

# Ebay, and Invisible Sales Throttling, Caps, or Limits Related to UK VAT Thresholds

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## Introduction

A few years ago in the new year of 2012, I started selling electronic components on ebay as a way of actually making a living. This business operated quite happily under the UK VAT threshold and while it would never make me rich, it would do for now. This avoided additional complications while building up the business and increasing both the breadth and depth of stock. Over the next few years the UK VAT threshold crept upwards in line with inflation and it was easy to stay under it. Around 2016 I made some special effort and by the end of the year had at least twice as many different items for sale and had branched out into larger second-hand electronic objects on a separate ebay shop. A further ebay outlet sold some old tape spools that I had acquired. Ebay sales numbers had often looked a bit strange as I inspected the daily bargraphs, but surely such is the nature of human buying habits, online marketplaces and randomness in general. Or so I thought.

It became clear that ebay were operating a completely invisible capping or throttling system across all these outlets. Without any intervention by me, sales across the three outlets over one year would add up to almost exactly the UK VAT threshold for that year. This was fine for a while. In a way it was almost quite helpful, allowing me to increase my inventory without having to be too careful not to exceed the threshold. However from 2017 onwards, there was no inflationary increase in the UK VAT threshold by the chancellor. In March 2019 I decided to take the plunge and become a voluntarily VAT registered sole trader. The assumption was that when I entered my new valid VAT number into the ebay shops, the mysterious limiting algorithm would be deactivated and I could increase sales. In fact, I didn't assume this completely. I thought that there was a 50/50 chance that nothing would happen, and that I would have to manually draw attention to the fact via the ebay customer support line. I also assumed that there was a fair chance that I might have quite a fight on my hands getting the capping system removed.

On the 5th April 2019 at 23:00 I entered the VAT number one hour before it became valid.

## What Happened Next

Nothing. Well that's not so surprising. It would take some time for the system to recognise the fact. However, for a substantial payment in ebay fees every month one might expect something to have happened after three days, so onto the ebay customer support telephone line I go, to draw attention to this fact and to check what the telephone operatives have to say. I've recorded the calls for training and quality purposes. You can click on the links to hear them or download the mp3s. I have only edited out long periods of hold music to save the listener from the pain. Long periods on hold are not necessarily insignificant though. Also, in all the calls I have left in many quite 'sensitive' details. I don't mind. I have nothing to hide and you can find all the addresses and usernames by going onto ebay and just typing them in.

That's business. When you stick your head above the parapet and say "Please buy what I'm selling," you're public property to some extent.

[09-APR-2019 10:36 First call to the overseas call centre](#)

Summary: "The VAT number is valid and there are no restrictions on your account."  
[ebay\\_vat\\_09042019\\_1036\\_c.mp3](#)

The overseas call centres are not always the most reliable so the next day I request a call-back, which will usually come from the Irish call centre.

#### 10-APR-2019 Steve from Ebay Customer Support in Ireland

Summary: We discuss the issue briefly. Steve says, "Hmm, I can see what you're saying here." Really? He gets back to the selling limits team and then drops the call like a hot potato. Well that's no good. Drop my call? Back to the telephone. [ebay\\_vat\\_10042019\\_1\\_c.mp3](#)

#### 10-APR-2019 Derek from Ebay Customer Support in Ireland

Summary: We discuss the same issue, noting that the addition of the VAT number was a few days ago, and the ebay denials start. I introduce the idea of statistical analysis and noting vast swings between separate accounts and an £85K sales cap. Derek uses the unusual word "Levelling" without me mentioning it. I direct him to the 11th February week data when the capping system went into a wild oscillation due to a delay between the caps on the two accounts. Steve may well have gone into it with another team, Derek. Before Steve dropped my call. We discuss VIES and my registered business name and address across accounts. Denial. Don't worry Derek, it /is/ an absolute pattern, and I will be back. [ebay\\_vat\\_10042019\\_2\\_c.mp3](#)

#### 12-APR-2019

Summary to follow [ebay\\_vat\\_12042019\\_1\\_c.mp3](#)

Summary to follow [ebay\\_vat\\_12042019\\_2\\_c.mp3](#)

#### 18-APR-2019

Summary to follow [ebay\\_vat\\_18042019\\_c.mp3](#)

#### 19-APR-2019

Summary to follow [ebay\\_vat\\_19042019\\_c.mp3](#)

#### 21-APR-2019

Summary to follow [ebay\\_vat\\_21042019\\_c.mp3](#)

#### 24-APR-2019

Summary to follow [ebay\\_vat\\_24042019\\_c.mp3](#)

### **More Lack Of Progress**

This telephone battle is clearly going nowhere, so I follow the advice of the customer support operatives and actually write a physical paper letter. The details of that, the absence of a written response from anyone who is willing to give their full name, and the subsequent tedious telephone discussions are available here: [Interesting Electronics The Trouble With eBay Page](#)

### **Various Interesting Sales Charts**

Sales Data 31-AUG-2019 to 30-SEP-2019 (Only one ebay outlet is operating at this stage and later dates.)

On 31st August I came back from a week on holiday, during which time sales were zero for five days. After that we see a series of successive days of sales going up-down six times. Do people only buy on ebay on alternate days? I don't think so. Daily thresholds are in effect, which when

exceeded cause a limit on the subsequent days sales. If the probability of experiencing a sales increase or decrease at any given time by random chance is 0.5, then six alternating days has a probability of 0.5 raised to the power of six, that being 1.56%. That should be quite an unusual event. You'd expect to see that sequence repeated only rarely, perhaps once in one year. Despite this, the sequence appears again starting on 7th September. This time the flip of the coin occurs in opposite directions eight times, an even slimmer probability of 0.39%. Once again, and most strikingly, on 21st September, another improbable sequence of seven consecutive up-down sales totals. That is a sequence probability 0.78%. It would appear that far from being unlikely, these improbable sequences are occurring almost all the time with small breaks of one or two days in between.



#### Sales Data 12-OCT-2019 to 11-NOV-2019

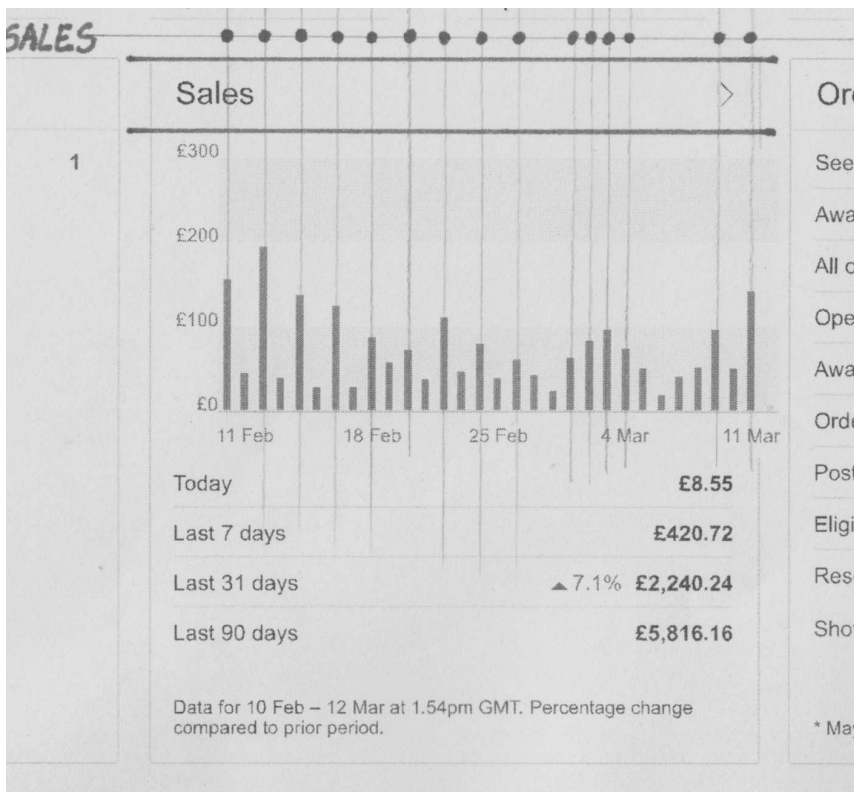
This behaviour is continuing into November. It's not showing quite the same crazy comb effect as above, but there are another two highly improbable sequences of higher and lower sales on alternate days. The first starts on the first bar, 12 October and there is a run of eight up-down cycles,  $p=0.39\%$ . The second starts on 28th October and is another run of eight up-down cycles, more marked this time. Again, the probability of this happening at any given time is 0.39% so it should only happen about once or twice in a year. ( $1/365$  would be 0.27%) You can argue to toss on the statistical detail, but the ebay throttling / capping system makes an almost perfect daily oscillator, inexplicable by any other reason. In electronic engineering we call this a relaxation oscillator. You can make one with a single transistor instead of a strong ebay shop with threshold capped sales. That also involves a threshold and recovery cycle. The higher the gain of the transistor, the higher the oscillation frequency. But we can only see samples of daily sales figures. It might be even more interesting to consider how infrequently subsequent days *don't* show a relaxation oscillator. The daily sampling of the bargraphs is likely to be showing classic Nyquist aliasing of an oscillation that is too fast to capture.



That's the trouble with electronics engineers. We're not idiots, eBay.

**Going back in time a bit.**

You'll remember how this all came to a head early-on in 2019, when the obvious strange capping behaviour could no longer be ignored. I've found one of the print-outs, and here is the scan showing jenna\_stannis sales from 11-FEB-2019 to 11-MAR-2019. This is discussed in some of the previous telephone calls.



Prompted by a big sale one day, here the sales limiting algorithm goes into a completely wild oscillation. Starting at the beginning of this chart there is an extremely marked alternating day to day pattern, and a run of no less than seventeen up-down swings, gradually reducing in amplitude much like an accidentally resonant system given a large impulse input might make. What's the probability of that run happening naturally by chance?  $0.5^{17} = 7.62 \times 10^{-6}$ , or *7.6 chances in one million*. This is what I call "proof." Certainly, if eBay start printing lottery tickets I won't be in

the queue to buy one, because I'm obviously the unluckiest seller in the entire world, or one of only 7.6 people in a million to see this. I'll be adding more interesting charts as time progresses.

