eBay Partner Network

QUALITY CLICK PRICING
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

General Questions

1) Why are you going to Quality Click Pricing (or a CPC based system)? What does this mean for the future of your affiliate program?

Our goal is to continue to make eBay Partner Network the best affiliate programs on the web. Quality Click Pricing is about simplifying our commission structure and improving the alignment of our payouts to the quality of traffic affiliates bring.

We see huge opportunity in the affiliate channel and have been actively encouraging the wider digital industry to increase investment in affiliates. Here are some of the ways we are investing in our affiliates:

- Expanding our internal team. Several new members have joined this year to help with account management, tool and platform development, and operations.

- Hiring third parties to provide program management support: PartnerCentric in the US, Canada and Australia, R.O.Eye in the UK and Ireland, NetBooster in France, Italy, Spain and Belgium and affilinet in Germany, Austria and Switzerland have been appointed to supplement our in-house teams to provide personalized account management to more affiliates. Read more about this on our blog

- Releasing a number of new tools in April and May, including product feeds, a new enhanced RSS tool, and a new Link Generator tool. Read more about blog.

- Improving our blog. We have increased the frequency of posts and are adding more informative articles with help content, best practices, industry updates and guest bloggers like Wil Reynolds and Jake Becker (Winner of 2009 Star Developer Award)

2) What is Quality Click Pricing?

Quality Click Pricing replaces the current CPA (Cost Per Action) system of directly paying for new users and bids or revenue. In the new system, we pay publishers for clicks sent to eBay sites and the amount paid per click (EPC) on a daily basis will depend on the traffic's quality, i.e., the amount of incremental revenue and long term value that the traffic generates for eBay.

The quality of the traffic will be assessed by looking at both the short term and long term value of the traffic to eBay. Short term value is calculated by looking at the revenue associated with purchases that happen as a direct result of publishers' marketing efforts. Long term value is a measurement of the revenue that users direct to eBay beyond the first few days after a click. In essence this is the life-time value to eBay of the customers you drive. Essentially, the more incremental revenue and long-term value your traffic generates for eBay, the more you'll be paid per click.

Earnings per click (EPCs) will be set daily for the previous day's traffic. After an EPC is posted, it will not change.

3) What is quality?

When we assess traffic quality, we look at both the short term and long term incremental value that the traffic brings to eBay. This includes elements like bidding and buying activity and long-term value of new users, but also includes other sources of value to eBay like PayPal and advertising revenue.

Short term value is evaluated by looking at the amount of incremental revenue generated by purchases, PayPal and advertising, as well as the engagement of those users on eBay (for example, the amount of time they spend on the eBay site.) In particular, we look for purchases that happen as a direct result of the publisher's marketing efforts, which is most often indicated by sales that happen closer to the click. We do evaluate auctions and buy-it-now purchases differently as there are different behaviors that are typically observed for auctions.

Long-term incremental value is driven by new users who return to buy on eBay time after time. The more your new users return to eBay to buy, the more incremental value they drive for eBay, and the more you get rewarded.

4) How does the new way of calculating EPC and earnings differ from the old [CPA] way and how will this impact me?
Why am I getting paid a different average amount now vs. what I was under CPA?

Specifically, we have made four changes to how we calculate the value of traffic sent by an affiliate to eBay:

- Although we still have a 7 day cookie for sales, we no longer value all sales in a 7 day period equally. In general, sales that come toward the beginning of that period, close to the click, are judged more incremental and therefore valued higher than sales that come towards the end of that period. Please note an adjustment is made for auction listings and certain categories, e.g. motors, which may take longer to convert.

- The lifetime value of new users is now calculated as an actual value rather than a set tier. For example, whereas before affiliates in the US might have received $1, $10, $28, $40 or $50 for a new ACRU based on quality, or a certain payout tier based on volume in other countries, you will now receive an amount based on the actual average value of new users you bring to eBay in all countries.

- Certain health metrics are also taken into account in pricing. If the amount of credit card fraud, unpaid items, extremely low-value ACRUs, and a number of other variables resulting from traffic you send to the site is significantly higher than average, you will be notified and your EPC may be reduced.

- We now add a small amount to the EPC amount to compensate for revenue we make from advertising shown on eBay and when purchases driven by affiliates are paid through PayPal. For now this will be small in comparison to the revenue from items actually bought on eBay, but this may increase over time, and may become especially important for traffic to specific categories like Motors where eBay increasingly gets revenue from advertising fees rather than sold items.

