
Dan Thompson's
“Making Of Auction SOS!”
The Secrets behind software development

“The Making of Auction SOS!” is a publication written by Dan Thompson of <http://www.elpassobooks.co.uk>

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Introduction

First of all, let me thank you for purchasing this e-Book - I hope you find it informative and helpful. And I hope it will even inspire you to go out and create your own piece of software!

In this e-Book I am going to show you exactly how I developed my software application from start to finish, without any programming knowledge! I am going to be looking at what problems I encountered and how I overcame them. I will also look at the marketing techniques that I used to recover 75% of the cost of the software within the first 48 hours of it being on sale. I won't just be talking theory, though, I am going to show you the exact emails that I sent out to my mailing list to generate these sales!

Not only will this software make me money from the sales but I am also using it to generate "back-end sales" for many years to come without any effort on my part. Again, I will show you exactly how this is done from start to finish.

As if that wasn't enough, I will also answer the question that people have been asking me since I released the software:

"Why did you choose to develop a software application rather than an e-Book?"

I will give you my exact reasons behind this choice and I will also discuss whether this idea is right for you. Software development certainly won't be for everyone but I hope to give you an insight into what it takes and the time/costs involved.

Anyway, enough of my rambling - I'm not good when it comes to writing introductions - let's jump right into the good stuff!

The Beginning

Before I begin, lets set the scene..... it was a dull Tuesday at the beginning of April 2006 and there I was sitting at my desk staring blankly out of the window. I was looking for a new project to start - should I write another e-Book? Should I build another website? Or should I try something different?

I don't know why, but I chose to leave my comfort zone and try something that I had never done before. I decided that my own software application would be the answer! Now, here's the thing, I didn't know how to make my own application and I had no intention of learning - I don't have the patience ;-)

The only time I spent programming was whilst I was studying for my AVCE and HND in BIT (Business Information Technology). After 4 years of tuition the best I could come up with was a simple "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" PC game. I would offer it for download but I have no idea how to create an installer! If anyone would like to volunteer let me know ;-)

I also didn't know what I wanted the software to do or how I was going to market it. At this stage, you could say I was a total novice when it came to software development. However, before I could do anything, I needed an idea. What would be the point in continuing with the development if I didn't know the sort of thing that I wanted?

I had just created a new website that allowed eBay members to report scams - <http://www.auction-arses.com> - and I thought that a piece of software that was somehow related to this site would be a good idea. The software could be used to promote the site and *vice versa* - I would be killing two birds with one stone. With this in mind, I took the next step. I knew that I wanted to make a piece of software that was related to eBay (because of my eBay based website) so all I needed now was some research.

So, how exactly did I do my research? Simple, I sent out a mail to the very responsive Members on my mailing list!

Initial Research

My initial research was very simple. I already had a Membership of around 3000 people at the time of researching the software. All I did was send them out a fairly vague email asking for suggestions. I asked what Members disliked about the current ebay system and what they would like to see improved. I also added a handful of my own ideas, just to get kick-start their ideas. Let me show you the exact email that I sent out to my Members:

- - Start Email - -

From: Dan Thompson

Date: 12/04/2006

Hi *Name*,

I need to ask you a favour, I very much hope you can help me out here.

I am planning to create some software that will help eBay users (mainly buyers) use the eBay system.

I would like to ask you what you find difficult when using eBay, and what you would like to see improved or simplified?

So far I have thought of:

1. View all negative feedback of a certain user at the click of a button - No more scrolling through pages of feedback looking for the negs!

2. How about searching for more than one thing at once, it can be done on eBay but would you like it simplified?

Those are the sort of ideas I am after, do you have any thoughts on the ideas above or any suggestions for the software?

I would love to hear your feedback, who knows maybe your idea will end up in the final version of the software!

