



## AffiliateTip.com Interview: Lily Shen, eBay

Hosted by Shawn Collins

<http://www.affiliatetip.com/blog>

**Shawn Collins:** Thank you for joining us. Today I'm speaking with Lily Shen of eBay, and we're going to be talking about some of the different things they are doing with the affiliate program over there. I want to thank Lily for taking the time to speak with us and look forward to hearing what you have to say.

**Lily Shen:** Thanks, Shawn. I'm definitely excited to speak with you and definitely look forward to sharing some more information. We have a lot of exciting things going on, so, yeah, definitely looking forward to it.

**Shawn:** Great. One thing that I am curious about it, if you could let me know and the rest of the audience, what sets eBay's Affiliate Program apart from the other affiliate programs that are out there?

**Lily:** Sure. I can't really speak for other affiliate programs per se, but I do have to say that the eBay Affiliate Program offers a really competitive payout, very easy to use tools, and the unparalleled breadth and depth of products that are currently on eBay.

In terms of our compensation today, we pay out on both ACRUs, what we call Active Nearly Registered Users, and we pay anywhere from \$12 to \$22. We also pay on the rev share side anywhere from 40 to 65 percent of revenues generated to eBay buyer affiliates, and that launched just late last year and it's proven to be very successful for many of our publishers.

In terms of the marketplaces, we have an amazing breadth and depth of products with over 50,000 categories, and even just in Q3 we had 584 million new listings added to eBay worldwide. We also have a global presence in over 33 markets with users from every country around the world, so we definitely provide a great playground for our affiliates and our publishers to be successful.

**Shawn:** Great, sounds fantastic. Can you tell me a little more about some of the tools and resources that eBay has innovated to help affiliates to succeed?

**Lily:** Yeah, absolutely. We actually have a dedicated team here just looking at products, tools, and infrastructure for the eBay Affiliate Program. We have a number of tools that our affiliates employ to really get them up and running quickly.

To start, we have a flexible destination tool which instantly allows affiliates to create trackable affiliate links to any eBay URL. We just this year launched an RSS feed generator that obviously creates RSS feeds that include affiliate links. We offer free APIs



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for our affiliates, and just a couple of months ago we launched an API plug-in tool that allows affiliates to conduct some research and become more familiar with eBay's API data in Excel.

We also have hub pages, very vibrant discussion boards, and community newsletters et cetera. I don't know if you are aware of this, but we are actually looking to launch in probably the first half of 2007 a product called AdContext, which is a contextual advertising product that will allow affiliates and our publishers to basically take some code and put the product on the site, and we'll essentially call the content from the site and surface up the most listings that will help our affiliates be most effective. We're currently in beta mode at the moment.

**Shawn:** So is that available to all affiliates or just a select group of affiliates?

**Lily:** This is currently invite-only.

**Shawn:** OK. Gotcha. As far as engaging the eBay affiliate community, are you using any kind of Web 2.0 methods for communication or have any events or any kinds of things to get in touch with the affiliates and keep in contact?

**Lily:** Yeah, absolutely. We have a dedicated team of account managers both here at eBay and on the Commission Junction side, and we manage many, many of our top accounts. We actually do have a monthly newsletter that goes out that provides best practices, trends, product information to our publishers. As I mentioned before, we have very active discussion boards, and we also hold an annual invite-only affiliate summit for our top publishers, and we run this in parallel with our developer's conference. This year we are looking to build that out even more and have an affiliate track at the developer's conference, too.

In addition to that, we have very comprehensive pages on the affiliate site that provides best practices for our affiliates who are really looking to pursue almost any type of business model. We are always looking for new ways to share information and allow affiliates to really communicate with each other as well.

The community is really the bread and butter of eBay's business, and that is absolutely the same thing for eBay's affiliate community. We feel that it is really important that we develop the relationships with them directly and learn from them.