Finally, although an EPC amount is posted the day after your clicks are delivered to eBay, when setting that EPC the algorithm takes into account historical data, such as the lifetime value of ACRUs and sales within the 7 day cookie lifetime, as well as the quality of yesterday's traffic. This means that you will see fewer fluctuations in your EPC on a day to day basis than on CPA. For example, if you have a large sale on one day, your EPC may not be as high as on CPA; if you have a day with low sales, your EPC might be higher than under CPA. Overall, however, publishers who drive more incremental sales and long-term value will earn more under the Quality Click Pricing system.

5) Wasn't the old system of paying on conversions and revenue generated already factoring for quality?

Yes and no.
While the Value-Based ACRU pricing that was implemented in the US was factoring in quality, the revenue share and bid components (depending on the program) were not directly related to traffic quality. Given the popularity of eBay, the old system could generate payouts for affiliates if they simply generated a high volume of low-quality links or placements, e.g., blog spam, forum spam, etc., etc. Paying out for lower-quality conversions under a traditional CPA payout system dilutes the amount that merchants can pay for high-quality conversions, i.e., conversions that were incremental due to the affiliates' marketing efforts. By aligning our payment structure with incremental revenue, we are still able to compensate for auction transactions that happen up to 7 days from the affiliate link click, and we provide the right incentive for our affiliates to be successful by driving incremental revenue and incremental long-term value.

6) Is anybody staying on a revenue share + lead (ACRU) payment structure? Can I choose to stay with the old program?

We will ask certain loyalty and cashback affiliates to stay on the CPA payout structure, because as these types of publishers reward their customers per transaction, this model is not well suited for Quality Click Pricing.

We will contact key loyalty and cashback affiliates eligible to stay on the CPA structure individually. If you fall into this category and we have not contacted you, please contact customer service: ePN-cs-english@ebay.com

All other business models will transition to Quality Click Pricing.

7) Which programs does Quality Click Pricing affect? Does it affect non-eBay programs such as Half.com?

All eBay programs and countries currently on eBay Partner Network will transition to Quality Click Pricing. Half.com will continue with its current commission as a percentage of the sales generated through publishers' sites. Please refer to our blog post for the latest details.

8) If I have a low EPC, is there a danger I might get expired from the eBay Partner Network?

If you have a low EPC, this can be an indicator of lower quality but could also be a factor of the interaction on your site (e.g., if users typically "pogo-stick" between your site and eBay). If the low EPC is not a factor of your site interaction, you should use the optimization tips to increase the value of your traffic and thereby your EPC. Publishers will not be removed from the eBay Partner Network for having a low EPC, unless:

- The traffic is fraudulent or does not abide by our terms & conditions
- The account is dormant
- The quality of traffic has been very low (e.g., EPCs below ~$0.03) for a sustained period of time with no improvement after several follow up communications.

9) Overall, are you paying less to your affiliates under QCP than you were before?

No, the concept behind Quality Click Pricing is to align our payment to publishers more closely to the value of the traffic to eBay, not to reduce the overall payout. If you take the affiliates we had as a group before we launched Quality Click Pricing, overall we will still be paying the same amount as we were under our old CPA pricing model. In fact, as a part of this move we will be paying our UK affiliates more on average than we were under CPA.

As a result, some affiliates will get paid more and some less under the new model.

Transitions Questions

10) When is the switch to Quality Click Pricing happening?

Existing publishers will be transitioned over to the new Quality Click Pricing payment structure on October 1st, 2009. New eBay Partner Network publishers who are approved September 1st, 2009 or later will be placed into the Quality Click Pricing payment structure.

11) How do I know how much money I will make with Quality Click Pricing before the switch?

If you are an existing publishers, you can view information on what you would earn under Quality Click Pricing starting in late August, 2009 although you will still be paid on the CPA payment structure until October 1st. This is to allow you time to adjust to the new pricing system and to begin to your optimize your campaigns.

You can view your EPC's calculated under Quality Click Pricing by looking at your "Quality Click Pricing Preview" in the Useful Links section of the dashboard. . This report will provide a preview of your EPC's by program and by campaign.

12) If I am an existing Publisher, can I open a new account in September to transition to Quality Click Pricing?

Existing affiliates cannot transition to Quality Click Pricing until October 1st. You can view information on what you would earn under the new payment model starting in late August, 2009 although you will still be paid under the CPA system until October 1st.

Pricing Questions

13) Where do I find EPC pricing information?

Your EPC pricing is set daily for the previous day's traffic. To access this information, log into the eBay Partner Network and go to the "Programs" tab. Click on the "Payment Structure" link. You will see the screen displayed below. You will see "N/A" for your daily price if you have driven no clicks for that day.