Regards,

Dan

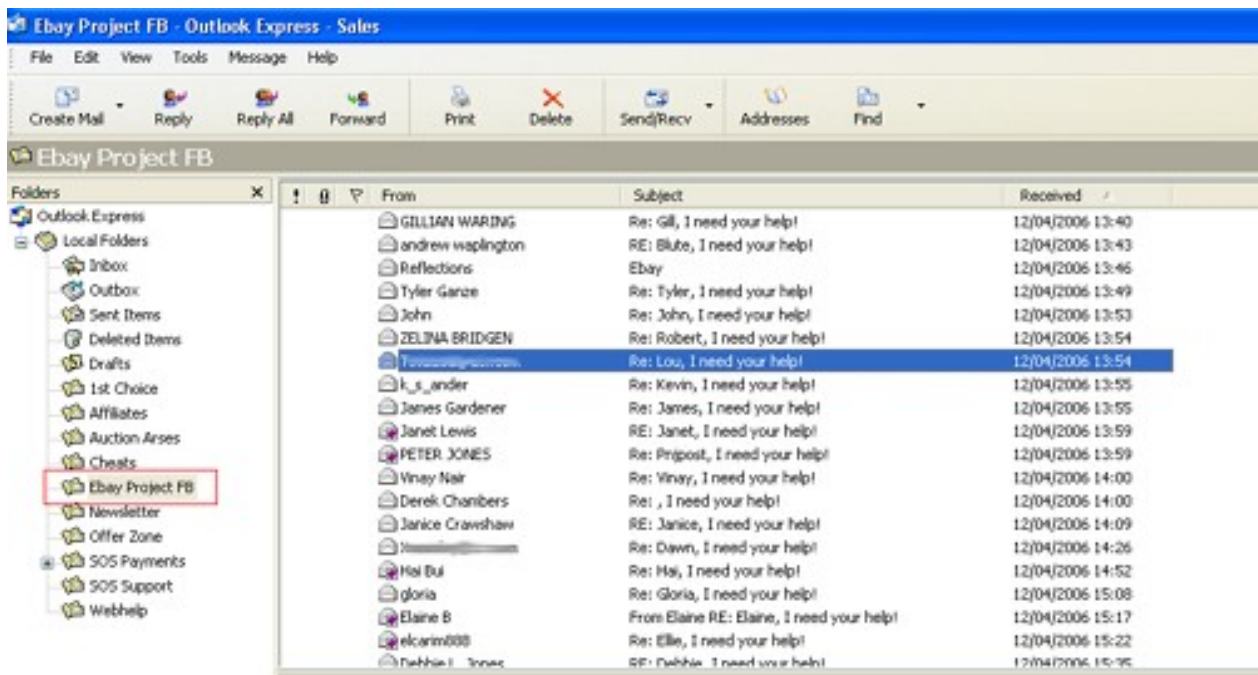
<http://www.elpassobooks.co.uk>

- - End Email - -

This was the first time I had ever sent something like this out to my mailing list so I wasn't sure how they would respond. It turns out that my Members actually liked me asking them questions and I was inundated with suggestions within minutes of sending out the email. I received all of the suggestions you

could possibly think of - some were terrible but some were very good and they did actually end up in the final version of the software.

I left the results alone for a few days to give everyone a chance to reply. Once I was satisfied that all of the replies had been collected I moved all of the emails into a new folder and went through the suggestions one by one. I also made sure that I replied to everyone that replied to my mailing, thanking them for their help.



Once I had read through all of the suggestions I had a look to see if any patterns were emerging. I actually scribbled this down on a piece of paper but in hind-sight it would probably have been better to use a spreadsheet for this task. If any of the ideas were repeated I added them to a separate list. Obviously, if more than one person requested a feature, there was a decent chance others would want it as well!

In front of me I was left with a piece of paper with my scribbles all over it - the sheet was full of the most popular user suggestions. I transferred these questions into a notepad file for simplicity.

Now that I had the ideas I needed to create a "Specification". Remember that I am by no means a programmer, so I knew I was going to have to `outsource' the work to someone else. Outsourcing requires the need to ensure that your specification contains EXACTLY what you want from your product. If you provide someone with a sub-standard specification there is no point complaining when you get an application that isn't what you hoped for. All the programmer has to work on for your project is your specification and if you provide him/her with a well laid out, detailed specification there is much less chance of any problems, as

you have spelled out exactly what you require. I will show you some examples of a bad specification later on in this report but for now, let's concentrate on my specification. Here are some snippets - notice how I included rough sketches to show the prospective programmer exactly what I wanted. This is just the specification for the negative feedback checker part of the software but from this you get a good idea of what to include.

View all negative FB for a specific user will be one of the main selling points of the software. Actually, it was already possible to do this with a Firefox plug-in but this plug-in has stopped working in new versions (post 2005) of Firefox - that's why I thought it would be great to have this in the software:

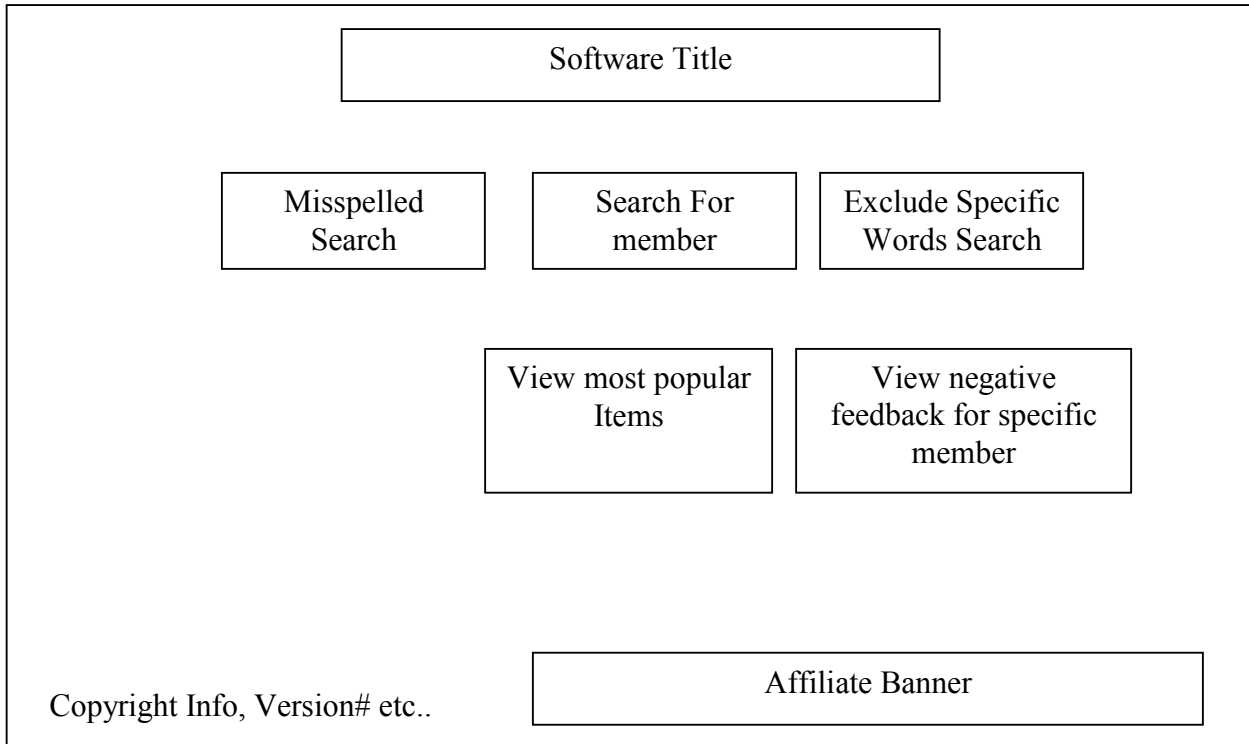
The comments will be shown in the software, if the user clicks on the users name, then they will be taken to that member's ebay profile, again this will include my affiliate link.