**Shawn:** Great. As far as the different types of affiliates, there are so many types of affiliates out there, is there a particular kind of affiliate that is usually more successful with your affiliate program?



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**Lily:** I wouldn't say it depends on a business model, per se. We have a very diverse portfolio of affiliates ranging from content and portals and SEO, shopping comparison sites. We have auction tools, loyalty incentive affiliates and obviously paid search affiliates.

We found what makes most affiliates successful is less about the model they engage, as a matter of fact many of them employ multiple models, but what really determines their success is their level of dedication to innovating: finding new things and really optimizing what works. The space is constantly changing as well as the marketplace, so we find that those who are really dedicated to it find huge success in it.

**Shawn:** Great. For affiliates from the newbies up to the experienced ones, do you have any particular tips and tricks to help them maximize their revenue with the affiliate program?

**Lily:** Yes. We really encourage our affiliates to always think about the end customer and stay abreast of not only industry trends but also product trends. Obviously for this holiday season it would be the PS3, Wii, the Xbox, etc. Some new top affiliates just this past month have solely built sites around these products and have simply turned the traffic to eBay. That's pretty interesting. We really encourage our affiliates to keep on top of that. I would say it's really tough to try new things and to really optimize space on the results that you see in the data that we provide you. A lot of our affiliates have been successful that way.

**Shawn:** OK. I know you have affiliate teams all around the world. Do you have any tips for affiliates that want to expand beyond the US borders as an affiliate?

**Lily:** Yes. We have programs in almost 20 countries today. We manage them in a very decentralized manner, and so we recognize the importance of localization in our affiliate program. I really encourage the affiliates to research the market itself and understand the end users there, but also spend some time understanding the programs of each of our countries.

You may find that the more mature markets may be more similar in nature. For example, you may want to start with English speaking countries if you're currently in the US. You may want to start with the UK, Australia or Canada and you've got a springboard to launch into some of the other markets. I would definitely say spend time localizing your content enough for it to appeal to the end consumer in the English market. I would say that geo-targeting has helped our affiliates a lot as well.



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**Shawn:** OK. I've been hearing a lot about affiliates trying to play around with both video and mobile phone. Do you see either one of those playing a role with the eBay affiliate program in the near future?

**Lily:** Yes, absolutely. In terms of mobile it already plays a role in the program and we're looking to make that even bigger. We're actually launching a place off our API probably in the first half of next year that will really enable affiliate tracking for a lot of the folks that are building mobile apps for eBay. What we really want to do is allow affiliates to scale in this space. Certainly in terms of video, we believe it's a huge opportunity and we're just starting to work with a few affiliates now looking to plan this new and exciting space as well. We'll definitely have more information to come.

**Shawn:** OK, fantastic. I got some announcements in the past month that Project Rover and how the affiliate program has changed with that?

**Lily:** Sure. Project Rover is really a new HTML tracking methodology. We pursued this in order to decrease the number of redirects users may follow to reduce added cookie blocking and to allow for more global infrastructure improvements. The affiliate program itself hasn't really changed. We're simply looking for new ways to improve the infrastructure for our affiliates and to make things easier. Our goal is to simply provide more immediate and long-term benefits to our publishers with the project. I'd say that the program itself hasn't changed. We're just hoping to make things better for them.

**Shawn:** OK, that makes sense. That's all the questions I had. Do have any other updates or news about the affiliate program?

**Lily:** I think I covered a lot with the questions that you had. I just want to say that we really encourage our affiliates to innovate and to test and to provide us with feedback on things that we could be doing better as well. We're really here to serve our publishers and we're excited for a lot of the new and upcoming initiatives rolling out in 2007, such as ad contacts in the place off our API. Thank you.

**Shawn:** Thanks a lot. Thank you to Lily Shen eBay for joining us. For more information affiliates can go to [affiliates.ebay.com](http://affiliates.ebay.com) to apply and learn more about the program. Thanks a lot, Lily.

**Lily:** Thank you.

**Shawn:** Great. Take care.