Right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You need to figure all this stuff up. The buyer etiquette.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Don't string someone along. Curiosity is not enough to pay the bills, right? So if you have a question about what you are looking at, make sure that you are ready to buy, right? Contingent on the answer, right? But it's a waste of everybody's time if you just wanna learn about the object instead of how you can purchase it.

Travis: How do you feel about in this of like making a counter offer on a listed price?

Teresa: I think it depends on the site, right? I think that's the purchase. That's, like, the point of eBay, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, but Etsy, I think is different because it's usually, like, smaller sellers or they're handmade items a lot more often. I mean, you can sell handmade items on eBay, but I think that because the platform is different, people don't expect that to really happen. You know what I mean?

Travis: Well, especially I think it's different at Etsy. There's a lot to go deeper into Etsy because it used to be all, like, handmade or people creating it themselves and now drop shipping has gotten into it. But if somebody is like, "I made this, I know how much work went into it, I know how much the materials cost, this is how much I'm charging for it, versus, like, I'm reselling an antique or something on like Craigslist and I'm charging 150 and you're, like, "I can do 125." That's different, right?

Teresa: Right. Absolutely.

Travis: I do think that if it comes to Craigslist or something like that and you wanna make a counter offer, one, use your best judgment to not be offensive, right? If they're like, "I would like 500" and you're like, "I'll give you 20 bucks," right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Why would they do that? But also if you're, like, They're charging 500 and you're, like, "I'll give you 450," and they're, like, "The price is 500," that's the answer, right?

Teresa: You've got to respect that. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. The next thing, read through the whole post.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: Do you have questions about the condition of the item? Probably it's in the post. Do you have questions about the measurements, the dimensions? Probably in the post. Questions about when the seller is available for messaging? Probably in the post.

All of that stuff, you need to do your own due diligence and read the whole posting, right? Again, our friend, the reseller said that a lot of questions that they get through their message app, through their sites that they use, are all answerable in the post.

Travis: I would also say two, let me be your dad for a moment and give you some cautions. One, especially if it's a site like eBay or Etsy or something where it has a built-in purchasing engine in the thing or purchasing abilities in the platform. If somebody says like, "Oh, actually, could you just, like, PayPal me?" Or, "Oh, I'd prefer if we— Thank you, but instead of doing it through eBay, let me charge you through this thing." Do not do that.

Teresa: Mm-mm, sounds fishy.

Travis: And you're removing all of the ability to then go to whatever the, uh, governing thing is, to go to Etsy and say, like, "I would like a return on this" or, like, "Here's the tracking information of this purchase I made and they charged me for it and they never sent it to me," right? And then if it's just, like, "Oh, instead I sent them a hundred dollars on Venmo," that's completely out of anybody else's hands.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And in the real world, if somebody is, like, "Okay, you can come pick it up from my house" or "I'll meet you in some remote location." Either take somebody with you or meet in, like, the parking lot of a Walmart, right? Something like that, where— Don't just go to somebody's house.

Teresa: There are plenty of communities that have pick up safe areas, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Where, like, they have designated the corner of like a parking lot. They say, like, this is a place where you can do this. There are people around, we've sanctioned this right here. This is where it should be done to keep everyone safe.

Travis: Also just to get back to Etsy. And in general, Amazon, all that stuff, if you don't know about drop shipping, oh, please look into it because there will be things where, one—

So basically, drop shipping, to give you a real quick idea, drop shipping is there are places where you can get, like, really, really cheap things like AliExpress is one, right? So say there's a ring on AliExpress, you can order it for a dollar, right? So drop shipping is they then create, a listing for that thing on Etsy and charge like \$40 for it. And when you order it, it automatically orders it from AliExpress to your house.

So that product was never in their hands, right? They have just charged you like a \$39 markup on a \$1 ring or something like that, right? And so just be aware of the thing that you're buying and Etsy has just been flooded with these, Amazon has been flooded with these and you're just basically getting overcharged for two cents worth of material that you're paying \$100 for or whatever. Be really careful about that and know what you're buying before you buy it.