14) How do I improve my EPC amount?

Here are some tips to help you improve the quality of your traffic:

- **Pick the right business model**

- The sites which work best are those that get people interested in buying and are more product-oriented. For example, sites where you can read reviews, compare prices, surface great deals or niche content sites.

- The sources of traffic to your site, whether paid for or organic, should be of high quality. If you have good quality traffic coming to your own site, this is likely to result in high quality traffic to eBay, but the reverse is also true. Therefore, if you buy traffic to your site, ensure that is well targeted and commerce-related. We have found that PPC campaigns and relevant natural search traffic generally perform better than buying from Ad Networks.

- **Create a good user experience**

- Develop relevant copy and regularly update it.
- Encourage user-generated content, such as product reviews.
- Integrate eBay listings into your site, as this generally performs better than creatives or text links.
- Use the data you have about your visitors' demographics and interests to showcase the most relevant listings.
- Always inform a user they are going to eBay.
- Do not offer your visitors an incentive to click on an eBay link or to register an account on eBay.

- **Landing Page optimization**

- Use the geo-targeting functionality to ensure your traffic is directed to the most relevant eBay site.
- Consider which landing page you direct your traffic to carefully, as the eBay homepage is generally not the best option. For example, if your content is about model cars, try linking to a model car search result page.

- **Continually optimize**

- Try to give each placement or site a different campaign id, so you can monitor the metrics and EPC amount for each.

- Use this data to focus on campaigns that are performing well and optimize those that are of low quality.

- When testing new approaches, remember to set up a new campaign so you can check

15) Will there be any changes to when affiliates get paid every month?

No, affiliates will continue to get paid by the 25th of the month following when the commissions were earned.

16) Am I still getting paid for leads / ACRUs?

Yes. The new EPC algorithm factors in the longer term revenue that your new users bring to eBay.

17) How much can I make with the program under QCP?

Just as in the prior CPA system, there is no limit to the total amount you can earn under Quality Click Pricing. On average across eBay Partner Network, publishers make between $0.06 and $0.21 per click sent to eBay. Note that this varies among programs/countries based on the economics of each program. Publishers sending high quality, targeted traffic can make much more. We have hundreds of publishers earning more than $0.40 per click. However, results will vary by business model as well as how targeted you are in driving traffic to your own site and then sending that traffic to eBay.

18) I had a large increase / decrease in the value of my EPC recently. I am not doing anything different. What happened?

As your EPC is calculated based on the behavior of the users you send to eBay, there will be normal statistical variation in the value of these users to our sites. This variation will be more pronounced if the volume of clicks that you deliver to eBay is low.

However, if there is a consistent and sustained drop or increase in your EPC, it will be due to a change in the short term and long term quality of your traffic, or in other words a change to the amount of incremental revenue delivered to eBay per click.

Here are a few things that may change the quality of your traffic and could be the cause of a drop in EPC:

- Traffic Sourcing: If you change the sources you use to drive traffic to your site, this may lead to changes in users' likelihood to buy on eBay and the types of products they are buying.

- Ad Placement: If you have changed the placement or layout of your website, this may affect the winter holidays than in the middle of the summer, and our affiliates typically see better conversion rates during the holidays when consumers are more in the mood to shop

The key to increasing your EPCs and then maintaining them at a high level is to continually optimize your content, placements and traffic sourcing. You can use the campaign ids and the campaign reports to help you to do this.

19) Do you still use the same tracking system for revenue? Do you still drop cookies on users machines to determine how much revenue I'm driving to eBay? Are these cookies still 7 day cookies for sales and 30 days for new users?

Yes, we still use the same system as we did under the CPA system, with Mediaplex tracking the number of sales, new users and amount of revenue that a particular affiliate brings to eBay.

Our tracking systems will remain the same as before, with a 7 day cookie for sales and a 30 day cookie for new active users (ACRUs). All of your reports will continue to show the standard eBay Partner Network metrics: impressions, clicks, CRU (30 days), ACRU (30 days), Bids / BINs (7 days), winning bid (count), winning bid revenue and GMB.

Our EPC algorithm factors in the revenue from up to 7 days after the click, as well as longer-term revenue from the users you send to eBay. However, there will be more emphasis and weighting for revenue that comes in the first few days after the click and less weight on revenue that comes toward the end of the 7 days, as sales that are generated earlier in the 7 days are more likely to have happened as a direct result of the publisher's marketing efforts than sales later in this period. Please note that our algorithm takes into account the unique characteristics of auction listings which may take longer to convert.