Sketch Example:

Negative Feedback Finder		
Find Feedback For:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="Search"/>
Member	Comment	Left On
Members Name - View Profile	Negative Comment 1 is displayed here	Date FB was left
Members Name - View Profile	Negative Comment 2 is displayed here	Date FB was left

As you can see, the above drawing is a very rough sketch but it helps no end when you are submitting your project to prospective programmers. If you compare the above sketch to the final product you will see that they look very different but that doesn't matter. The specification is the backbone of your product. You can always discuss changes or ideas with your programmer at a later date but your specification needs to hammer home all of the main points clearly to the programmer.

I included sketches of every part of the software for my programmer to look at. I even thought about the design and layout of the software. Again as you can see from the picture, this looks very different to the final software but as I said, doing these rough diagrams really does help your programmer when it comes to creating your product.



Outsourcing

After you have put together a fantastic specification it's time to take your project out into the big, wide world for the first time. The main aim here is to find someone with a good knowledge of programming that will create the software at a reasonable price. That's all well and good but you can't exactly go down to your local Woolworths store and buy a programmer! (Sorry that's a UK only joke - overseas readers replace Woolworths with Walmart!)

So, we need to find a programmer. Luckily, in today's 'at-your-fingertips' Internet climate, this is quite an easy task. There are currently thousands of programmers, web designers and artists from all over the world looking for work. I like to use www.scriptlance.com for all of my programming and web design jobs. Let me give you a very quick run down of how the system works:

1. Create a scriptlance account
2. Post your project and wait for bids from programmers
3. Discuss project with potential programmers
4. Once happy accept a bid and the work will commence

Obviously, this is just a basic overview of how the system works - once you create an account, (it's free!) have a look around your control panel and you will soon get to grips with everything.

Now, what I am about to show you is quite personal, so I would appreciate it if you keep that in mind when viewing the information. I am going to show you the exact project that I posted for my Auction SOS! Software, I will also show you screen shots of the private message board postings.

Take a look at the screen shots on the next page.

Project: eBay Desktop Software
 ID: 1145277847
 Chosen Programmer:

Status:	Closed (No bidding)
Budget:	N/A
Created:	4/17/2006 at 8:44 EST
Bidding Ends:	N/A
Project Creator:	dant27 Rating: ★★★★★★★★ (1 review)
Description:	<p>I am looking for someone to create a piece of eBay Desktop software with the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mis-spelled item search - Search for member - View all neg FB for specific member - Exclude selected words from search results if appear in the title - Link to www.xe.com/ucc for quick currency conversion - Most popular items <p>- Fully functional free trial for the software that expires after 48 hours, then the software becomes locked and they have to click a button that takes them to the sales page.</p> <p>- Must have space at the bottom for a standard 468*60 affiliate banner. Not sure if its possible but would the software be able to "call in" the banner code from an URL then I could change the banner at any time if need be.</p> <p>I have attached a more detailed spec in .doc format.</p> <p>If I accept you for the project payment will be made into your Escrow account and released once the project is completed.</p>
Job Type:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C/C++ • Visual Basic • .NET
Database System:	(None)
Operating System:	Windows

Hopefully, you can view the image above without any problems - I had a bit of trouble making it small enough to fit in the e-book! If you read through the project description you can see that I have given prospective programmers a brief summary of the application, I have then attached for them the full specification in MS Word form. I always find that this way works best, you give a brief description to the programmer and then if they are interested in the project they can look at the detailed specification for more information.

Now take a look at the screen shot below, this is the list of programmers that left a bid on my project. I have blanked out the prices as I don't feel that's important, plus I would rather keep it to myself ;-)

[View Project Message Board](#)
Messages Posted: 28

Programmers	Bid ▼	Delivery Within	Time of Bid	Rating
faprodev	██████████	25 days	4/17/2006 at 14:52 EST	★★★★★★★ (6 reviews)
Please see PMB for details				
solution4you	██████████	21 days	4/17/2006 at 17:49 EST	★★★★★★★ (2 reviews)
Hi, I'm an excellent VB.NET programmer and I will be happy to create this application fo you. See PMB.				
DWS	██████████	30 days	4/17/2006 at 10:45 EST	★★★★★★★ (59 reviews)
I can make this software. Use MS VC++				
codequru	██████████	45 days	4/17/2006 at 22:58 EST	★★★★★★★ (26 reviews)
Refer PMB				
haqteam	██████████	25 days	4/17/2006 at 15:13 EST	★★★★★★★ (20 reviews)
I can help you. Please see PMB.				
acumensoft	██████████	40 days	4/17/2006 at 9:24 EST	(No Feedback Yet)
Hi, We can provide the solution either in VB6.0 or VB.NET. We are Acumensoft Technologies, a software development/IT and BPO firm located in India. Please visit www.acumensofttech.com to get a detailed impression about us. Portfolio will be provided on request. Please open PMB for further discussion. Looking forward to work with you, Regards Puspendra Roy				

As you can see from the image above, I received 6 bids on my project - all from programmers with a good feedback rating (you can see the feedback rating on the right hand side of the screen). You can also click on the blue star to view each programmer's feedback. The feedback system is very much like the system you would find on eBay and other such sites - make sure that you have a good read through the feedback before selecting a programmer!

