

Amazon infiltrated eBay's email system to poach top sellers in 'global conspiracy': Lawsuit

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For three years Amazon has been illegally infiltrating an internal email system at e-commerce rival eBay, seeking to hide its tracks as it tried to poach top sellers, a new lawsuit claims.

"Amazon's clandestine efforts have borne fruit. Its representatives have discussed the success of their scheme with eBay [seller](#) prospects," said the lawsuit by San Jose's eBay, one Amazon's chief competitors, though a fraction of its size.

Seattle-based Amazon did not immediately respond to a request for comment on eBay's claims.

The San Jose firm, valued at \$31 billion to Amazon's \$864 billion, alleged that dozens of Amazon operatives set up fraudulent accounts in eBay's internal email system for sellers, and then contacted eBay's "high value" vendors in order to get them to peddle their wares on Amazon.

"One Seattle-based Amazon representative opened three accounts in the course of a few weeks, sending solicitation emails to eBay sellers within minutes of opening each separate account," said the lawsuit, filed Wednesday in Santa Clara County Superior Court.

"Others waited less than five minutes between opening an account and sending solicitation messages.

"Understanding that they were breaking the rules, Amazon reps engaged in systematic efforts to circumvent eBay's detection tools, finding creative ways to share their contact information with eBay sellers. These anti-detection measures often took the form of spelling out non-word portions of email addresses and using punctuation and other words to break up telephone numbers."

When approaching eBay vendors via the email system, Amazon's operatives would identify themselves as Amazon representatives, and in some cases acknowledge the sneaky tactics, according to the lawsuit.

"Ebay does scan for key terms and they don't exactly like us poking around," one Amazon rep allegedly said in a message to an eBay seller. "Honestly the easiest way to communicate about this would be on the phone."

The lawsuit contained alleged examples of Amazon's under-the-radar pitches, such as this one:

"Hi there, Hope you are well!" the message began. "I manage the apparel category at Amazon and came across you guys with a really cool selection. I was curious to see – have you looked at selling on Amazon? Because this is a personal invite, I could get you up and running quickly, opening you up to a whole new audience for you guys."

Amazon's eBay intrusion was a "global conspiracy" that involved Amazon reps in the U.S., the U.K., France, Spain, Italy, Australia and Singapore, all using similar tactics to solicit sellers and evade

detection, the lawsuit claimed.

The [lawsuit](#) seeks a court order barring Amazon from getting into eBay's systems, restitution to eBay of Amazon's alleged "unlawful proceeds," plus unspecified damages.

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