20) Will I be impacted negatively if I send most of my traffic to auction listings rather than BINs?

You will not be impacted negatively if you send more traffic to auctions. Our algorithm factors in the unique characteristics of auction listings which may take longer to convert.

21) I'm a publisher who primarily drives traffic and sales to the motors (vehicles) category, how does Quality Click Pricing affect me?

We know that buyers in the Motors category, particularly those buying vehicles, behave differently from those in most other eBay categories, as the decision to purchase is generally less spontaneous and therefore could take place a longer time after the click. We also know that classified listings make up an increasing percentage of overall listings in the vehicles category. The algorithm takes into account both of these factors, so promoting eBay Motors remains rewarding.

22) I'm a publisher who primarily drives traffic to items with high average selling prices, how does Quality Click Pricing affect me?

If the average selling price for the goods you promote is high, this will still remain a positive factor as the revenue associated with these purchases is also high, and therefore it will not negatively affect your earnings.

23) Will seller promotions impact my EPC?

From time to time, eBay will run seller promotions such as zero or reduced listing fees for particular categories, which are designed to increase the number of listings and unique inventory on the eBay sites and therefore increase the chance that a user an affiliate sends to eBay will find what they want. They are a necessary and vital part of maintaining a large and diverse inventory on the eBay site and they offer you an opportunity to promote Free Shipping, unique inventory or reduced pricing.

Seller promotions may impact the revenue amounts that eBay collects from sellers. Just as with the CPA system, these promotions may temporarily bring down the revenue portion of your EPC payout for particular listings or categories.

24) Why am I seeing more variability in my EPC pricing than I did before Quality Click Pricing?

Why does my EPC not fluctuate as much as before?
I had a big day in sales yesterday, why didn't my EPC spike today?

In general, publishers should see less variability in their EPC than under the old CPA system, if you compare what you were actually paid daily on a per click basis. In fact, during the Beta for Quality Click Pricing, we saw a ~30% decrease in variability of EPCs. This is because your EPC is based on the short term and long term quality of your traffic, so historic data, as well as the quality of the traffic your drove to eBay for that particular day are taken into account.

As a result, if you have a large sale on one day, your EPC may not be as high as on CPA, and if you have a day with low sales, your EPC might be higher than under CPA.

25) Can I receive a fixed Earnings per Click (EPC)?

We do not give fixed EPCs. EPCs will fluctuate up and down to properly reward you for the actual sales you are driving to eBay and give you the ability to improve your traffic and increase your payout.

26) Are you paying certain groups of affiliates the same EPC?

In cases where there is not enough data to calculate an EPC amount, we may pool publishers' metrics and pay a default EPC amount. This will only affect our very smallest publishers that drive only a few dollars a day to eBay Partner Network on average. If you happen to fall into this very low volume click category and believe the quality of your traffic is above that of an average small publisher, we encourage you to drive more clicks to eBay so you can benefit from a higher EPC.

27) How do you have enough information the day after my traffic comes through to tell the value of my clicks?

The QCP algorithm uses a combination of metrics to assess the EPC that you will be paid for the traffic you have driven. In addition to looking at the revenue driven by yesterday's traffic, it also takes into account historical information, such as the long term value of the users that you bring to eBay and the value from sales that happened within the 7 day cookie latency. Therefore, the EPC is comprised of more than just the sales and ACRUs you brought in on any single day.

EPCs will move up or down over time. The more revenue you bring for a certain number of clicks, the higher your EPC will be over time. Less revenue for a certain number of clicks will result in lower EPC. In some cases the full commissions from a sale may not be reflected in your EPC that day. Instead it will serve to increase your overall EPC.

28) Why would a number of my campaigns all have the same EPC?

In cases where there is not enough data to calculate an EPC for a particular campaign, we calculate the EPC based on the overall quality of your traffic for that program which hasn't already been valued as a part of a specific campaign. As you begin to drive more clicks to that campaign, you will see an EPC that is specific to that campaign's activity.

29) How are data reporting issues addressed in QCP?

If there is a tracking or reporting issue, we may delay posting the EPC amounts until the issue has been resolved. If an issue is identified after EPCs have been posted, we may provide a makegood, as we have done in the old CPA system.

30) Are you rounding? How does that affect payout?

We use mathematical rounding to round EPC to the nearest cent (or equivalent in your account's currency) when showing the data in reports in the publisher interface. With any meaningful traffic and revenue over time, your overall payout will be almost exactly the same as if we had not rounded.

31) Do I need an impression pixel?

