

Notes from Used Video Game Store Interview

Replay'd

252 Brighton Ave, Allston, MA





How are you currently pricing your used items?

Manager: We are actually currently implementing an automatic price system, we have 2 stores with a 3rd one coming out. We have a set way of pricing things; it's difficult because the used [goods] market moves very quickly. We have to mix online with retail because some things will be impossible to sell retail but easy to sell online, for example kindles are really hard to sell in store. Some items are riskier than others in that they may have to take up shelf space for a long time before they sell, so this has to be taken into consideration when considering whether to buy an item. We don't sell PC games because they've moved to digital platforms and because serial keys and DRM make it difficult to know whether a second owner can play the game.

Can you tell me a little about your online store?

Manager: We have an ebay store to turn over items we can't sell in store (TVs) and specialty items, or broken goods like broken laptops.

Where are you finding prices for your items now?

Manager: We mostly go online, some things are really hard to find, like TVs, so we end up going to places like best buy to see how much similar sets go for.

What about for video games specifically?

Manager: Video games are easy to find, we almost exclusively use vgpc.com, and we use ebay and gamestop to double-check. If the game is still in production, then our competitors are people like best buy and gamestop, so we check against their prices. If the game is retro then we need to delve deeper to find the price point.

Could you see the use in an application that automatically finds prices for video games?

[The manager crossed his arms, he says it would be useful but body language wise he's not interested in this idea]

Manager: Yea I could, there was actually a co-operation with a consulting company and they developed something called quickapp which would help us put our games up really quickly on ebay and craigslist etc. It could be useful if it checked a variety of websites and found the prices, but if it just checked amazon, ebay etc. then it wouldn't be. I just don't know if it would be any faster. Also, sometimes if the cover is intact there's a barcode which we can directly scan and find the item for.

[Summary: He's skeptical that it would help a lot]

Is there any other activities that are particularly annoying or time consuming?

Manager: It takes a lot of time to test items (like video games) and we have a standard procedure for doing that, but there's not really any way to automate that. Something really annoying is that because you're in the used electronics business, people think they can just walk all over you. People don't really understand this market. Like we also do repairs, and some people come in with a phone that's damaged because they ran over it with their car, and they fill out the paperwork, but then they're still really upset when we're unable to fix it. They'll blame and get angry.

So each item that you buy is stored in your inventory?

Manager: We do have an inventory, and each item goes into our system, and I often schedule price checks for each item. So if an item sits on a shelf for 2 weeks, then I'll schedule a price check so that we can lower the price etc. This depends on the item, so if the item is one that we expect slower turn over then we won't schedule price checks as frequently.

Manager: Actually I just realized something that's really annoying and takes up tons of time. The Boston police department requires that anything we buy with a serial # has government ID of the seller, which is the law. We then have to fill out a form and give it to the police, but this is all hand-written and we have to mail with postage. It takes up tons of time and is something I would be really interested in automating. California has a system in which second hand dealers will put this information in online and not deal with hand-written forms. If there was a system we could enter in the serial # information etc. and then the police department could flag it automatically and tell us not to buy an item because it was stolen, that would be good. Items with serial #s generally are things like phones, game consoles, GPS. As it is the police always come in and ask questions etc.