## 08-MAR-2020

Meanwhile, after new year 2020 I loaded up the Useful Components shop with lots of goodies that used to be on the old Interesting Electronics shop. The postage versus item price is less easily understood, but there are ways to work around this and still make a sensible offering to the customers. More than 100 quite good listings go up within a month, and yes, they sell quite well. I'll be analysing just how much difference this *should* have made to total sales when things settle down. For the moment, the answer is "very little." No surprise there. What I can't ignore are the two unsolicited messages sent by customers regarding my shop pages. It seems that customers are often unable to see my shop pages, being regularly and consistently presented with blank page "Server Error" messages. Here are the customer messages sent to me:

Site Message 26-FEB-2020 Helpful Customer 1 to Me: You might like to know that quite a few of the pages on your shop refuse to load. ("Server not found", all that malarky.)

Site Message 26-FEB-2020 Me to Helpful Customer 1: Hi HC1, Thankyou for that, it is \*very\* useful to know and explains a lot of what can be seen at extraordinary length here: [https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/ebay\\_main\\_page](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/ebay_main_page). If you were to send a typical screenshot I'd be delighted.

Note Attached To Sales Record 03-MAR-2020 From Helpful Customer 2: Buyer's note, Hi, There's something wrong with your shop, I tried to have a look round, but keep getting a 'could not find server' error when I tried to click on shop categories. Look forward to receiving my order... thanks!

Site Message 03-MAR-2020 15:59 Me to Helpful Customer 2: Thankyou for your note about the shop pages not showing. Such information is very useful to me right now, beyond what you can imagine.

And indeed it is very useful, because if two helpful customers have made the effort to actually send a message to me, you can be absolutely certain that many more have experienced the same thing and put it down to a temporary problem, their internet connection, or just given up and bought from somewhere else. Could this be one of the methods used by ebay to limit sales of a certain shop that is doing too well and can't be limited by the usual means without it being too obvious? I may never know about that, but what I can be sure about is getting a dismissive response from ebay seller "support" on the telephone. I was not disappointed, and here are the recordings of those calls:

[03-MAR-2020 15:04 Call to Ebay Seller Support Concerning Customers Not Being Able To See My Ebay Shop Pages.](#)

Are these people being deliberately obtuse? First fob-off, "There is no such message." Yes there is. At 13 minutes in, apparently it's the buyers fault. Then the nice lady obfuscates by trying to say it's paid for, and again tries to blame it on the buyers, or their web browser. The buyers, it seems, have to contact ebay.

BING! Ebay lie detected! Just ridiculous. Such lies.

As the call was not resolved satisfactorily, I was promised a call back from a supervisor the same day before 18:00 my time. No such call occurred.

[04-MAR-2020 10:00 Another Call to Ebay Seller Support Concerning Customers Not Being Able To See My Shop Pages.](#)

As I did not receive the call from the supervisor as promised, I thought that I'd better call in again the next day to check on any possible progress. I explain the situation again. I don't mind doing



the whole thing a second time. No, I did not change my shop name recently. What happens at 12 minutes 25? "Ah, OK." Were you talking to me or did you just get a message? 12:49, an unusual change of subject. Where did that question come from? Don't soil yourself because a red light has flashed on your screen, dear. The "policy" department? An argument ensues.

BING! Ebay lie detected! 22:22 a beep, and I am accused of twisting words and interrupting people! So, "a message was logged as sent," turns into "Oh dearie me, maybe someone said a message was sent and it wasn't." I have cut three minutes of silence from the end of this call for brevity. You can count the interruption score if you like.

Whatever the outcome, when I pay a £75 per month subscription for a much vaunted middle tier ebay shop, I don't expect so many customers to get blank pages so consistently that they are actually driven to write in about it. Or be incorrectly accused of interrupting people or "twisting their words," on the telephone, when that is not true.

[04-MAR-2020 10:45 A brief call back from eBay Seller Support suggesting there was some problem with links in the shop.](#)

Well, Yes. You can go ahead and mess up my shop if you think that will help. We shall see what happens. I had lost the will to live and was otherwise busy actually sending goods to customers at this stage, so I didn't ask exactly what the problem was, or what the proposed fix was. Rest assured, I will do that at a date in the near future though.

### **26-MAY-2020: What's going on with people not being able to buy more than ten or so items?**

Back in April when COVID-19 was just starting to kick-off, a customer in the USA contacted me wanting a quantity of thirty-six six-way potentiometers. The ebay user profile had a perfectly decent feedback rating of 188. She asked:

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Nice USA Customer: We are interested in purchasing 36 of these. (6-gang, 10K linier potentiometer).

Can you tell me how much it would cost to ship it to us in 2-4 days? We would pay for the expedited shipping. This goes into a very important project that we need right away.

Please let us know as soon as possible. We can make payment quickly.

Thank you,  
Nice USA Customer

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Henry: Hello NUSAC,

I assume this is to a UK address? Easter is in the way as well.

Royal Mail first class is available as an option but there's no guarantee on that. I've made a special delivery option available which should be there by 13:00 tomorrow if it's paid for in about... 30 minutes. I've no way to work that timescale to an overseas address.

Thanks, Henry.

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NUSAC: Hello Henry,

I should have given you the address.... my apologies. We would need it shipped to the USA.

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NUSAC: We want to purchase B10K, 36 pcs. for quick delivery.

When I went to checkout, it multiplied the delivery price by quantity of pieces.

Can you please advise if you have 36 pcs. of the B10K and provide the dollar amount shipping

would be as a total (not multiplied by piece) Thank you, NUSAC

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Hi NUSAC, This is just the stupid way that ebay does it - the single post charge is applied as a discount when you pay for multiple items. If it goes wrong I can refund, or send a 'request for total.' Henry.

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NUSAC: Henry,  
Do you have 36 of the B10K?  
When I go to checkout, it only allows me to purchase 10

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Henry: I have 36 going into bubble-wrap now and they are available on the listing - this will be ebay limiting the purchase quantity. Unbelievable. can you message me at the information available at this link? [https://www.interestingelectronics.com/ebay/warm\\_address.txt](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/ebay/warm_address.txt)

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NUSAC: Henry, Where do I go on EBay to buy it? Can you send me an invoice and we will pay that?

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Further communications with my Nice USA Customer were via normal email, and yes, the pots were paid for outside of ebay, they did get sent via DHL the next day and yes, they did arrive on time and yes, my nice USA customer was happy. But this proves that eBay is limiting my potential big customers with a decent feedback rating to purchases of less than ten items, at least in this particular case. Why? Why ever could that be, Rob Hattrell VP of eBay UK? Only you can answer that mysterious question. Or *can* you even? I can. Because occasional multi-hundred pound sales throw your sales limiting algorithms into a very obvious spasm, which I have seen before. If you want proof that eBay limits big sales by making it appear to your customer that you don't have the stock on hand, or that as a seller you don't want to sell them, then the above transcript is exactly what you are looking for.

### **30-MAY-2020 Customer is unable to buy more than one item:**

After some decent weeks, sales are dropping again and showing some *very* fishy behaviour. Whatever could be the matter? I have obviously just sold too much stuff during viral lockdown and ebay doesn't like it for some reason. Whether that is still an incorrectly applied VAT suspect limit or a seller velocity limit now kicking in, only time and the analysis spreadsheets may tell. However, from this transcript with a customer today, here's another way limiting seems to be applied while making it appear to be my fault for not having enough stock, or some other problem of my making:

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30-MAY-2020 15:56 Customer **\*\*vinyl\*\***: Hi I am trying to order four of these DPDT Center Off switches but the box will not allow me to change from 1 to 4. Please advise. Thank you for your service. Regards **\*\*vinyl\*\*** (Item no. 120819784743)

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30-MAY-2020 16:52 Henry: Hi **\*\*vinyl\*\***, There's no obvious problem with the listing and I can't reproduce the error, successfully adding four of those to shopping cart as a guest user in a different browser. You may find it just suddenly mysteriously works now. Please let me know if the problem persists though, as it may be a part of a hidden ebay system limiting my sales. Thanks, Henry.

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30-MAY-2020 17:26 Customer **\*\*vinyl\*\***: Hi I tried entering 4 in another sellers sale and it worked,

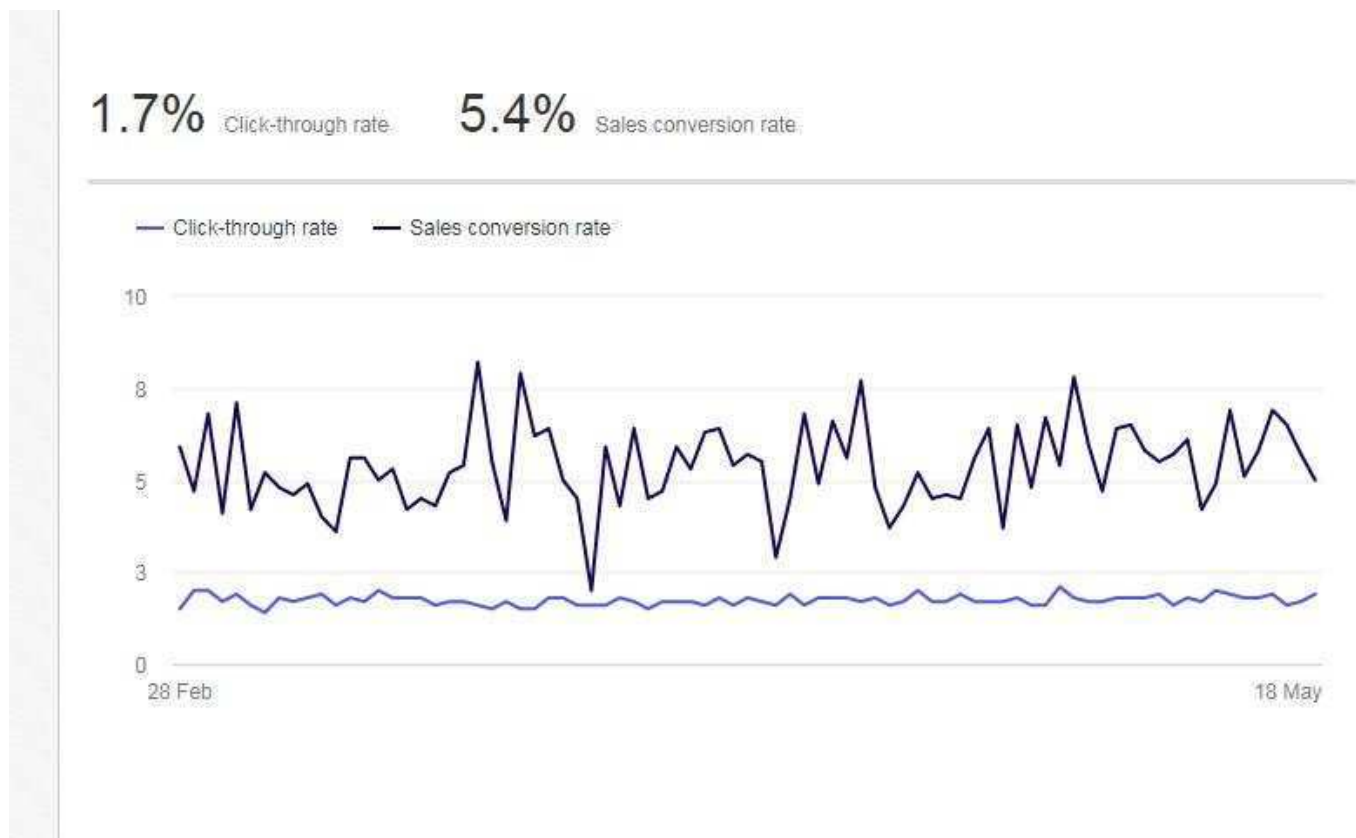
but I prefer the look of the ones you have for sale. Tried reloading rebooting ebay etc. However I still cannot make the 1 turn to a 4. I will try rebooting the computer.