But wait, we have missed out on one of the most important parts of Scriptlance – The Project Message Board!

The project message board allows you to communicate with prospective programmers about your project. The programmer may also want to ask you some questions about the software so that they can bid accordingly, or give advice as to improving your project. It is vital that you read through all messages posted on your project message board. Here is a screen shot of my project message board (see next page) for the Auction SOS! Project. Again, I have blanked out the prices and any private information.

Author	Message
softasap Programmer ★★★★★★ (1 review) Bid: N/A	#1 Posted 4/17/2006 at 9:36 EST [private message for dant27] Hi dant27, We are working in the area of simultaneous using C++ and Web technologies and have created a couple of different tools which combine C++ desk application with web browser. Please, see examples at our site ...softasap.net: LEMultibrowser, AutoguestBook etc. Thus, we are going to implement your task as a stand alone C++/MFC desk App with several embedded web browsers, within those user can fill in some form or can view banners. If this approach is acceptable for you, we can develop our project description in more details. Supposed project price may be about: ██████, time of delivering - about 2 weeks (after discussing the main project details). Thanks for your time, Yuriy Reply to this message...
solution4you Programmer ★★★★★★ (11 reviews) Bid: ██████ days	#2 Posted 4/17/2006 at 10:24 EST [private message for dant27] Hi. Your project is very interesting. I'm very familiar with eBay. I just finished an app that allow a vendor to edit his listing and show feedback from any user on eBay. The bid include support on the app for 2 years, 3 minors updates and a major one. Reply to this message...
dant27 Webmaster ★★★★★★ (7 reviews)	#3 Posted 4/17/2006 at 10:26 EST [private message for pwa] Hi Thanks for bidding on my project, have you done much work with eBay scripts in the past? To be honest I have very little experience developing with eBay, are all of my features possible?
dant27 Webmaster ★★★★★★ (7 reviews)	#4 Posted 4/17/2006 at 10:31 EST [private message for solution4you] Hi Thanks a lot for your bid, you have great feedback and your price is very reasonable. I will give the bidding another 24 hours and if nobody else comes forward I would be delighted to work with you on the project. Hope to speak with you soon.

I apologise for the quality of the picture, especially if you have a small monitor! You should be able to make out the text, but its not important if you cant. All I really wanted to show you was a quick screen shot of the message board.

As I said previously, this is a place for you to get to know your programmers. Make sure that you ask them any questions you may have BEFORE you accept any bids. It's no good starting the project and then finding out that the programmer doesn't understand a certain part of your specification. I also find it very helpful to ask for examples of the programmers past projects as this gives you an idea of the quality of the programmer and the sort of projects they have worked on previously. If they have worked on similar projects in the past then there is a good chance they will do a good job with your project.

It's also important to look at the prices you are being quoted by the programmers. You should find that the prices are within a similar region. If you find that one programmer has made a bid with a really high price then it may be worth sending them a message via the project message board asking them if they would consider lowering their price to fall in line with the rest of the bids. This has worked for me on a number of different occasions.

Once you have communicated with the programmers about your project it's time to accept a bid. Use the methods I described above and choose the programmer that you think will provide you with a high quality application within your specified budget. Once you have accepted the bid from a programmer you will each receive the other's contact information. This is the first time in the project that you will be given the programmer's details (everything beforehand

needs to have been discussed on the project message board).

In my experience, when a programmer gets your contact details they will send you an email with a brief outline of what they will be doing, how long it will take and which payment method they prefer etc. I can't really give you much advice in this regard as it all depends on how your selected programmer chooses to work. I find it a good idea to ask for "project updates" once a week from your programmer, that way you can keep track of their progress and address any concerns that may arise.

That just about covers the Scriptlance part of things. Let's just take a quick look at what we have done so far in the software development process for Auction SOS!:

- Initial research - send out email to my list
- Analyse data that has been collected
- Write a specification for your product
- Post your project on Scriptlance, or similar site
- Choose a programmer to work on your project
- Communicate with programmer

The next step for me was to prepare for the pre-launch. Even though the software was still in development I needed to plan my pre launch sequence!

The Pre-Launch

For me the pre-launch was one of the most important parts of the project. The pre-launch is what enabled me to recover almost all of the the cost of the software within the first 48-hours of the product going on sale.

Let me just give you a quick time line here, to show you when I started the pre-launch:

4 th April	-	First ever mention of Auction software
17 th April	-	Software development begins after choosing a coder
18 th April	-	Begin Pre-Launch campaign
1 st August	-	Release Software

As you can see from the time line above, I started my pre-launch MONTHS before my product was ready to launch. This wasn't a massive barrage of emails every day up until the launch, instead I would drop subtle hints in my [weekly newsletters](#). I also asked my mailing list to help me choose a name for the software - this received a great response and I actually got the name "Auction SOS!" from one of my newsletter subscribers. Doing this was a great way of getting everyone involved in the project, no longer was it just about me creating this software but I was now involving others in the process.

Just a quick side note here, you will notice that a lot of my methods revolve around my mailing list. For me having a mailing list is a vital part of my and indeed any on-line business - without a mailing list you will find it very difficult to market your products. If you haven't started building your own mailing list yet then I would recommend that you give it some serious consideration, it could be the most important decision you make in your on-line life! I use [Aweber](#) to manage my mailing list but there are also other systems out there such as Get Response.

