

GET TO THE POINT SPEECH

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Three Questions to Ask When Selling Furniture on Craigslist

Mr./Madame Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters, and esteemed guests:

I could not believe it when I got the email. My wife Kristen and I had been rearranging our apartment's furniture for the past few months in preparation for our baby – which, by the way, is due in less than two months! As part of this process, we were downsizing some of our furniture, and we had just posted our kitchen table for sale on Craigslist. We thought we were being a bit aggressive in the price we were asking, but since we were not in a rush, it seemed like a good idea to start high at first. So we created an ad and published it, and already, just *two hours later*, someone had inquired about it! Did we end up making the sale? Before I tell you the rest of the story, there are some important other details you need to learn first. Importantly, you are going to hear that there are three questions to ask yourself when posting furniture on Craigslist. They are: (1) Is the description detailed? (2) Are the images picture perfect? And, (3) Is the price right?

The first thing you need to ask yourself when making an ad for a piece of furniture on Craigslist is, "Is the description detailed?". This point is almost self-explanatory. Start with an informative title. In our case, it was "Wooden kitchen or dining table with six chairs". Since shoppers are searching the ads via your title, it is important to make this one-liner count. Within the actual listing, it is important to cover basics such as dimensions, defects, or different features that make it stand out. The more information you can give, the easier it will be for shoppers to make a decision about your furniture ahead of time. Giving details also promotes trust between you and the buyer, so they know exactly what they are getting, flaws and all.

A good description is important, but as the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." In light of this, the second thing you need to ask yourself is, "Is the picture perfect?". When I first took photographs of our kitchen table for our ad, I did a "quick and dirty" job using my iPad's camera, without paying much attention to the background or other details. This did *not* satisfy "management," however, and at Kristen's strong suggestion I decided to make a second attempt. Together we ended up cleaning the dining area and laying out six place settings with plates, cutlery, and wine glasses, to give a better feel for the table's size and feel. This time I took pictures using my Cannon digital SLR camera, whose lens gave a better perspective and focus to the shots. I even took an image of the manufacturer's brand that was stamped on the bottom of the table. It was well worth doing a better job; the new pictures definitely put a better face on the table and made it stand out.

Describing and depicting a piece of furniture well is important, but ultimately the item will not sell unless you nail the last question: "Is the price right?". Do some homework when specifying your preferred dollar amount and you will reap the dividends. First, if possible, price the item so that you can recover the money you

originally spent when you purchased it. Second, check on the prices of comparable items on Craigslist as well – you want your price to be similar. Third, build in a little margin so that as you negotiate the final price with the buyer, the ending value still satisfies you.

And that leads me to the end of my story. After a little negotiation, we settled on a final price for the table and chairs. It was about 11% lower than what I had listed it for, but we were satisfied because this amount was in the ballpark with other tables listed on Craigslist at that time. As we started loading the table into the buyer's pickup truck, memories began to flash through my mind. I could remember when Kristen and I first loaded this table into a similar pickup truck when we bought it on Craigslist. I remembered many conversations and dinners here, late night homework dates with Kristen, and even the hours I sat at this table writing my dissertation. Kristen and I were both sad to see it go. But as I watched the pickup truck pull away, I had a little smirk on my face. We had just sold our table and six chairs for 36% more than we had purchased it for four years ago!

Let me close by reminding you of the three questions that you have heard today. (1) Is the description detailed? (2) Are the images picture perfect? And, (3) Is the price right? If you can be mindful of these things when you list furniture on Craigslist, you will be more likely to have success in your sales too.

Mr./Madame Toastmaster.