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 30-MAY-2020 18:37 Customer **\*\*vinyl\*\***: Please cancel that order. I ended getting the wrong ones because suddenly one of your quantity boxes was working. I want the ones with the silver plated contacts and the blue hermetic seal around the terminals. It still will not allow me to change the 1 to a 4. I will order them one at a time now instead. **\*\*vinyl\*\***.

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 30-MAY-2020 19:12 Henry: Hi **\*\*vinyl\*\***, I have the black body types with the sealed contacts in DPDT, and there are some DPDT-CO on the way for Tuesday. I hope they still have the same sealing on them. The contacts are described as copper alloy with silver inlay silver plated. I think you wanted four items DPDT-CO, am I correct? I'm trying not to cancel the wrong thing. The only explanation I can offer for the weird quantity entry problem is ebay shenanigans over which I have no control, but rest assured that they will be told about it.  
 Thanks, Henry.

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 30-MAY-2020 21:11 Customer **\*\*vinyl\*\***: Thank you Henry. best wishes, stay safe. Thank you for your response and help. Regards **\*\*vinyl\*\***.

And indeed they will be told about it here, but as it is one of those 'mysteriously goes away' problems that customers only tell you about occasionally, a call to the seller "support" telephone line or a text chat is obviously pointless. Normally of course, the customer will just buy elsewhere, resulting in a limiting effect on my sales which can't easily be traced. What it could do is result in a sudden dip in what is called 'Sales Conversion Rate.' This is a percentage that represents how many people who have looked at your listing actually buy from it. Ebay provides you with a chart of these numbers over time. Here is a recent example from 2020:



What you see here are periods of relative calm punctuated by periods of extreme daily swings.



Obviously, people like my listings very much on one day, and then really hate them the next day, and this continues for up to seven days in a row. This is, of course, impossible. There is a run of seven wildly alternating swings starting on 25th April. What's the probability of that? Something like 0.5 raised to the seventh power, about eight times in one-thousand, or 0.8%. You might expect to see that at random three times a year, but as you can see, similar unlikely alternating runs are much more frequent. Quite what happened on 28th March while ebay's servers were clearly broken is anyone's guess, but I don't pay for that kind of service.

Did I say, "Ebay provides you with a chart of these numbers over time?" Yes I did, and for now they still do. You have to click on the 'switch to the previous version of this page' link to see it, though. No doubt access to these charts of sales conversion rates will be withdrawn soon, as they are just far too revealing about what is really happening. Given the conversations with customers shown above, I state that in many cases ebay is capping my sales by deliberately breaking the system that allows customers to buy more than one item, or by limiting them to buying fewer items than some arbitrary number invented by them. At the same time this appears to be the fault of the seller, and as shown above, wastes a lot of time and irritates the customers.

Do you want some more, Robert Hattrell, Vice President of Ebay UK? Or are you going to answer my letter properly? More is coming. All I have to do is sit here, absorb the numbers into the analysis spreadsheet and wait for my customers to tell me more:) There's always the BBC of course. You might consider listening to the omnibus editions of, "The Great British Post Office Trial," on BBC Sounds. Similar problems in their systems eventually cost them tens of millions of pounds.

## **02-JUN-2020: Another customer sees "Out Of Stock" when stock is present on the listing.**

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31-MAY-2020 20:12 Customer ##r45Customer ##r45:Customer ##r45:: Hi please can you tell me if you are going to get more of the 6.2 v by 0.3 amp as you are currently out of stock of these bulbs best regards, ##r45. (Item no. 110951791253)

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31-MAY-2020 20:24 Henry: Hi ##r45, At my end I've got the stock and the listing also shows stock. However, you are not the first person to spot this kind of ebay 'error.' It seems that Ebay are artificially limiting my sales by this method and there's not a single thing I can do about it. I've updated the listing so you could try again to see if it works, otherwise you can contact me using the following link to arrange the sale: [https://www.interestingelectronics.com/ebay/warm\\_address.txt](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/ebay/warm_address.txt) Thanks, Henry.

If you're interested in the story, you can see it here:

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/ebay\\_vat\\_throttle.html](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/ebay_vat_throttle.html)

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01-JUN-2020 06:03 Customer ##r45: Morning Henry I've looked at you site again but no luck still shows no e10 / 6.2 v / 0.3 out of stock could I not order 6.2v/ 0.4 and you give me the ones I want looking forward to hearing back from you very best regards. ##r45 I tried clicking on to your link but again no luck

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01-JUN-2020 08:37 Henry: Hello, Yes, order anything in the right quantity and I'll send the 6.2V / 0.3A. They are all the same price. Henry.

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01-JUN-2020 09:34 Customer ##r45: Thank you very much Henry your a star best regards ##r45

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Once again, most customers will just buy elsewhere when they see "Out Of Stock." I would conservatively estimate this happens ten times for each time I get to hear from a helpful customer. Using these recovered sales as a guide, that would equate to lost sales of £220 over two days. Oddly enough, that's about what the recent suspicious sales drop has been. Of course, it's impossible as yet to prove a causal link.

What do ebay have to say about these two events? Telephone contact is still not available so here is the text chat transcript:

[Transcript of text chat with ebay seller support concerning customers being incorrectly shown items as out of stock when there has always been plenty of stock available on the listings, 02-JUN-2020 13:16.](#)

#### Summary:

Ebay seller text chat 'support': "This problem does not exist. There is no problem with your account. It is the buyers problem. You should tell them to contact us. Your official complaint will be ignored. My only interest is in evading your question."

Henry: "If your manager ever does ever email me, I predict that your manager will try to obfuscate the issue by answering a completely different question, or says exactly the same thing that you did. You can try to evade the question, but I'll be back."

#### 05-JUL-2020: An Ebay Message Appears:

Followup regarding buyers unable to purchase items SR# 1-264131449947

Hello Henry,

This is a follow-up on the chat conversation you had regarding buyers unable to purchase items and were seeing out of stock.

I apologise for the delay caused in getting back to you on this matter addressing your complaint.

Upon reviewing the matter, I confirmed with our team, but no such issue was highlighted by other sellers, so not sure what exact issue the buyers in question faced. We are hoping that buyers are not reporting this issue now. If at all buyers are still reporting the same even now, please do ask buyers what exact error message they see and probably help you with screen shot of it so that you can forward that to us and we can investigate this matter to resolve it once for all. Alternatively buyers can also contact us immediately so that our dedicated team can help them further with this.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to look into this. Feel free to get in touch with us in-case you need any assistance.

Kind regards,

Nilesh S.

Manager eBay Seller Support

[THREAD ID: 1-3DC91N4T]

I respond with the following at 18:54 09-JUL-2020

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You wrote: "Upon reviewing the matter, I confirmed with our team, but no such issue was highlighted by other sellers, so not sure what exact issue the buyers in question faced... please do ask buyers what exact error message they see and probably help you with screen shot of it..."

I have explained this in clear and full detail already. It is recorded in full on my public website.

I consider this response to be wholly inadequate. It is pure obfuscation and denial of a clearly explained and proven problem. Please ensure that Robert Hattrell, VP of Ebay UK is informed of our conversation.

In case you need a full summary, you can view it here:

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/ebay\\_vat\\_throttle.html](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/ebay_vat_throttle.html)

Thankyou,

Henry Walmsley.  
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"Computer says no," is just not good enough. Is it, Rob?

07-SEP-2020

It's been a while since I have last posted on this issue. Meanwhile I've been downloading paypal data and generating some *very* big spreadsheets. It was a fairly bumper ebay spring in 2020, and that has nicely compensated for all my messing about closing shops last year. It's remarkable, and it has been the exception that proves the rule beautifully. The new big spreadsheets running from 2017 to 9th August 2020 show an average daily sales total, taken over that entire time, of £231.94. If I had hit the VAT threshold *\*exactly\** that number would have been £232.88. Ebay systems are still limiting my sales to the UK VAT threshold to within -0.4%. The system has run since approximately 6th April 2017. I have been VAT registered since 6th April 2019.

Onto the telephone again eh? The level of lies and deliberate attempts at diversion on this call, which lasted more than one-and-a-half hours beggar belief. Click to listen, if you can bear it. There is some preamble which could be considered to be irrelevant. But then maybe not, eh?

[07-SEP-2020. Ebay seller support are confronted with proof that my account is limited by ebay systems to an average of £232.87 per day over the last Three and a Half Years. Which is spookily the UK VAT Threshold divided by 365 days.](#)

P.S. I got the rounding wrong on the daily number. My apologies. In future communications the correct daily constant value is  $85000/365 = £232.88$ , not taking into account one leap year.

06-OCT-2020: The -0.4% Has Disappeared. We Have Reached The Threshold and the Customers are Now Messaging In Again With More Complaints

Just for you: A genuinely nice customer tries to buy more than one item and gets *rightfully* pissed off when the ebay limits stop him from buying, and my trying to get the impossible information demanded by the Ebay Central liars from him is not going to happen. My customers want the goods, not to send screenshots of the failing ebay website to ebay liars. If you'd like to hear the entire resulting telephone call to ebay liar central on this issue, then you may click on the link below.

[06-OCT-2020 A Nice Customer Can't Buy More Than One Item From My Listing and is Rightfully](#)

[Annoyed, and this is Your Pathetic ebay Customer "Support" Lie Response, Robert Hattrell.](#)

### Call Summary To Follow

Fun, isn't it? No. It is not. It is *my name* on the listings, Robert Hattrell, VP of ebay UK, responsible for all ebay UK activities, which you are always so eager to point out.