I would keep dropping these small hints until about 1 month before the product launch on August 1st. In the month running up to the launch I started to give out more information about the software such as "Spy" screen shots and demo videos. I made sure that I posted regular "progress updates" on my blog, this also helped to create interaction amongst my subscribers and helped give the product a "BUZZ".

There were also many psychological triggers that I used during this launch, these triggers helped me win back the cost of the software within the first few days of it being on sale. I would love to share these triggers and methods with you, I would also love to take the credit for coming up with these methods but, unfortunately, I can't! I actually planned my Auction SOS! Product launch using tools, psychological triggers, and strategies I learnt from Jeff Walker's [Product Launch Formula](#) course. When I signed up for Jeff's package I also signed a

confidentiality agreement which meant that I couldn't divulge the secrets learnt from the course. To be honest I have probably already told you a bit too much! What I can do, though, is show you some of the emails that I sent out during my pre launch :-)

- - Emails Start - -

Email 1 – sent out July 5th

Hi {!firstname_fix},

Dan Thompson here again. You will remember I have been talking on and off about a piece of software called "Auction SOS" for months now! Well the good news is that the launch is on the horizon, all I need is a very quick favour from you. If you could answer the survey below (only 3 questions!) it would help me a great deal :-)

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=775152320641>

I will be releasing screenshots, videos, news and special offers in the coming weeks. If you would like to receive these updates all I ask is that you enter your name and email address at the page below:

<http://www.auctionsos.com>

This means I can keep in touch with those that are interested without annoying the rest of you!

I will send out a regular newsletter next week, it`s been too hot for me to write this week! Remember you can view all of my past newsletters at my blog:

<http://www.elpassoblog.com>

Regards,
Dan

Email 2 – sent out July 10th

Hi {!firstname_fix},

As you will know, last week I sent out a survey asking for your questions about Auction SOS. Today I have answered some of the most popular questions that were asked by you:

<http://www.elpassoblog.com/auction-sos-questions-1/>

I had over 100 questions so apologies if your question isn't listed. If you would like a direct reply to your question then feel free to leave a comment on the blog or send me an email.

Regards,

Dan

<http://www.auctionsos.com>

P.S. I will soon be releasing the first ever screenshots of Auction SOS. I may even throw in a video for you as well!

Email 3 – sent out July 17th

Hi {!firstname_fix},

It's too hot for me to write a long email so I'll keep this short and sweet, the first ever Auction SOS! screenshot is available to view at my blog:

<http://www.elpassoblog.com/auction-sos-spy-screenshot-1/>

Enjoy!

Dan

<http://www.auctionsos.com>

Email 4 – sent out July 21st

Hi {!firstname_fix},

I have just managed to get my hands on a sneak preview video of Auction SOS!.

I have put the video up at Youtube, I am going to post it on my blog next Thursday but I wanted to show you guys first!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFEP8l4CBOo>

On Monday I will be sending you the official release date and a really big update for those of you that want to be affiliates!

Have a great weekend!

Dan

Email 5 – sent out July 24th

Hi {!firstname_fix},
I know I only usually email you on a Thursday but I have some good news that you will be delighted to hear.

FINALLY after months and months of development Auction SOS! is ready to be released, I have added a countdown timer to the home page so you can mark the date on your calendar:

<http://www.auctionsos.com>

BUT that `s not all, what `s even more exciting is the fact that I am giving you the chance to win a BRAND NEW I-POD video by becoming an Auction SOS! affiliate. This offer is being released to you a full week for everyone else so please make the most of it:

<http://www.auctionsos.com/ipod.php>

All cookies last for 365 days (or until they are deleted by the user) so you can start promoting right away, every sale you generate gets you 50% of \$47 and if thats not enough you can even win a brand new I-Pod Video!

If you have any questions please do get in touch.

Regards,
Dan
<http://www.auctionsos.com>

Email 6 Sent out July 31st

Hi {!firstname_fix},
Just a very quick email to let you know that there are less than 24 hours to go until the Auction SOS! launch, you can check out the timer at:

<http://www.auctionsos.com>

I have also just finished putting together some special bonuses for "early birds", as you can see by screenshot below:

http://www.auctionsos.com/images/secret_bonus.JPG

I have given you this screenshot now because I think it `s only fair that you get the bonuses as you have been following this project closely.

So hopefully knowing what the bonuses are before hand will mean you dont need to re-read tomorrow, don `t let anyone grab them before

you! I expect them to sell out very quickly so make sure that you are at your PC for the launch tomorrow.

*Until tomorrow,
Dan*

<http://www.auctionsos.com>

Email 7 sent out August 1st

{!firstname_fix},

I just thought I would drop you a quick email to let you know, baring any technical difficulties, Auction SOS will launch TODAY (Aug 1st) at 4pm UK Time - 11am EST

As soon as the timer hit`s 0 you will be able to see the Auction SOS letter I have put together for you. I was up most of the night writing it for you but all of those coffee`s paid off!

It`s quite long, and for that I apologize, I know some of you already want to order straight away so if that`s you then you can scroll to the bottom of the page to place your order.

For the rest of you that would like to watch the video and view the screenshots, don`t worry - I don't expect the Early Bird offers to sell out within the first hour so it should give you enough time to read through the letter.

INSTRUCTIONS:

I will be sending out an email on or around the launch time, but if you want to get in early then just hit the refresh key when the countdown hits "0" and you will be taken to my letter!

