

## **HOW TO MAKE BIG MONEY AT GARAGE SALES, FLEA MARKETS & SWAP MEETS**

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### **BAGGING BUYERS WHO ENJOY THE THRILL OF THE HUNT**

Flea markets, or swap meets as they are also known, is the mother of all garage sales. For any of you that haven't yet been initiated, they are nothing less than part discount store and part carnival.

Whether economic times are good or bad, flea markets remain the best place to buy almost anything for yourself or your home at affordable prices. That's why at the first sign of sun up on a Sunday morning the giant drive in theater parking lot in El Cajon, California; the Orange County Marketplace in Costa Mesa, CA, or the Annex Antiques Fair and Flea Market in Manhattan come by the hundreds carrying flashlights before vendors have even finished setting out their merchandise.

Experienced shoppers theorize that by 9 a.m. the truly valuable items will already be gone. But still the carnival-like atmosphere keeps the crowds coming, and going, and coming. Buyers are poking among everything - records, chrome wheels, music cassettes, antique furniture, tools, car seats, saddles, World War I gas masks, porcelain dolls, fishing lures, doll furniture, T-shirts, stereos, polished rocks, quilts, sunglasses, and just when you think you've seen it all, a clown starts selling balloons!

### **AS A VENDOR YOU CAN MAKE INCREDIBLE PROFITS IN A SHORT TIME!**

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It has been estimated there are over 20,000 flea markets operating each weekend across America, totaling more than \$5 billion dollars in sales. Among the thousands of flea markets, the Rose Bowl market at Pasadena, California really stands out. That's probably because there are 3,000 dealers and, by mid-afternoon, over 50,000 shoppers, all of whom are there to find a treasure and the ultimate bargain.

The Rose Bowl market is an intimidating seven acres, and you would be amazed at what people buy. There are watches, antique fountain pens, pressed glass. Oriental rugs, Indian pottery, art, and weapons.. authentic dinosaur bones setting alongside old rusty metal doo-dads. No one, including the vendor, knows what the doo-dad is, but someone pays \$25 for it anyway. From the buyer's point of view, he came looking for a genuine treasure, and this may be it! It seems incredible, but it seems people will buy anything!

### **DECIDING WHAT ITEMS YOU SHOULD SELL**

Aside from the size crowd you can expect, flea markets, swap meets, and garage sales have something in common. Garage sale type items account for a part of the merchandise being sold at a swap meet, but homemade crafts and new merchandise are also widely available.

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Many vendors purchase new products at below wholesale prices, and make huge profits. Those who have gone through the initiation process report earnings of up to \$5,000 per weekend and more. The key to successful flea market sales is to display attractive, interesting, impulse-buying merchandise at attractive prices. And mixing second-hand pieces with new or more common items that sell well, can be quite a challenge. But once you get a feel for what people expect, and fill that niche in the market, you'll be on your way to making more money in a single day than you ever thought possible.

## HOW TO ATTRACT THOUSANDS OF BUYERS TO YOUR SPACE

There are hundreds, or in the case of the larger meets, even thousands of vendors who set up to sell their merchandise at flea markets. If you want to get the attention, and keep it, of everyone from those who showed up with flashlights to those entire families who came dressed up from church to browse, you must somehow stand out from the others.

Strategy is everything. For example, experienced shoppers usually make a reconnaissance tour along the outside circle of a flea market, knowing that the less experienced dealers are there. Then they slowly work their way inward to the more heavily trafficked middle section.

It also helps to know a little about the "history" of items that are antique, collectibles, or can otherwise become a conversation piece. If an item has a history, it's automatically worth more money.

Don't be afraid to talk to people who stop at your space to browse. From a shopper's point of view, one of the great delights of flea markets is the conversation. People are attracted to dealers who are storytellers, loaded with fascinating information about the items they have for sale. And be a conspirator. If your customer has gotten a great bargain, let them know.

Setting up a canopy will not only give your space a professional store-like appearance, it will also give you protection from the hot sun or rain. After setting up your tables, arrange your wares and display merchandise in an organized manner. Remember, a junked-up messy area can take away from the value of some items. It can also cause people to start tripping all over the place.