### 28-SEP-2021: A Long Awaited Update.

I have continued to update my big sales spreadsheet. As of 26-SEP-2021, the capping algorithm is currently limiting sales to an average of 1.2% over the VAT threshold, and the silly sales behaviour continues in an extremely obvious fashion. In fact, the cap result is much closer than +1.2%, as I have yet to filter out the transactions to the EU since July 1st 2021, where VAT is collected and paid by ebay. So, if you thought that the reading that I reported last October was just a lucky sample in some way, you'd be wrong. The average sales level has been bumping a little negative and positive around the cap limit the same way ever since then, despite three separate 6 day holidays of complete shutdown. This is *impossible* by chance.

During two telephone calls last week I brought this issue up again for the first time in a while. ([link to general failures - scroll down to 20-SEP-2021](#)) The results were negative. During a teleconference with an ebay "hybrid event" representative today, I was once again issued with denials, albeit in a polite fashion. On 30-SEP-2021, the live and in-person part of the hybrid event will be taking place at the Victoria Warehouse near Old Trafford in Manchester starting at 08:15. At that event, I hope to politely deliver the letter shown below by hand, to as many ebay representatives as possible. I dearly hope that this will include the present V.P. and General Manager of ebay UK, Murray Lambell, who is responsible for all ebay UK activities

[Ebay Sales Limiting Systems Relating to £85,000 UK VAT Threshold on Account Henry J. Walmsley, vila\\_restor Letter By Hand](#)

The text reads as follows:

Ebay Representative,  
By Hand.

Dear Sir,

Since 6th April 2017 I have been aware of ebay systems limiting the turnover on my ebay account to exactly £85,000 per year, the UK VAT threshold.

Since 6th April 2019 I have been VAT registered. I have entered all details into your systems, and I have made many different attempts to communicate this.

The cap in your systems remains in place. It is currently accurate to within 1% taken over the period 6th April 2017 to the present day. If you choose not to accept this, you are mistaken. Proof is included at the link below.

I request that this capping process be identified in your systems and removed from my account.

Yours Sincerely,

Henry J. Walmsley. BEng. (electronics)

Final Numerical Proof and Supporting Evidence:

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/ebay\\_vat\\_throttle.html](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/ebay_vat_throttle.html)

Let us see what transpires.

### **26-OCT-2021: What Does Murray Lambell Have To Say?**

At 10:30 on 30-SEP-2021 I politely hand delivered the above letter to each of Murray Lambell, VP of Ebay UK, Eve Williams, Chief Marketing Officer of Ebay UK, and Bradford Shellhammer, VP of Buyer Experience and GM eBay NYC. I also had a nice polite chat with them about the issue that I have been experiencing, suggesting that a once-over by a statistician or mathematics graduate might prove interesting. After that I had a one-to-one meeting with Kate Dudley, eBay Commercial Team Lead where I explained the problem once more and delivered the same letter. What was the result? The result was right down at the bottom of the spectrum of possible expected responses, a set of dismissive site messages attempting to confuse the issue with irrelevant information.

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05-OCT-2021 Your letter to our Executive SR# 1-390043076518

Dear Mr. Walmsley,

Thank you for reaching out to our SVP Murray Lambell. This is to confirm that your letter has been received and is currently under review. If you have any urgent queries, please contact our dedicated Customer Support who will be able to provide real-time guidance and support. We thank you for your patience and look forward to chatting to you as soon as possible.

Kind regards

eBay Executive Office

\*\*\*\*\*Please do not respond to this email as responses are not monitored\*\*\*\*\*  
[THREAD ID:1-4ZD3Q2VQ]

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06-OCT-2021 Your letter to our Executive SR# 1-390043076518

Dear Mr. Walmsley,

My name is Emma, and I am contacting you from the eBay Executive Office. Your letter was received and reviewed in full, and I thank you for taking the time to attend the eBay Open event in Manchester last week. Our VP Murray Lambell asked that I reach out to you on his behalf. I understand you have raised concerns regarding your account with our Customer Support representatives and I am disappointed to see that you have not been satisfied with the service provided. I have undertaken a full review of your account and can see that there are no restrictions or issues on your account and your current site wide selling limits are 80K items to a value of £4M or whichever is reached first. These are significant selling limits and therefore demonstrate that there has been no selling cap of £85K on your account. I understand there was a recent issue when the selling limits were being reviewed but this was rectified and restored to the limits

mentioned. Prior to this, there were no issues that would have affected selling above £85K at any time. This is also evident by reviewing your sales for 2020 which totalled £102,380.44 from January 1st to December 31st, 2020.

I would recommend revising your listings and inventory if you are concerned with the level of sales you are experiencing and wish to develop your business further. I can see there are many listings that have been on site for quite some time and so would advise it best to review and see if a refresh of these listings overall would help generate additional traffic for you. I have attached a list of stagnant listings which details the duration of time on site, stock quantities and sales for your convenience.

As these are quite niche products, typically daily average sales will vary. For example, a more expensive item may sell two or three times in a week compared to your average daily sales amount and therefore, these higher amount days sales will appear significantly higher when viewing the sales graph on your dashboard across a week/ month. I have reviewed your pricing and can see there are variations of items from the lower price range to a few hundred pounds, so this needs to be taken into consideration when reviewing your sales reports as a potential influencing factor.

Within your Seller Hub, the 'Performance' tab provides access to this data where you can review your sales. We do suggest utilising the 'Research' tab also where listing improvement recommendations are provided and underperforming listings can be analysed in more detail. Our Selling Teams are also available should you wish to discuss these features further.

I trust that I have clarified your query but if you do have any further questions, please respond directly to this email. Of course, our Customer Support team is available should you have any other queries and are best placed to assist with real-time guidance. I wish you all the best moving forward with eBay and every continued success. Take care and stay safe.

Kind Regards,

Emma

Executive Escalations UK  
[THREAD ID:1-4ZIQHWFB]

---

06-OCT-2021:

Hello Emma,

1) I consider responses from people without surnames to be unprofessional, given the potential seriousness of this issue.

2) You have ignored the single issue raised, that being of my amalgamated sales since 6th April 2017 to the current day equating to exactly £85,000 p.a. +/- 1%, choosing instead to obfuscate this single issue with temporary variations within that period. I can only assume that while claiming to have reviewed the letter in full, you have failed to follow the link in the letter, and have not read the details at the following page:

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/ebay\\_vat\\_throttle.html](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/ebay_vat_throttle.html)

You need to do that, and you need to confirm that you have done so. It may influence any further response that you decide to make.

3) Please reply to me with the name and address of the data protection officer for ebay UK, who is responsible for answering requests made under the UK Data Protection Act 2018.



Henry J. Walmsley.

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08-OCT-2021: Your letter to our Executive SR# 1-390043076518

Dear Mr. Walmsley,

Thank you for your reply. As before your letter has been reviewed in full and there have been no issues or selling caps on your account that would have affected selling above 85K at any time. Therefore, our position on this query remains the same as set out in my previous correspondence.

I have included a link to our User Privacy Notice here and the requested contact information for our UK Data Protection Officer below if you wish to contact them with any data queries. Our selling team are also available should you wish to discuss listings or any other selling queries you may have.

Data Protection Officer  
eBay (UK) Limited  
1 More London Place,  
London,  
SE1 2AF,  
United Kingdom

Email - ebaydpo@ebay.com

We thank you for your longstanding membership and wish you all the best moving forward with eBay. I hope you have a lovely weekend, take care and stay safe.

Kind Regards,

Emma

Executive Escalations UK  
[THREAD ID:1-4ZMO87B2]

---

### **Points of Note for This Exchange:**

- 1) We can see that ebay can check back and produce a total value for turnover on an account for any given period, particularly when it is convenient for them to produce a specious argument.
- 2) It was nice of Emma to give me this address as required under UK law. According to the ebay seller "support" telephone line, such information is not available and could never be given out to a paying customer using their service. Stating that to a customer is somewhat illegal.

[07-OCT-2021 Telephone Request for the Ebay UK Data Protection Officer Name and Address](#)

[07-OCT-2021 Youtube Video Link of Telephone Request for the Ebay UK Data Protection Officer Name and Address](#)

### **Call Summary:**

Ebay seller "support" refuse to give me the name and address of the Ebay UK Data Protection Officer, and end the call.

**12-OCT-2021 Letter to the Ebay Data Protection Officer at 1, More London Place.**

If the only effect of contacting the VP personally and in writing is to be peddled-off to a surname-less "Emma," one is forced to go a stage further. So, noting that ebay do hold sales turnover data for previous intervals, I thought that I would put in a request for disclosure of relevant data under the 2018 UK Data Protection Act. Here it is:

---

Henry J. Walmsley,  
14 Anderby Road,  
Southampton,  
Hampshire,  
SO16 9PN

Phone: 02381 XXXXXX  
Mobile: 07748 XXXXXX  
VAT No. 318381695  
ebay a/c: vila\_restor  
email:

vila\_nestor@hotmail.com

12-OCT-2021

Data Protection Officer  
eBay (UK) Limited  
1 More London Place,  
London,  
SE1 2AF

Dear Sir,

This letter constitutes a request for a full disclosure of data used by ebay systems under the 2018 UK Data Protection Act relevant to the accounts shown below.

I have a particular interest in the storage of previous sales totals being used to automatically influence current sales rates when compared to a specific numerical value. This process has been active in your systems since April 6th 2017. I have not been informed of this by ebay UK, and many enquiries to ebay UK by the more usual routes have proved to be fruitless and dismissive.

I believe that this constitutes non-transparent use of my data.

The ebay accounts in question used the following usernames:

|                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| vila_restor:      | Active                         |
| jenna_stannis:    | Closed                         |
| tel_varon:        | Closed                         |
| james_from_space: | Closed                         |
| curavon01:        | Closed                         |
| olag_gan:         | Closed - never properly opened |

Any other accounts which may have inadvertently been linked to "Henry J. Walmsley / vila\_restor" should be included. Numerical values used for automated calculations should be included. All account "Flags" should be included. Please inform me of any necessary charges involved.

Yours Sincerely,

Henry J. Walmsley.

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**26-OCT-2021 An Email and Site Message Response from "NikHil" of eBay Privacy**

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26-OCT-2021

Dear Henry Walmsley,

I am contacting you in relation to an email sent to us requesting your eBay data for your account "vila\_restor". My name is Nikhil and I would be happy to advise on this.

Your general eBay data can be requested at any time through your eBay account, please follow the steps below:

Sign into your eBay account and in the top left under "Hello Henry" select "Account settings" Under "Personal information and privacy" select "Request your eBay data". Follow the steps and your data will be automatically provided within 10 days.

However, to help you resolve your request quickly I have requested for your Subject Access Request (SAR) on your behalf you will be able to download all your personal data within 10 days.