<http://www.auctionsos.com>

*Enjoy!
Dan*

The Launch Email Sent out August 1st

Hi {!firstname_fix},

Just a super-quick email to let you know that the much anticipated Auction SOS! eBay desktop software is now live:

<http://www.auctionsos.com>

As you know I have spent the past 5 months of my life developing this software so I hope you enjoy it :-)

Happy bargain hunting!

Dan

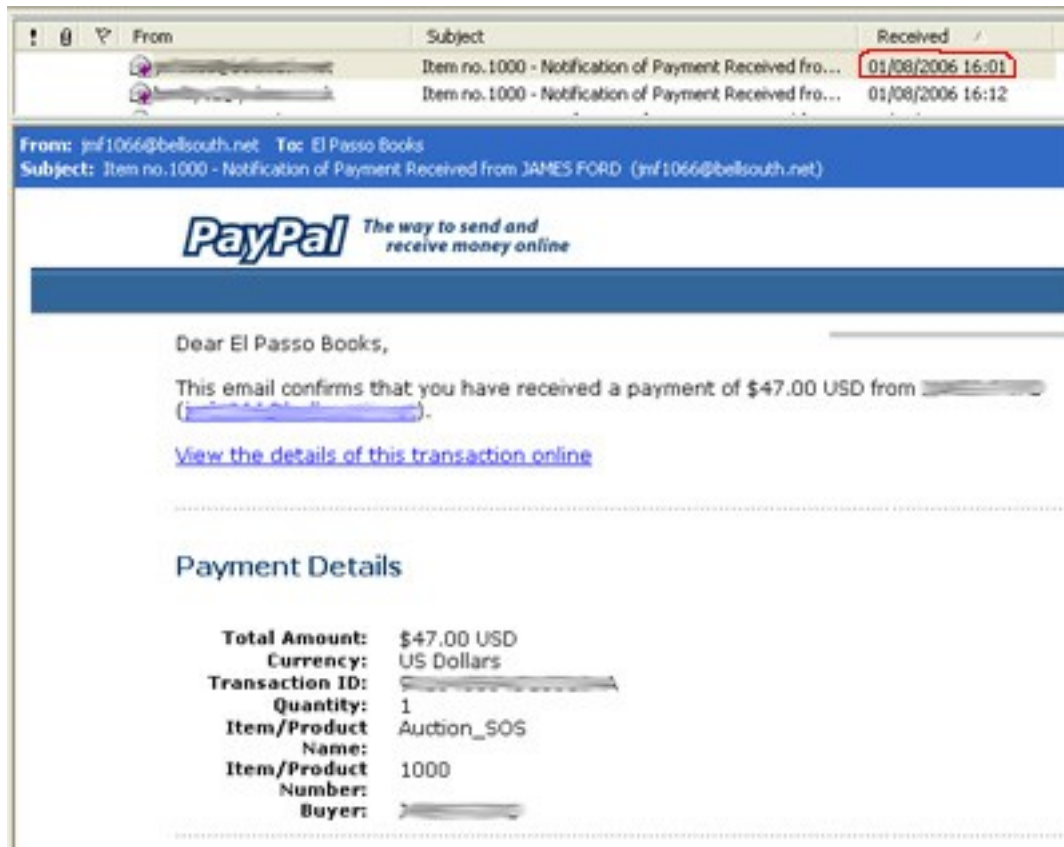
<http://www.auctionsos.com>

P.S. Make sure you don`t miss out on those early bird bonuses!