If you set up signs make certain they are neat and easy to read. Be creative in your approach to getting people's attention and interest. Balloons tied to your tables, canopy, etc., is a attraction that gets attention, for example.

Don't be embarrassed to bargain. In fact, you'd best be prepared to haggle, because everyone expects it. It's part of the flea market tradition.

## WHERE TO FIND GREAT DEALS AT BARGAIN PRICES

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\* ANNEX ANTIQUES FAIR AND FLEA MARKET, 26th Street at Sixth Avenue, Manhattan. This is one of the premier antique and collectible shows in the world. Prices range from \$1 for common collectibles to \$20,000 for a platinum-and-sapphire necklace. Open Saturdays and Sundays year-round. Admission is \$1. Call (212) 243-5343.

\* RENNINGER'S, 740 Noble Street, Kutztown, Pennsylvania. Renninger's is an indoor farmer's market and antique market, along with an outdoor flea market. It opens every Saturday at 8:30 a.m. and runs until 5 p.m. The markets attract a wide variety of used goods and collectible dealers. Renninger's also holds the 1,200-dealer Antique and Collectors Extravaganza on the last Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of April, June and September, Call (717) 385-0104.

\* FORT LAUDERDALE SWAP SHOP, 3291 W. Sunrise Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, Florida. 2,000 vendors occupy 87 acres at this flea market. This daily event drew more than 12 million people in 1991. During peak season the gates open at 4 a.m. Call (800) 345-7927.

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\* KANE COUNTY FLEA MARKET, Kane County Fairgrounds, St. Charles, Illinois. This market is held the first Sunday of every month and the preceding Saturday. More than 1,200 antique and collectible dealers line the tents, buildings, and grounds at this family-run market. Call (708) 377-2252.

\* SAN JOSE FLEA MARKET, 1200 Berryessa Road, San Jose, California. Open Wednesday through Sunday, 52 weeks a year. Many dealers here specialize in used goods and antiques. Nearly 80,000 customers a week visit the more than 2,300 merchants at this market. Call (408) 453-1110.

\* HEART-O-THE-MART, Brimfield, Massachusetts. This is one of the biggest antique and collectible markets in the country. Professional buyers and tourists alike storm the gates at 9 a.m. Open three times a year, this market draws as many as 30,000 shoppers over each five-day event. Call (413) 245-9556.

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\* ORANGE COUNTY MARKETPLACE, 88 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa, California. This market draws more people annually than either Hollywood's Universal Studios or nearby Knott's Berry Farm. More than 1,000 vendors sell everything from luxury cars to \$1 pairs of dice. There are about 100,000 shoppers on a good weekend. Call (714) 723-6616.

### **EARN UP TO \$1,000 EVERY WEEKEND WITH GARAGE SALES!**

Everyone loves garage sales for the same reason they love flea markets - because it's an opportunity to go treasure hunting for terrific deals at bargain prices.

There are various reasons why people have garage sales. Some run out of storage room, or are moving away and getting rid of items they don't really need. Others do it as a fund-raising event for a local charity, or get really serious and start having ongoing sales. The best reason, however, to have a garage sale is to make some FAST CASH!

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All it takes to make some really big money with garage sales is your time, some careful planning, and a little merchandise know-how.

To be successful, you should have a variety of merchandise to sell. Don't worry about not having a variety. Once you start taking an inventory, you will soon be amazed at what you own but have forgotten about. When an item is not used it is simply abandoned by the "minds-eye." It's a little like having light fixtures throughout your home. They are there, but you don't really see them.

So the very first thing to do in preparing for a garage sale is to take a pen and notebook to begin a room-by-room inventory. That means looking in every drawer, every box, shelf, behind the bed, and on the walls, to list items that are just taking up space inside your home. Your criteria may be, "if it isn't absolutely necessary and you have no personal attachments that would cause some emotional conflict," add it to the list.