I hope the above information was helpful

Kind regards

Nikhil

eBay Privacy  
[THREAD ID:1-525HV34V]

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**My Response on 26-OCT-2021:**

Please confirm if this response from you is a result of my original paper letter sent to...

Data Protection Officer eBay (UK) Limited 1 More London Place, London, SE1 2AF  
dated 12-OCT-2021.

Please note the following:

- a) None of the requested data is available using the procedure that you have outlined.
- b) Your response does not constitute a reasonable response made under the 2018 UK Data Protection Act. As such, the original timeline from the date of that letter continues to count-down.
- c) This request was made under the 2018 UK Data Protection Act to the ebay UK Data Protection Officer. I expect a written response from that officer, not an individual who fails to declare a full name.

The original letter is shown below.

I still await a timely and proper response to my original request.

Yours Sincerely,

Henry J Walmsley.

(Original letter to DPO enclosed as readable text)

---

[Navigate Up](#)

General email address:

`vila_nestor@hotmail.com`

## Interesting Electronics "The Trouble With ebay" Page

This is an archive page to retain what was used as the front page of one of my ebay shops during its closing down period. There is more background information on the related page [Ebay, and Invisible Sales Throttling, Caps, or Limits Statistically Related to the UK VAT Threshold](#).

**Updated 10th December 2019: Please scroll down for the latest news. Warning! It's a long way down.**

**23rd August 2019, 21:31**

After no response to a total of four letters, Interesting Electronics is now closed, and this account will be removed as soon as the system allows me to do so. Other online marketplaces are available. As a last ditch attempt, and to make my intentions clear, I made yet another telephone call to ebay seller "support" today. Joseph tried hard, and will, as ever, try to "take it further." I'm afraid I've been *there* before. That call is also available to listen to at the links at the bottom of the page.

So, Goodbye then!

There is no point running this shop which sells bulkier items when any sales made here contribute to an overall sales cap, along with my other ebay shop selling smaller items. These shops are both limited to an overall summed sales cap of £85K per annum despite my being VAT registered for several months now. Every time total sales hit £232 a day, they are severely restricted for about a week before the process repeats. Other longer-term capping behaviour is equally obvious. You don't need a mathematics degree with a statistics major to show it beyond any doubt. I have battled on the seller "support" telephone line for hours. When they finally dismissed my complaint, I was instructed to send in a pointless letter to the ebay customer complaints address in Dublin. I have the delivery receipt. This has been ignored for eight weeks, without even a courtesy response or a dismissive denial. Here is the letter:

-----

Henry J. Walmsley,  
14 Anderby Road,  
Southampton,  
Hampshire,  
SO16 9PN

02381 785329  
VAT No. 318 3816 95

24-JUN-2019

Ebay business user account usernames:

vila\_restor,

jenna\_stannis,

Personal user account usernames:

james\_from\_space  
tel\_varon

UK / Europe Accs  
Ebay Administration,  
Ebay Europe,  
P.O. Box 9473,  
Dublin 15,  
Ireland.

Dear Sir,

Since approximately April 2017 I have been aware of a general system operating within Ebay that invisibly limits total yearly sales across all accounts registered to the same real name to the UK VAT threshold of £85000. I do not refer to email warnings or listing restrictions of which the user is informed. I refer to an invisible sales cap about which the user is not informed. I have proved this beyond any doubt, and quite easily. Using amalgamated 12 month sales totals and integrating under a curve with an £85K offset for those two years, this shows that the resultant equals zero to within +/- 5% at any given time, despite substantial modulation of products available and shop holidays. This is impossible by chance. I imagine that this is achieved by reducing listing visibility, reducing listing visibility on international sites, or by straightforward denial of purchase to a customer, followed by the message "This item is no longer available." I have had direct reports of this occurring. The exact process is not important. While I do not expect to receive full details of the process, please do not issue a denial. I understand that this is to protect Ebay from being liable for unpaid VAT by sellers under HMRC rules and UK law.

Up until the date of 6th April 2019, this was not a problem for me. Indeed, it was rather helpful as I was not VAT registered prior to that time. However, I have been VAT registered since that date. The VAT number is in the ebay system on both business accounts and is showing on listings. I have spent many hours on the seller telephone helpline ensuring that all these details are correct. They assure me that I am a valued customer with all accounts in good standing.

This does not fill me with much reassurance however, for while all these discussions were ongoing, none of the many representatives and supervisors with whom I spoke were able to inform me that this number had been entered incorrectly in the standard HMRC display format. When this is passed to VIES for checking, it returns a 'not recognised' response. I have since detected and corrected this myself. All these calls have been recorded for future reference. The number has been correctly entered for many weeks now.

Unfortunately, day-to-day statistical sales analysis clearly shows that the capping algorithm is still very much running across my business accounts. This is particularly obvious as an approximate eight-day cyclic 'tick' where sales cross a threshold of



approximately £234 every eight days before being restricted. This is inexplicable by any seasonal, random, or other effect, other than the one already stated. It has been proven mathematically. Please use whatever words you wish, but do not issue a denial.

This is cause for complaint. The many calls to the telephone helpline constitute the first complaint, and I made this clear at the time. This email constitutes the second complaint. The complaint is that Ebay systems are restricting my sales across two business accounts to the UK VAT threshold of £85000, a restriction about which I have not been informed and which in any case, should have been removed upon VAT registration and correct entry of business details.

- \* What can be done to address the complaint?
- \* The capping system must be removed from these business accounts.
- \* What will occur if this does not happen?
- \* I will escalate the situation in stages starting in ten working days from the date of this letter. This is the second opportunity given to Ebay to avoid this. I wish to avoid this action.

It may be the case that I need to make some technical change to the entry of business details, or make some technical change on the Ebay site. Having spent many hours attempting to do this via telephone support, You need to tell Me exactly what is required. Be assured, that the moment the situation is correctly resolved, it will be unmistakable in my analysis plots within 48 hours.

I expect prompt action.

Yours Sincerely,

Henry J. Walmsley.  
-----

No such action has occurred. So, that's approximately £2000 in ebay fees every year, for the last eight years and 100% seller feedback on my account. **Sixteen Thousand Pounds**. Ebay; This clearly means nothing to you. If only I could say the same myself.

15th August 2019

After another telephone call today I was given two *different* addresses to write to, and no explanation for the lack of response to date. So I did write to them. Here is the letter. The telephone call, as ever, is linked at the bottom of the page.

-----  
Henry J. Walmsley,

14 Anderby Road,  
Southampton,  
Hampshire,  
SO16 9PN

02381 785329  
VAT No. 318 3816 95

15-AUG-2019

Ebay business user account usernames:

vila\_restor,  
jenna\_stannis,

Personal user account usernames:

james\_from\_space  
tel\_varon

UK / Europe Accs / Account Closures

Ebay Administration,  
Ebay Europe,  
P.O. Box 9473,  
Dublin 15,  
Ireland.

cc:

Office of President, Ebay Account Closures  
2145 Hamilton Avenue,  
San Jose,  
USA  
95125

cc:

Ebay Account Closures  
Hotham House,  
1 Heron Square,  
Richmond  
TW9 1EJ

Dear Sir,

Enclosed is a copy of a letter sent to Ebay at Dublin 15 on 24th June 2019. It was signed for at 09:15 on 28th June by Sigita Gud. I was advised that writing to this address was my only recourse regarding the problem outlined in the letter. I have received not even a courtesy response and would like to know why. In a telephone call today I was given two different addresses to write to, as shown above. This communication represents the third complaint on the issue. The letter, further details, and links to recordings of relevant telephone calls can be seen on the front page of my ebay shop at the following url:

<http://www.ebaystores.co.uk/interestingelectronics>

A written response and prompt action would be appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Henry J. Walmsley.

Signed for in Richmond by Filipe at 09:36 16-AUG-2019

Signed for in Dublin by Sigita Gud at 10:00 19-AUG-2019

Signed for in San Hose at 13:47 21-AUG-2019

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### **Telephone Calls**

Here are links to recordings of the three ebay seller "support" calls, 14th August 2019, and more will be added as they occur. It seems that even the tape recorder was losing the will to live on the last one. They could not care less about a letter that they know nothing about, yet will gladly insist that you write it, after they have refused to do anything other than read aloud from a card or, "look into it further." (i.e. do nothing for two weeks then send a dismissive site message)

1) Gabriel in the USA tries to be helpful, but as ever, "Oh dear. Never heard of that before. Can't do anything."

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/gabriel\\_usa\\_14082019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/gabriel_usa_14082019.mp3)

2) Mumel overseas somewhere has difficulty understanding and reading, tries a bit but, "Oh dear. Never heard of that before. Can't do anything."

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/mumel\\_14082019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/mumel_14082019.mp3)

3) Katrina overseas somewhere also has difficulty understanding and reading, tries precious little and guess what? "Oh dear. Never heard of that before. Can't do anything."

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/karina\\_14082019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/karina_14082019.mp3)

### **Telephone Call 15th August 2019**

Lou provides me with two new addresses to write to, and I ask her how many more possibilities there might be. Do I have to try all of them or just some of them at

random? How many times? Can I expect a response?

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/lou\\_15082019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/lou_15082019.mp3)

Final (?) Telephone Call 23rd August 2019

Joseph tries quite hard by the sound of it, contacting every element of support at his disposal. I've actually edited out some of the longer silences and sounds of typing for brevity. Joseph calls me back on the wrong number, as usual, at the end. My apologies for the sound quality on that portion of the recording on the mobile. All to no avail. Unless Joseph can convince some higher power and sort out the issue, I'm shut for good on this particular outlet.

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/joseph\\_23082019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/joseph_23082019.mp3)

**Page Update 24th September 2019**

Tuesday 27th August 2019

I receive a site message from Kunjan K, team manager of ebay UK department:

---

Complain - Sales drop SR# 1-224894687646

Hello Henry,

This is the follow up email with regards to the letter you have sent us.

Henry, this is Kunjan - Team Manager of eBay UK department. We are sorry for any inconvenience caused. I thoroughly checked your account and I confirm that there is no restriction on your account due to VAT registration. Your sales has nothing to do VAT registration. However, I will provide some insights on how you can improve.

I will explain current market trending and the best practices to improve the sales. First of all, we appreciate your partnership with us for last 9 years. Please understand within this gross competition in the market, the seller must be competitive and keep on updating the strategies to be the pro. Rest assured that at eBay, we don't stop or start the sales of any seller. It totally depends upon item demand, item price and seller performance.