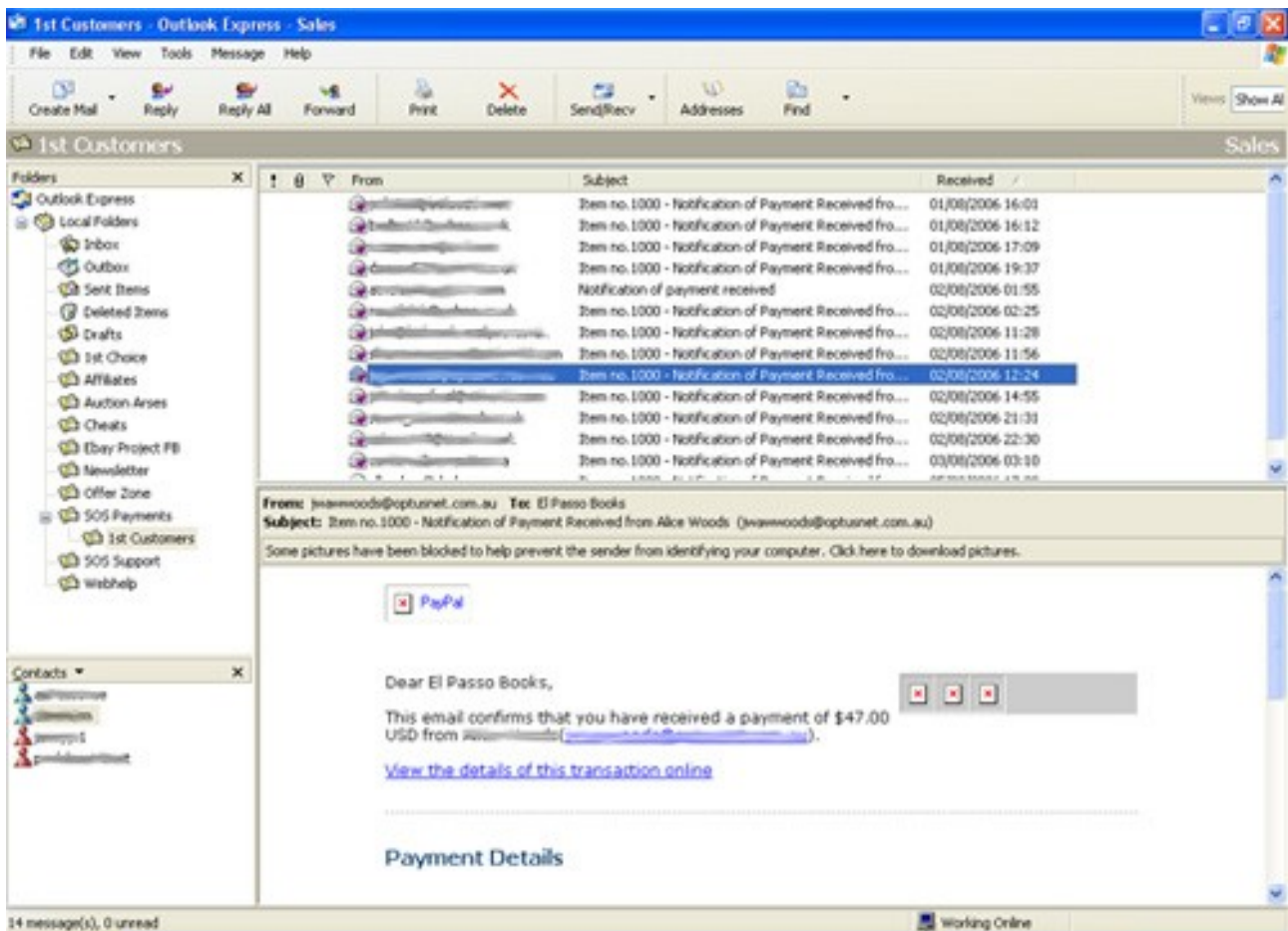
- - End Emails - -

So, there you have it, you have now seen every email that I sent out during my pre-launch. These emails helped me recover 75% of the cost of the software within the first 48 hours of it being on sale. I even sold one copy at 4:01pm - just 1 minute after I launched the product - this person didn't even had time to read through the sales page but the psychological triggers that I learnt from the [product launch course](#) kicked in!

Just take a look at my payments below, I have highlighted the time the first payment was received:



After the first sale I continued to have a steady flow of sales for the next 48 hours which made back 75% of the total cost of the software, yet more proof that my pre-launch was a success. Again, let me show you another screen shot of some of the \$47.00 payments I received within the first 48 hours of Auction SOS! going on sale. Apologies for the picture quality but it doesn't seem like they want to fit on my page!



Within the first 10 days of launch, all of my “Early Bird Bonuses” had sold out - I added 20 Early bird bonuses for the first 20 customers that bought the software. Thus, I recovered the entire cost of the software in the first 10 days! Not bad at all considering this was my very first software product and I did make some fundamental errors which I will try to overcome with my next project.

Now that the product was launched and I had recovered the cost of the software, where was I going to make my money from? Sure, the income from the sales is nice but what about a residual income as well!

I will now show you exactly how I will be making a residual income from the Auction SOS! Software (and the demo which we will come to later) each time someone uses the application.

Residual Income

It is virtually impossible to use my Auction SOS! Software without clicking on one of my affiliate links, I will show you in the screen shots below but you could also download the [free demo](#) to take a look for yourself.

Item Title	Bids	Current Price
The Note of the Master of Bass Fishing GameBo	0	\$4.99
NINTENDO GAMBOY ADVANCE TETRIS WORLDS GAME BRAND NEW 1.	7	\$10.84
Gambou Advance SP - WITH 6 GAMES!	9	\$51.00
NINTENDO GAMBOY COLOR POCKET "WITH GAMBOY CAMERA"	0	\$9.99
Gambou Advance and Color, 8 games, tons of accessories!	0	\$45.00
NINTENDO GAMEBOY COLOUR YELLOW + BAG + GAMES	1	\$37.85
Yu-Gi-Oh Dark Duel Stone for Gambou Color NR	0	\$1.99
Gothilla the Series gambou	0	\$2.00
Wave Race gambou	0	\$2.00
Ice Gambou Advance W/ Cover, Case, and 3 Games!	0	\$14.99
Gambou advance Droidopa	0	\$3.77
Nintendo Gambou Leads and Case Very Good Condition	0	\$9.44



Have a look at the screen shot above and look at the first point (number 1). It may not look like much, but every time Auction SOS! generates a link to an eBay item or page the link is encoded with my eBay affiliate ID. So, every time someone click's on a link within Auction SOS!, they are also clicking on one of my affiliate links, giving me back-end earnings from the software.

That's not all, look at point number 2. This one is more obvious than the first point but is still another source of income from the software. During my initial specification I asked if it was possible to "call" a page on my website and include it in the footer of the software. I can then use this footer to display important information about the software or simply add another advertising banner onto the software. The great thing about the footer is the fact it is dynamic, meaning I can change it at any time and the changes will appear in your copy of Auction SOS!.

The Demo?

When I launched the software many people asked why I would want to give away a fully functional trial version of my software, wouldn't that stop people from buying the full version?

I gave this a lot of thought but in the end I felt that the pro's outweighed the con's. Let's take a look at some of the main points:

Pro's

- Before you can download the Demo you need to give me your email address (This all goes back to the list building point I made earlier)
- Giving me the email address allows me to send follow ups regarding the software's features and potential benefits via my auto responder
- The Demo is encoded with my affiliate links so I make money from that even if you don't upgrade to the full version of the software
- Potential to get your product seen by a much wider audience using sites such as download.com

Con's

- May be possible for some people to "crack" the trial version of the software
- Hard to manage downloads given out by 3rd party sites such as download.com

I think you will agree with me that the pro's far outweigh the con's in this instance. One of the main reasons for offering a trial was the first "pro" I listed above - before you can download the Demo you need to give me your email address.

