



Ztail Becomes More Worth-y

By Julia Wilkinson

AuctionBytes

May 27, 2008

<http://blog.auctionbytes.com/cgi-bin/blog/blog.pl?/comments/2008/5/1211915385.html>

Julia Wilkinson is a blogger, freelance writer, and the author of several books including "The eBay Price Guide" (No Starch Press, 2006) and "eBay Top 100 Simplified Tips & Tricks" (Wiley, 2004-6); Her latest ebook, "Over 500 Books that Sell for \$50-\$5000 on eBay," is available on her website.

I'd thought of Ztail as the site that lets you grab product info and stock photos from various databases and use them to create quick 'n' easy eBay listings (kind of like eBay's Pre-Filled Item Information on steroids), so when I heard they now seemed to be all about guessing what various items are worth, I called CEO Bill Hudak to see what was up.

Techcrunch.com said Ztail wants to be "the Kelley Blue Book for Everything." Had the company totally changed its business model?

It turns out the listing tools are still there. In fact, the addition of the new community-based values (that's values, as in prices) is meant to add another layer to the experience of helping people get stuff out of their closets and sold. "It was motivated by the thought we were trying to get casual sellers involved," Hudak told me. The first question people have, he said, is "what it's worth."

And while the old Ztail model pulled, and continues to pull, data from various product databases, Hudak said "there's so much different stuff" there, this communal price-guessing fills in gaps for those random items that don't, for example, have neat and tidy SKU numbers. Another thing skewing the database stats was that one man's sale of an item might not be the same as another's: for example, one game system may come with a wireless remote and two games; the other with nothing extra. Then you get the odd item like the old pair of Levi's blue jeans from the 70s that you may not find in any product database.

On facebook, the Ztail "What's It Worth?" concept is a game widget. People guess what they think an item is worth, and the price is the average of everyone's vote. You can score up to 100 points, with points ranked on a percentage correct of the price, and you can see the global "Top Ztailers" in a list to the right.

Hudak notes that user's appraisal accuracies will be saved, so that with time their appraisals will have appropriate relative weight. Users can also enter comments to qualify why they give the value they do: "Any time anyone says something is worth something, there's usually some kind of qualifier," he said.

He points to the endurance of shows such as "The Price Is Right," one of the most successful and long-running game shows ever, as well as the popularity of "Antiques Roadshow," as indications that this approach will be successful.

Ztail seems to have found a fun concept that will naturally build community around their site and create a member-generated price guide to boot. It will be competing with eBay's own database of completed prices, but Ztail's approach gives people a more engaging way to place a value on things. The bigger question may be, will enough people take time out of their day to play the price game? For a site that's built a product that streamlines the listing task, the answer will be valuable.

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