I see checked your Growth tab and I found that some of your items needs improvement which you can check through the below link:

<https://www.ebay.co.uk/sh/grw/listings-improvements>

Moreover, being a top rated sellers, we always advise to keep rotating your inventory to include the hottest items which will keep you up in the competition. For example, if it is a Christmas or New Year, people buy gifts, clothing and accessories. In Winter, people buy warm clothes a lot.

This was just an idea.

Also, you can include all the inventory to offer the eBay premium service which will give a boost your items search standing.

Also, I see that you have offered eBay Premium Services for 97 item and you can also offer to other 870 which will give a boost into your search standing and will also give 10% discount on Final Value Fee.

Furthermore, nowadays social media is trending a lot. So, you may invest some of your time sharing the items or shop link to Facebook, Instagram, etc. which will divert the traffic to your shop and items, and you may see a boost in the sales.

I am sure that the above information will help you take the business to the next level.

Kind regards,

Kunjan K.  
eBay Customer Support.

[THREAD ID: 1-224894687646]

---

I reply as follows via a site message with words to the effect of:

"This was not a complaint about a sales drop. It was a complaint about obvious and unnecessarily applied invisible sales capping. You have addressed none of the points in my letter. Also, this site message is not a response in writing. Please respond in writing."

Sunday 1st September 2019

I receive the following response from Bholanath S. via a site message:

---

RE: Complain - Sales drop SR# 1-224894687646

Hello Henry,

Thank you for writing back to eBay Customer Support regarding the issue related to the restriction and account status.

Henry, I am sorry for the inconvenience caused in this regard and we want to make sure that you get the correct information in regards to VAT.

**First of all, I would like to assure you that there is no restriction placed on both your account "vila\_restor" and "jenna\_stannis".** The sales limit threshold of £85k is the limit

set by HMRC and not eBay. Here the best would be to contact HMRC so as to get complete information related to VAT from below link:

<https://www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc>

I trust this is helpful. Thank you for choosing eBay!

Kind regards,

Bholanath S.  
eBay Customer Support.

[THREAD ID: 1-2VIOVAZK]

---

I reply via this site message with words to the effect of:

"This was not a complaint about a sales drop. You have addressed none of the points in my letter. Also, this site message is not a response in writing. Please respond in writing."

18th September 2019

I receive the following via a site message:

---

Complain letter - VAT SR# 1-227656368516

Hello Henry,

This is a follow up with regards to the complaint letter you had sent us regarding VAT threshold and sales limits.

This is Kunjan - Team manager of eBay UK department. I have reviewed the account and can certainly understand that you are still facing issues. For further assistance, I would suggest to contact the HMRC team directly as they will be able to provide you support and clarify your concerns in the best possible way.

Please try to understand that we have provided all the information that we can in our previous emails and for your further information, I would recommend to go through our terms and conditions policy as well as user agreements.

I hope you can understand our case here and appreciate your kind cooperation and patience regarding this matter

Kind regards,

Kunjan K.



eBay Customer Support

[THREAD ID: 1-227656368516]

---

I respond via a site message:

"This is not a response in writing and will be ignored."

As a separate note here, I would like to add that while communicating in writing, it is normal business practice to use full names. I have no more interest in communicating with "Kunjan K," or "Bohlonath S," than I would with communicating with "Homer S." or "Captain K." I see no reason for either of you to hide behind partial names. You have my full name. It is unprofessional not to use yours.

However, "This is not a response in writing and will be ignored," could be seen as a bit unhelpful. Kunjan K. in his site message suggests that I contact the HMRC team directly. As it is described as a team, I assume that this means some specific team in ebay seller support. That's strange, because I didn't know that such thing existed. I'd better check that out on the telephone! To summarize this call, I was correct; No such team exists. I am informed that Kunjan K. was referring to HMRC itself, not an HMRC team. I point out that this is...

- a) Incorrect information.
- b) This issue clearly has absolutely nothing to do with HMRC, and it is misleading to suggest that it has.
- c) Having being forced down this paper-bound route by ebay, I expect a proper response in writing.
- d) This issue is still open.

Here is the recording of that telephone call, where the line starts conveniently breaking up and the ebay seller support operative, "Joven," actually starts laughing:

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/written\\_letter\\_23092019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/written_letter_23092019.mp3)

As of Tuesday 24th September, I still await a written response, on paper, from someone with a full name.

### **Some Meanwhiles**

In an attempt to clean this up myself somehow, and to protest by moving some business elsewhere, I needed to close some accounts. Closing of ebay accounts is not as simple as you might imagine, though. I know that any account needs to be cleaned-down before it can be fully closed. However, it seems that ebay has a series of hidden tricks to avoid this for some reason. This includes mysterious non-existent subscriptions, mysterious invisible subscriptions that occur when you close a shop, refunds supposedly made via e-cheques taking seven whole days to "clear," and a series of incompetent seller support operatives giving misleading information.

Here is the series of telephone calls that are still resulting from this, and a brief summary of each.

### 6th September 2019 Call No. 1

Christian and I discuss items preventing the closing of account jenna\_stannis, and we engage in a discussion over straightforward refunds and the pure obfuscation of e-cheque clearance times. "It's Paypal's fault," he says. Ridiculous.

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/christian\\_nick\\_06092019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/christian_nick_06092019.mp3)

### 6th September 2019 Call No. 2

I go back to the telephone and try to clear up some other mysterious jenna\_stannis subscriptions which seem to exist when trying to close the account, but which the site tells me do not exist. After speaking to "Boy Wonder," I get put through to Kaly who is actually very helpful, discerning that a certain subscription suddenly occurs automatically when you close a shop. Yes, Really. Closing one subscription makes another invisible one occur! And yes, you keep getting charged fees for the pleasure.

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/boy\\_kaly\\_06092019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/boy_kaly_06092019.mp3)

### 6th September 2019 Call No. 3

I start the closure process of account james\_from\_space which has been *completely unused* for months. I am told that the account will be monitored for seven days and then closed. Was this too easy do you think? Yes, that would be far too easy...

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/jfs\\_closing\\_06092019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/jfs_closing_06092019.mp3)

...because on the 16th September, this account is still very much present. I get the name of the previous person that I spoke to wrong in this call, it was not Kaly. Perhaps the original person should have said, "The process of closing the account will be *started* in seven days, after which it will take a further thirty days for no good reason."

[https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys\\_interesting\\_electronics/customer\\_service/ebay/jfs\\_not\\_closed\\_16092019.mp3](https://www.interestingelectronics.com/old/henrys_interesting_electronics/customer_service/ebay/jfs_not_closed_16092019.mp3)

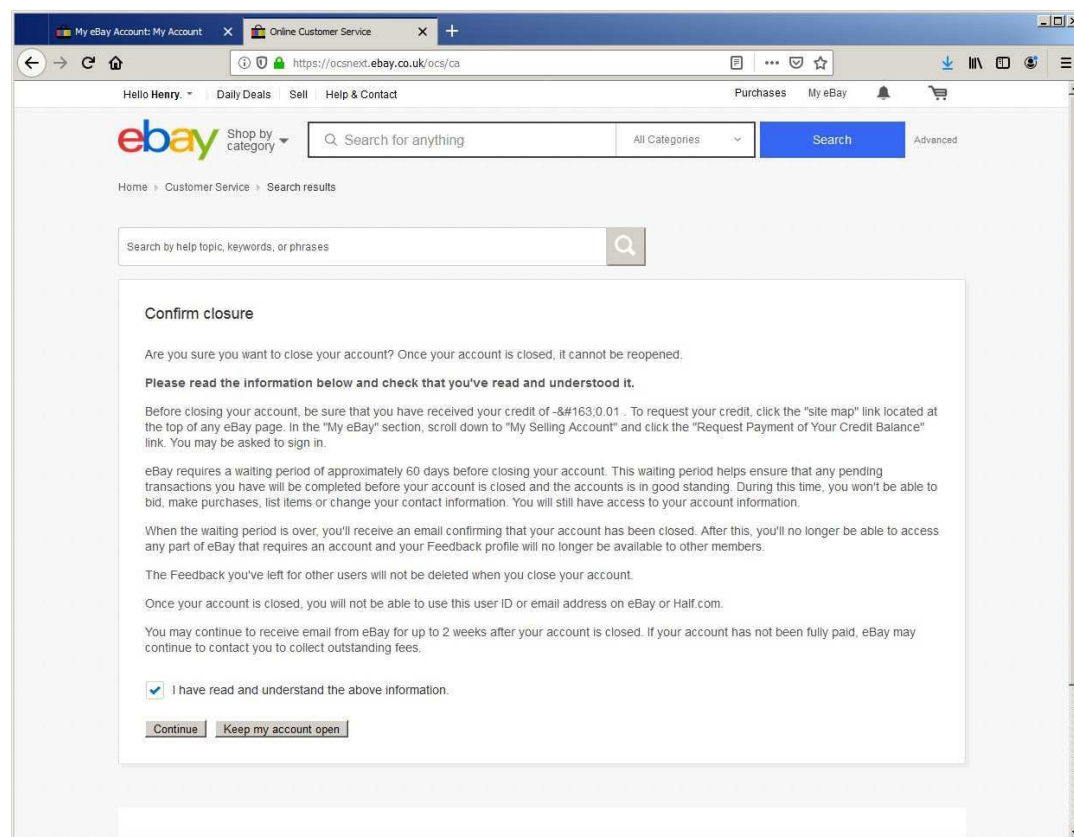
### 8th October 2019

On Tuesday 8th October I thought that I would just check-up with seller support to make sure that the closing of jenna\_stannis was in progress, if not already

completed. This is bearing in mind that I was told that all subscriptions were completely removed on 6th September during call No. 2 with Kaly. Right? Wronnng! Oh, what a surprise. A subscription to selling manager pro is still 'active' somehow and this blocks closing the account. It's almost as if ebay will do *anything* to stop accounts being closed and looking bad on their numbers. Here is the telephone call where we note that it might take five to seven days to start the thirty to sixty day process of putting the account through 'term pending' and finally kill it off. During that five to seven days, a cynical individual might imagine that a magic subscription to selling manager might re-appear. However, the subscription disappears from the ebay account closure page and I get in on the 'close account' button before it has a chance to come back. Note that there is no way on the website to remove this so-called subscription, nor even to see that it is active.

### [Ebay telephone call with Glen who removes the selling manager pro subscription 08-OCT-2019](#)

I am finally presented with this page, which you can click on to read it properly:



I see that there's yet another potential trick embedded in this, that being the -£163.01 (way to go on the £ sign, web monkeys) credit on the account and that despite what I was told on the telephone, I'm supposed to claim it. That would involve a payment, and yet another thirty day wait before the account can be put into a further thirty day 'term pending' closure period. I wonder if the 1pee account balance will turn out to be a problem with closing the account? How did Kaly on the telephone get the refund amount so *slightly* wrong a month ago? Surely you can add-up.