The impression pixel is a short HTML snippet of code, which enables click through rate (CTR) and effective earnings per thousand impressions (eCPM) to be calculated. These metrics will help both publishers and the eBay Partner Network to optimize ad placements and creatives and will also help in our evaluation of the quality of the clicks.

All our banners and widgets already have an impression pixel embedded, but now all new cut-and-paste links generated through the Link Generator will have the pixel automatically embedded as well.

We have developed a tool for you to create impression pixels for link generator links and other

ads you have created that don't have them, which is available in the eBay Partner Network interface in the Tools tab.

Although we do not require an impression pixel with every ad at this time, impression pixels are the best way to track your impressions and determine your overall click through rate.

32) How does Click Through Rate (CTR) impact my EPC?

If you improve your CTR (conversion of impressions to clicks) for a given number of impressions, while maintaining the same quality of traffic and conversions, your commissions should increase as you will be driving more sales.

The impression pixel is available to track impressions that are not automatically tracked, and will help in determining your overall click through rate.

33) How does currency conversion affect my EPC?

The Quality Click Pricing algorithm calculates the EPC in the program currency and then uses the daily exchange rate to convert this into the publisher's currency. Therefore, your EPC amount can be impacted by fluctuations in the currency market.

34) Does conversion rate (Wbid / BIN per click) affect my EPC?

Your EPC is directly related to the revenue your clicks produce for eBay. Therefore, conversions from your clicks will be an important driver of EPCs just as they were under the CPA model.

35) Why calculate EPC as per click instead of per hundred clicks?

Given that we are now paying publishers per click, we believe calculating EPC at a per click level rather than per hundred clicks, offers more clarity.

36) Is eBay revenue still calculated in the same way as it was under the old pricing model?

eBay revenue is still calculated in the same way as it was under the old CPA system and is the sum of the fees that our sellers pay, including the fee for listing a product and the final value fee when a product sells. Learn more about seller fees.

37) Doesn't the new system just encourage me to send more clicks and not more sales?

With Quality Click Pricing, publishers are encouraged to drive high quality traffic, regardless of the volume of clicks. As revenue from purchases plays a big part in the QCP algorithm, driving sales is still important and will impact the EPC amount. Driving more clicks that don't convert or that are of lower quality will result in your EPC dropping.

38) What might cause my EPC not to post the next day?

The eBay Partner Network works on Mountain Standard Time (MST - United States), so if you live in another time zone, you will not necessarily see your EPC posted on the following day.

Click Filtering Questions

39) What is Click Filtering? Why are you filtering my clicks? Won't this lower my compensation?

As we announced in July, we have expanded our capabilities in filtering clicks generated by bots and other invalid activity. These filters are calibrated to make sure that only valid clicks are included in your EPC. Invalid clicks are usually the result of automated or non-human activity that typically does not have any transactions associated with them, therefore our publishers would not have earned anything from these clicks.

All click filtering happens before clicks are posted to the interface.

40) Why does the number of clicks reported by eBay Partner Network differ from my own internal count or from the numbers I saw on affilinet/ TradeDoubler?

When you compare two different sources of tracking, there are several known issues that can cause discrepancies between the number of clicks initiated and the number of clicks received due to the latency between those two events.

In addition to these general discrepancies between tracking sources, the click counts that you see in ePN only include valid clicks as determined by our click filtering system.

41) What type of clicks do you filter?

Although we do not provide an exact list of all of our click filters, we have incorporated industry standards and best practices for detecting clicks from things like invalid HTTP protocol, known bots/spiders, and other activity that can be identified as automated or non-human activity. Another such activity, for example, is link prefetching, which is a mechanism that some browsers use to preload a page or document into its cache in order to improve the page load time if the user clicks on that link. This preloading activity is not considered a valid click for that link.

As most networks do, we will continue to update this list over time as more bots/spiders and sources of automated and non-human activity clicks are identified, always according to industry best practices.

42) Can I test my own links?

You can test your own links to ensure that clicks are coming through from them. However, please note that if you are using automated software or bots to check your links, those clicks may be flagged and filtered.

43) How many clicks are you filtering vs. before?

This will vary by affiliate. The filters are designed to remove clicks generated by bots and invalid activity. Publishers with a large amount of invalid activity will see a higher than average percentage of their clicks filtered out.

44) Can I see my raw (un-filtered) click count?

We do not provide raw click data. Please note that the % of clicks filtered may vary by website and time of day, depending on the volume of bots scanning your site.

45) How do I report a bot?

If you believe that a bot is generating clicks that are not being filtered by eBay Partner Network, please contact Customer Service.