This opens up a whole new world of opportunities to me, if I have your email address then you are automatically added to my follow up system. Using the follow up system powered by my auto responder allows me to send you follow up emails advertising the product, showing you features, benefits, testimonials, case studies and more. I know I mentioned this product earlier but [Jeff Walker](#) has one of the best follow up sequences that I have come across. Even if you have no intention of buying his package it is worth signing up to the mailing list just to see his follow up sequence, it's a thing of beauty!

Giving me your email address also allows me to send you offers for future products that you may be interested in. By giving me your email address I also find out a bit of information about you. As the product is eBay based I instantly know that you are an eBay user so may be interested in more eBay related products. I also know that you have a slight interest in the software or you wouldn't have bothered to download the demo!

I'm sure you can see a pattern emerging here - most of my success from this project came from having a good mailing list and a reliable [auto responder](#) in place. By no means am I saying this couldn't have been achieved with no mailing list or auto responder in place but it made things a lot easier for me. If you haven't already started building a mailing list then what are you waiting for - start now!

Why did I do this?

A popular question I get asked is “Why did you choose to go down the software route rather than creating an e-Book”

The answer is quite simple – because I wanted to try something different!

In the past I had mainly focused on creating e-Books, almost all of these were viral reports with my most successful creation to date being the “Basic HTML” e-Book that I am sure a lot of you will have seen being sold on eBay. Whilst these were making me a lot of money from affiliate links and back-end sales, I really wanted to create something with a higher perceived value, so I chose the software route.

The final sale price for Auction SOS! Is \$47, which I consider very reasonable for a software title. I had, of course, done a lot of research and found a person selling a Misspelt eBay search checker for \$67! I know it's possible for some big guru's to sell reports for between \$47 and up to \$1000 but I had never charged more than \$10 for one of my own e-Books, so I was quite nervous about selling something for a higher value of \$47.

Would this be for me?

As I said previously, I didn't have any experience in the software development environment and jumped in at the deep-end, but does this mean that you should do the same thing?

I think it all depends on your situation; are you in a position to take a risk? Because let's face it, trying something on this scale when you have no previous experience involves a risk factor. Software development is much more expensive than creating your own e-Book but if you succeed then the potential profits will be higher. Are you in a financial position to take that risk? Please, whatever you do, DON'T risk your last \$500 on trying your hand at software development. Only risk what you can afford to lose and by all means make sure you research well beforehand, don't create a product for a non-existent market :-)

On the other hand, if you have put some money aside and are looking for a new project to jump into, then software development could be for you. Again, though, it is vitally important that you carry out your research before jumping in at the deep-end. Just because you think your idea rocks it doesn't mean others will agree with you ;-)

It is important to warn you that this type of project can also be very draining on your social/family life - constant communication with programmers

trying to iron out problems, dealing with technical problems after the release, TESTING!, not to mention the whole pre-launch process. At the time, I managed to get through everything without any problems but it wasn't until the launch was out of the way that it started to hit me. I was very fatigued and needed to take a 2-week break away from IM (internet marketing) just to recover!

All in all software development is quite a long process from start to finish (this will obviously vary depending on your project), so make sure that you have the time available to put into the development process - the more time you spend on the development, the better the product you will have at the end!

Mistakes I made

I will be the first person to admit that some mistakes were made during the software development process but I wasn't too worried about this - as an old Yorkshire farmer once said to me:

“Any man that has never made a mistake isn't human”

The main thing is not to worry about the mistakes made but rather, what will you do to make sure these mistakes don't happen again? I will now show you some of the fundamental errors that I made when creating the software. I have learned from these mistakes and, hopefully, it will help you avoid the same pitfalls!

Not Enough Research

Although I carried out what seemed to be a lot of research, when I had finished the project I realised that I should have done more. I feel that I started the actual development of the software too early. I should have spent more time looking at other similar products on the market and seeing how I could make Auction SOS! stand out more from the rest.

Professional Copy

Ultimately, I created the sales page (or copy) on my own. I am far from being a professional copywriter! Thus, in hindsight, I think if I had decided upon enlisting the services of a professional copywriter to devise my sales page, I would have secured even more sales. However professional copywriters don't come cheap and perhaps if I'd had a larger budget then this would've been a more profitable avenue to investigate.

Don't Alienate Your List

Although sending mailings to my subscriber list throughout the launch process definitely helped me make more sales, it also alienated some of my subscribers who weren't interested in the product. For future projects I will set up a targeted list that people can join if they have an interest in the software. That way I give the information to those that want it without alienating the rest of my Members.

In Closing

In closing I would like to thank you for purchasing this report. I have tried to include everything that I learned from creating my Auction SOS! software product. Hopefully you will have found the information in this e-Book helpful and inspiring. I wish you future success in all of your ventures, be it software-related or otherwise!

If you would like to discuss any of the points raised in this report further, why not drop in to my forum? I check the posts daily. So it won't be long before you get a reply!

<http://www.auction-arses.com/forum>

Also, if you would like to read my latest newsletters, you can subscribe at the link below. I receive great feedback from my weekly newsletters (just look at the testimonials on the page below) and I cover everything from eBay sales to managing your email accounts!

<http://www.elpassoblog.com/newsletter/>

Thanks for reading,
Dan Thompson

<http://www.auctionsos.com>