If you can bear the suspense, tune in for next month's exciting episode of, "The Ebay

Account Of Doom." (alternatively, Planet Of The Liars.)

## 18th October 2019: "Planet Of The Liars"

It turns out that you didn't need to be kept in suspense so long, because when I checked my records, I noted that my account james\_from\_space should have been closed on 16th October. I'd better just try logging in, on the outside chance that it hasn't been closed as agreed. Oh look. It hasn't! Time for a quick Friday evening call to ebay seller support, I think:

### [Call to Ebay Seller Support 18th October 2019 20:13 Regarding Failure of Account Closure](#)

#### Summary

First I speak to a young lady who tries to tell me that it can take thirty, sixty, or ninety days to close an account, depending on which options you select while closing it.

**"Bing! Lie Detected!"** (Sorry about that noise just there; That's just my automatic Ebay lie detector going off again.)

I direct the young lady to the relevant site message from 16th September 2019 which clearly states that the account will be closed in thirty days.

She tries to suggest that she doesn't have access to that site message.

**"Bing! Lie Detected!"**

I assure her that she can see anything in my inbox, which I know as a fact. I get moved over to an 'account specialist' who is better at lying without being caught out so easily.

After a very long wait I am told that the account should indeed have been closed two days ago. The excuse given is that account closures sometimes get stuck in the system because of a hyphen or odd character in my telephone number, email, or physical address. (Which there isn't) There are several words for that, but they're not acceptable on a public web-page. I am assured that it will be fixed over the weekend and that I won't need to call back on Monday.

Well, let's wait and see, shall we?

## 21st October 2019: Naomi and Eric

All completed? Account closed? Can I uncross all my appendages and undo the knot? Don't be silly. At 18:10 the account is still very much fully accessible. So it's onto the ebay seller support telephone line.

#### Summary Call 1:

I get through to Naomi who, after some time, tells me that the account is still open because I have been logging into it to see if it has been closed yet.

**"Bing! Lie Detected!"**

Not true. Logging in to the account is not account activity that should stop closure, and I draw this to her attention. An argument ensues where I invoke the spectre of the UK Data Protection Act. Naomi tries to persuade me that the terms and

conditions state that it might take sixty days to close an account. I draw her attention back to the site message sent by ebay that clearly states that sixty days only applies if a sale has been made, which it hasn't. I decided to be taken through the ebay terms and conditions on the site which involves me logging into the account. I was about to say, "But would that not stop my account being closed as you stated five minutes ago?" when I am rather rudely cut off. Cutting me off when you've been caught in a lie is cheating. Naughty! Oh Dear. I'd better call back.

[Naomi from Ebay Seller Support Tells Me Lies About the Account Closure Procedure, Then Cuts Me Off, 21-OCT-2019 18:30 hrs](#)

### Summary Call 2:

Ron initially can't see my data back very far as he is a buyer support person. I get put through to Eric who is a seller support person. We carefully track back the whole story of trying to enable the relatively simple procedure of closing an account, fully within the scope of ebay's terms and conditions. After it is agreed once more that the account should be closed already, I am offered a call back within 24 hours. I suggest that's not an answer to when the account will be closed, and suggest that seven days is a fair time before opening a complaint with the UK trading standards organizations, citing data protection law. There are very big silent gaps edited out in this recording, and one almost might have assumed after twenty minutes that the call had been dropped. I have more patience than that, though.

[Poor Eric on Ebay Seller Support Is Told to Fob-Off the Caller Again, 21-OCT-2019 19:30 hrs](#)

Let's wait and see *again*, Shall we? Tune in tomorrow, for the next exciting pile of... "Pathetic... Ebay... Excuses!"

I'm not sure how much an ebay call operative earns for a thirty minute call, but the economics of this situation are surely looking foolish. Just close the account.

### **22nd October 2019**

I speak to Ronald and Emma as a follow-up to the call on the 21st. They give me the same old story.

[Ronald and Emma from Ebay Seller Support Repeat the Same Story 22-OCT-2019 10:40 hrs](#)

### **23rd October 2019**

I speak to an Indian lady who again insists that just logging into the account is stopping it from being closed. No it is not. We hear this spelled-out quite clearly from Jacob in Ireland in the second part of the call who promises to send the entire staff of the overseas call centre for retraining on such matters. Jacob checks out all the account closure requirements as passed, puts in yet another manual request for



closure and assures me that it will be completed in seven days time. I say that I will check it out after eight days, next Thursday 31st October.

Also, the Indian lady gave me the email address of ebay's Data Protection Officer, and while we're on the line I check that email to see if it actually exists. I have been caught out with non-existent ebay email addresses before. To my surprise, ebaydpo@ebay.com does actually exist and sends back an automated courtesy response. I may be needing that email address in the not so distant future.

[Indian Lady and Jacob from Ebay Seller Support Give Me More Untruths and Delays 23-OCT-2019 08:41 hrs](#)

Let's call back on Thursday 31st October shall we? Maybe I won't have to.

### **1st November 2019**

I give ebay an additional day and check back on the 1st November. Oh dear. Guess what? The account still isn't closed.

#### **Summary Call 1, 1st November 2019:**

The usual discussion ensues with the first line operative about not logging into the account. This ends in a stalemate where I refuse to end the call and get put through to a second line operative, after about forty-five minutes of discussion. His line is initially the same, until I again refuse to end the call and sit in silence for about fifteen minutes. He then comes back, full of apologies, with a completely different story. The story now is that because there was a purchase on the account on 16th August and the request for closure was instigated on the 16th September, there was not a full thirty days between the last purchase and the closure request. This is why the account will only be closed after sixty days from 16th September, because the initial thirty day condition had not been met.

Foolishly, I accept this explanation. I get an acceptance that simply logging into the account will *not* prevent it from being fully closed.

My apologies for the extreme length of this recording, but it seemed for a while that persistence had finally paid off. The long pauses are important.

[JFS Account Closure Ebay Seller Support A, 01-NOV-2019 09:50 hrs](#)

#### **Summary Call 2, 1st November 2019:**

Later on in the day, I decide to check something. I was sure that there were thirty completely clear days between the 16th August purchase and the 16th September closure request. I was right! Back on the telephone to clarify why I was told that the account was not closed due to not fulfilling the initial thirty day clear period. I am careful to establish the thirty days first by doing some counting on fingers with the first call operative. We get nowhere. The supervisor tells me that the account will be closed on the 16th November, because it will take sixty days this time for no good reason. Further discussions ensue including a mention of the UK Data Protection Act, and ebay not fulfilling its stated terms and conditions in site messages and live on the website. I nearly lose the will to live when one-hundred and eighty days is



mentioned earlier in the call. This ends in a stalemate and I force the supervisor to end the call, making it quite clear that my problem has not in any way been resolved, and that the answers given are unsatisfactory.

### [JFS Account Closure Ebay Seller Support B, 01-NOV-2019 19:00 hrs](#)

See you on the 17th, if not before. (Before, as it happens)

### **8th November 2019 - Closing The jenna\_stannis Account**

If you've been paying attention, you'll remember that the original point of this page was to document the closing of the Interesting Electronics ebay shop which used the ebay account jenna\_stannis, and that closing the old james\_from\_space account was a bit of a side-track. So today we're back to the main point then, as a full thirty days have passed since I successfully clicked on 'close my account' on jenna\_stannis, after much painful tracking down of mystery subscriptions and weird payments etc. Very close observers will note that in the telephone call on 8th October I was assured beyond any possibility of a doubt, that a mysterious £0.01 credit balance left on the account by Kaly could not possibly stop it being closed. So, the account is obviously closed then?

Now, you already know the answer to that one, don't you? Phone call time!

### Summary Call 1, 8th November 2019:

All of ebays telephone lines were apparantly down for three hours so it takes until after mid-day and several aborted attempts to get a call-back. I wonder why? I get the usual useless individual and then get put through to someone who knows something about accounts. After some slightly ascerbic banter, I realise that I may have actually found someone helpful and we get on with business. Why isn't the account closed? etc. etc. Will the 1pee balance stop the account being closed?

Helpful Robert: "Yes."

Henry: 'Oh. Well that's not what I was told on 8th October'

We agree that the way forward is that I follow H.R.s advice and get an 'account rebalancing' done, as this will be quicker than paying 1pee into my Paypal account, if that were even possible. Why a paypal payment could possibly take up to ten days is beyond my comprehension, but let's do it the way he suggests. HR says that he may be able to call back with the result today.

### [Helpful Robert Ebay Seller Support Call 1, 08-NOV-2019 13:25](#)

### Summary Call 2, 8th November 2019:

Helpful Robert does indeed call back, and at 17:25 he informs me that the account rebalancing has resulted in a zero account balance. He says that we can now close the account. OK Robert, take me through the procedure. (Yes, I know. I've done this already, otherwise the account would not already be in 'term pending' status,' but let's

go through it again anyway.) It's worth listening to this labarynthine procedure, including clicking on what seems to me to be a hidden link, and one which takes you back to the 'classic' / supposedly redundant ebay pages. What next, a door in an unlit basement marked, "Beware of the leopard?" Oh surprise. I get a message saying that, 'We can not close your account at this time because it is already in the process of being closed.' Robert is slightly vexed. He is not alone. I point out to him that I successfully went through this procedure more than thirty days ago, despite the 1pee. It would help if you would listen to what the caller said originally, rather than engaging him a near argument. We part on sensible terms with promises of weekend investigations at higher levels.