Teresa: Here are some acronyms that you might want to know. We've got NWT, new with tags.

Travis: Oh, okay, yeah.

Teresa: That's nice. We got NWOT, new without tags. We've got EUC. Excellent used condition.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: We've got G-U-C, good used condition. A lot of these.

Travis: And Y-U-C, yucky used condition, yuck.

Teresa: [laughs] A lot of these are pretty straightforward, but if you run across, like, a listing that has a lot of these in the title, right? Then you wanna pretty much know what that is at a glance.

Travis: Another important one: O-B-O, or best offer. So if they say, "It's \$50, OBO," then they're letting you know that they're open to it. But that also means if you're, like, "I'll do \$25," and somebody else offers \$35, it's not going to you.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? So you can either say, I will buy it at \$50 the price that you listed, done and done, or you can make an offer, which then they might say, like, "Well, I'm gonna wait and see if somebody can get closer to the price I'm asking." And if that's the case, once again. you have to understand, like, you have to respect that. Cause if they're, like, "I would like \$50 or best offer." And you say \$20. And they're, like, "That's not really the best offer I think I'm gonna get for this." They don't have to say yes to that.

Teresa: Absolutely. I just would like to say that, drop shipping aside, if you're not Amazon, there are real people on the ends of these transactions. Real people buying things, curating stores, selling things to people who they think will enjoy them, not just, like, you know, like, clothing hauls or whatever, right?

Where people wear it for the internet and then they're done with it. Most of the time, these are people. Remember that if you are messaging a seller, that, you know, five o'clock on Friday night might be at the end of their business hours.

Travis: Right. Especially if it's not their full-time job.

Teresa: Right. It might be a part-time gig. So, like, maybe they don't message people on Saturday and Sunday. So you probably won't get anything until Monday morning. We always talk about, like, it is easy to hide behind the anonymity of your computer screen.

But when, especially doing online shopping, like I said, from people who aren't drop shipping or Amazon, right? Which is mostly computer at this point. There are people on the other end. And if you treat each other well, then you'll all have a more pleasant experience.

Travis: And especially when we talk about, like, a creative thing, if somebody has made it, they get to choose what that's worth, right? If I paint a painting and I say, "I would like \$200 for this painting," and you don't think that painting is worth \$200, then you don't have to buy it.

But man, the TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, all these things are just rife with examples of somebody being, like, "Well, I think the painting you made is only worth \$50. How dare you?" And it's like, okay, man, I worked really hard to make this.

Teresa: Then don't buy it. And there's something to be said for market demand.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: If you can't sell it for \$200, maybe you have overpriced it for what the market demands.

Travis: Right. Like, say I find a painting that I love. I love it. And someone's charging \$100, and I'm like, I can't afford \$100 right now. And I reach out

to them and I say, "I love this so much and I'd love to own it, but I can really only afford to do like \$75." Fine, they might say no. They might say like, but—

Teresa: That's their prerogative.

Travis: If you're being respectful about it, but as opposed to, "What you are charging is wrong. This is not worth that amount. I think maybe \$70 if you're lucky," right? There's an attitude difference to that, right?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us. Thank you all so much for listening. It's a new month. which means new merch over the McElroy merch store, McElroyMerch.com. There's a lot of cool stuff over there. Also, if you're listening to this on the day it comes out or even Saturday or Sunday, I'm going to be at SketchFest Sunday, February 4th, 7 PM doing the Traventure Zone. It's a RPG tabletop live roleplay— You get it, actual role— You get it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Live game, featuring me running the game and Danny Fernandez, Erica Ishii, Eugene Cordero, Aaron Keefe, Griffin Newman, and Connor Ratliff playing. It's going to be an absolute hoot. That's 7 PM on February 4th. You can get your tickets at sketchfest.com or sfsketchfest.com. If you search— Go to Sketch Fest, you'll find it. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Well, we thank Brent "Brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

Um, thank you to Alexx, our writer and researcher. Thank you to Rachel, our editor. And thank you to you for listening. We love you. Thanks for listening.

Travis: Yeah, you're great. And that's gonna do it for us. Join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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