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By the time you reach the last room your list will be pages long. If you're satisfied you have listed everything in the house, then head for the basement, attic, garage, lawn shed, work shop, barn, etc., and repeat the process. Don't overlook anything. Remember, what you may consider junk, another person will think is a treasure. An old tire, dolls, a child's wagon with only three wheels, an old Superman comic book, books and magazines, left-over lumber, a set of door hinges, costume jewelry, a hub cap you found along the road, rope,

empty glass jars, a half-filled can of paint, small appliances, Avon bottles, fence wire, pottery, bolts of material, depression glass, candles, cassette tapes, furniture, golf clubs, macramé, and old croquet set, fans, record albums, cameras, clay pots, cribs, baby clothes, ice skates, posters, radios, aquariums, clocks, window screen, drapes, rods, fiddles, ladders and bicycles. Whatever it is, people will buy it and just about force the cash into your hand to make certain it becomes their treasure.

## **GETTING YOUR MERCHANDISE SET UP**

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After you have made a list of every single item you want to sell, the next step is to plan the best possible way of displaying and labeling your merchandise. You won't make much of an impression with buyers if you just dump everything into a heap. Being organized and displaying your wares in a manner that gives each item perceived value will put more cash in your pocket! Arrange each piece and make it stand out. Put your costume jewelry in a well lit area and on a piece of black velvet material. Make it glitter and look expensive.

Cover your display tables with colorful paper tablecloths. Be prepared for those sudden breezes by using thumb-tacks or masking tape to secure your table covers.

## **DECIDING ON YOUR GARAGE LAYOUT**

The best way to determine how your merchandise should be laid out, is to measure. Measure every display table you will be using, and mark the floor with chalk indicating where each will be located and what it will contain. Make the appropriate allowances for aisle access.

Now you should decide what items will go where. After you are satisfied with your layout, you can save a lot of time and energy by distributing copies for anyone who will be helping you set up. In that manner, each person will know exactly where to unpack merchandise that was previously gathered from various locations inside the house, etc. All of the cartons should have been placed in a designated area.

If you plan on selling coffee, sandwiches, etc., make sure you set up your lunch table and coffee pot near a electrical outlet. The last thing you want are extension cords stretching across the floor where someone could trip and hurt themselves. You should also designate an outlet for all shoppers who want to try out electrical items.

Make certain you have enough table space. If customers are forced to rummage through cartons filled with mixed merchandise, they may leave in frustration, and leave you an even bigger mess.

If you don't have enough tables to display your merchandise neatly, borrow some from your friends, relatives, neighbors, or your church. Every item should be easy to view

## **QUICK TIPS THAT WILL MAKE YOU MORE MONEY!**

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\* First impressions are lasting impressions. Remember, you are displaying someone else's "Treasure," not your "Junk."

\* Before you place merchandise in your yard, mow the grass. Line everything up in an orderly manner. Entice your customers by creating a show-room right on your front lawn.

\* Wash up any toys that look dirty and unsanitary.

\* Almost no-one will buy soiled and dirty clothing. Wash your sale clothing, place them on hangers, and mark sizes plainly on pieces of paper attached with stick pins.

\* Label and price everything.

\* Never use a pen or magic marker to write prices directly onto an item. That immediately reduces the value. Use masking tape, or self adhesive labels instead.

### **ADVERTISING YOUR GARAGE SALE**

You could have the best-organized garage sale in the world, offer the best deals and greatest bargains anywhere, and still not make any money if people didn't know about it. You must advertise!

Today, all major daily and weekly community newspapers have a separate "Garage Sale" section. Weekly shoppers and penny saver type publications will often run garage sale ads for \$1-\$2.

When you write your ad make certain that:

> You make your ad stand out with headings such as "Super Deals Garage Sale." "Bargain Hunter's Garage Sale," or something similar that makes a page-scanner stop in his tracks!

> Give your address, but if it's difficult to find just say, "Just off E-35 at Roselawn & follow the signs."

> If you are having a multi-family garage sale, say so. This will leave the impression you have a wide variety of items to sell. Also let collectors know if you have items of special interest to them.

> Indicate if poor weather will cancel the sale.

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