### [Helpful Robert Ebay Seller Support Call 2, 08-NOV-2019 17:25](#)

Here are screenshots of the account before and after today's activities, noting that in the second shot, I have incurred a transaction, that being 'New activity not yet invoiced : £0.01'

Hello **Henry** ▾ | [Daily Deals](#) | [Sell](#) | [Help & Contact](#)

**ebay** Shop by category ▾ |  | All C

[Home](#) > [My eBay](#) > [My account](#) > [Seller account](#) > [Account activity](#)

## Account activity

Account ID: E1049474536003-GBP [\[Show details\]](#)

### Account summary [?](#)

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Latest invoice amount (30-Sep-19):                      | −£0.01        |
| New activity applied to the latest invoice noted above: | £0.00         |
| <b>Total amount:</b>                                    | <b>−£0.01</b> |
| New activity not yet invoiced:                          | £0.00         |
| <b>Current balance:</b>                                 | <b>−£0.01</b> |

(Includes United Kingdom VAT. [Learn more.](#))

### Total fees and payments

Select the months you would like to see your fees and payments for

From:  ▾ To:  ▾

Hello **Henry**. | Daily Deals | Sell | Help & Contact | Watch List

**ebay** Shop by category | Search for anything | All Categories

My eBay | jenna\_stannis (4259) ★ Power Seller

Activity | Messages (3) | **Account** | Applications | The My eBay landing page

**My eBay Views**

**My account**

- Business information
- Addresses
- Communication preferences
- Site preferences
- Manage communications with buyers
- Seller Dashboard
- Feedback
- PayPal account
- Seller account
- Donation account
- Subscriptions
- Resolution Centre

Make More Money with Free Listings - Private Sellers Only →

**Seller account**

**Account summary**

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Latest invoice amount (30-Sep-19):                      | -£0.01        |
| New activity applied to the latest invoice noted above: | £0.00         |
| <b>Total amount:</b>                                    | <b>-£0.01</b> |
| New activity not yet invoiced:                          | £0.01         |
| <b>Current balance:</b>                                 | <b>£0.00</b>  |

(Includes United Kingdom VAT. [Learn more.](#))

View: [All account activity](#) | [Fees](#) | [Credits](#) | [Payments and refunds](#)

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**Total fees and payments**

Select the months you would like to see your fees and payments for

From: Jul 2019 To: Sep 2019

**Invoices**

[Select invoice](#)

Your preference invoices period:

No files are available

**New: Personal**  
Now you can determine your sales. For option to include this calculation transactions in [Try it now](#)

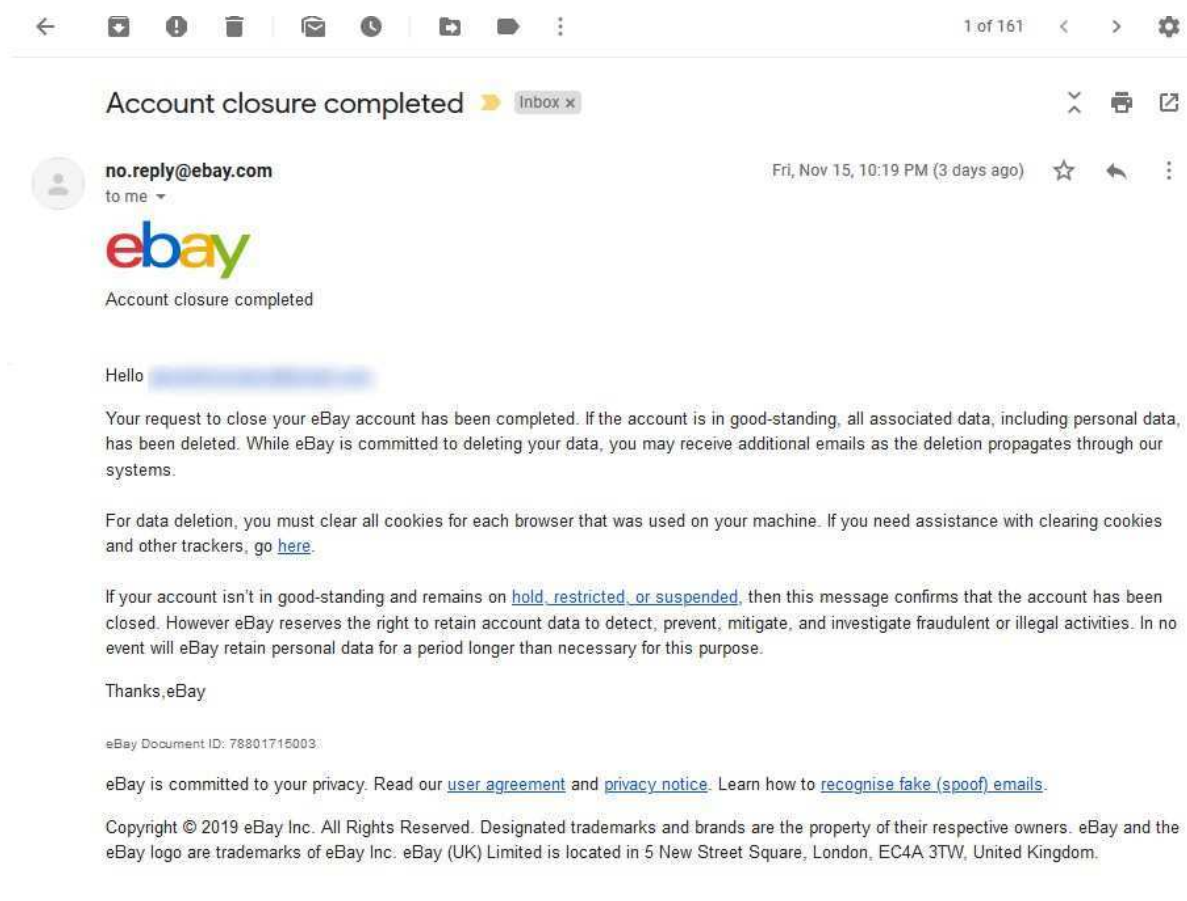
**Boost your sales**

[Discover how](#)

So I now have to wait n days to be 'invoiced' for 1pee owed to me, and as invoices generally work in the opposite direction, this could result in a 1pee account balance yet again. "Quelle Surprise." So does that mean another thirty days, sixty days, one-hundred and eighty days before the account is closed? That 1pee that might be below a paypal transaction threshold could be bounced around forever. A cynical individual might assume that this was the actual intention in the first instance. But Tune In...:)

## 18th November 2019 - Closing the james from space ebay account

Good grief, it's finally gone. It *is* actually possible! We now know that no-one on the telephone has the slightest clue as to how this really works, and that ebay consider their stated terms and conditions to be of no consequence whatsoever to their customers. But there it is. A tiny, minor success. I can no longer log into that account. We shall see if there are any flies in this ointment as time progresses.

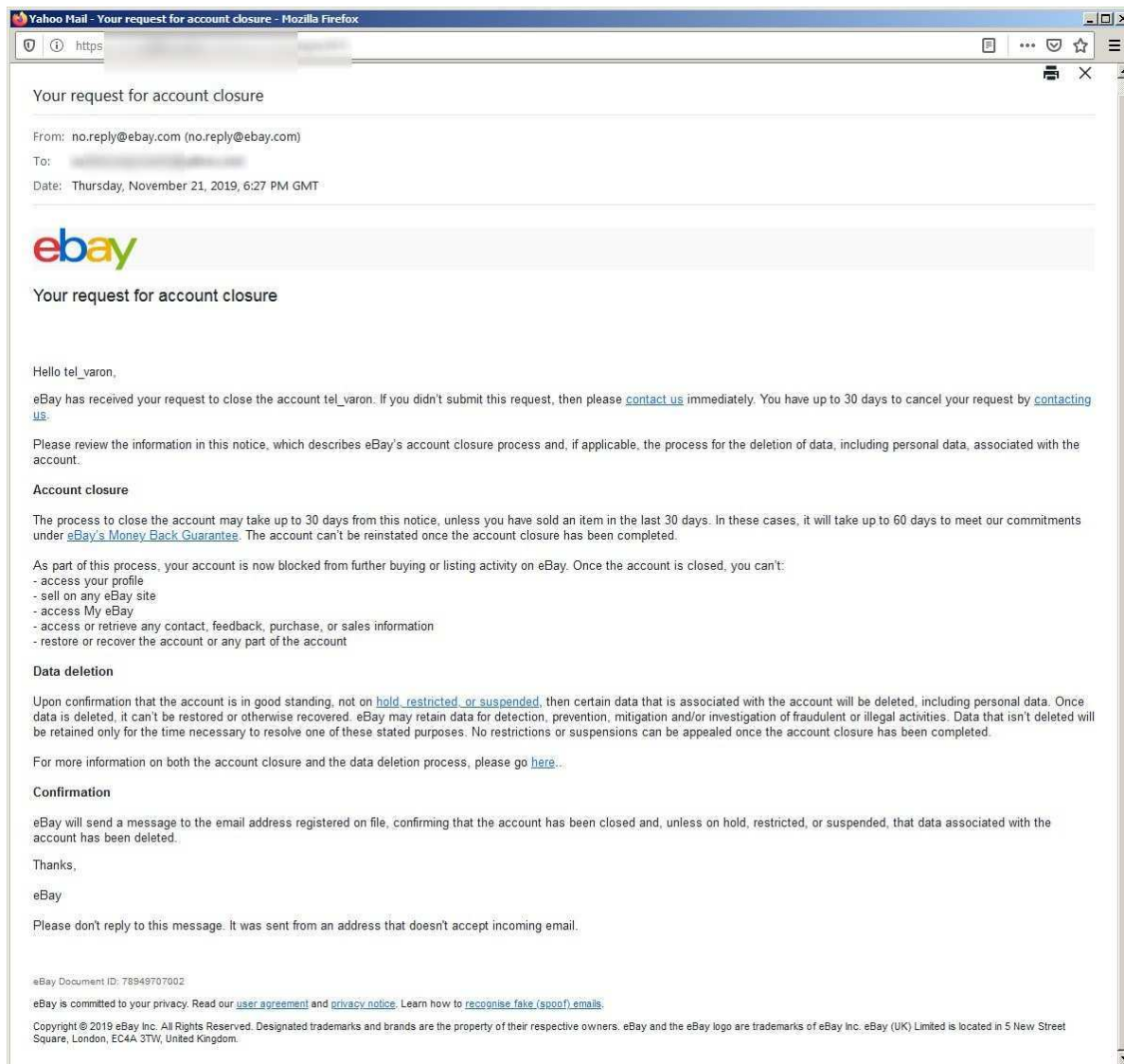


## 21st November 2019 - Closing The tel\_varon Account.

Closing james\_from\_space didn't shake anything loose in the system, and closing jenna\_stannis is still in progress. So I'd better get rid of another unused account while I'm at it. I opened this in my name earlier this year and used it for buying things. Closing it this evening was a relatively simple process, at least it has been so far. Note that you do still have to call up customer services to have that hidden subscription removed first. You can not do that yourself anywhere on the ebay website. It will be interesting to see if this much younger account closes properly in thirty or sixty days. Here's the telephone call:

[Helpful Michelle Ebay Support Call 21-NOV-2019 19:10](#)

And here is the resulting site message / email:



## 10th December 2019, Closing jenna\_stannis.

Jenna closed properly on the 7th December 2019. Hurrah! Only thirty days after the longest possible time period stated in the eBay terms and conditions, with a completely clean "top-rated" account, and after months of messing about with dodgy non-existent "subscriptions" and mysterious penny account balances. It *is* actually possible.

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vila\_nestor@hotmail.com

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