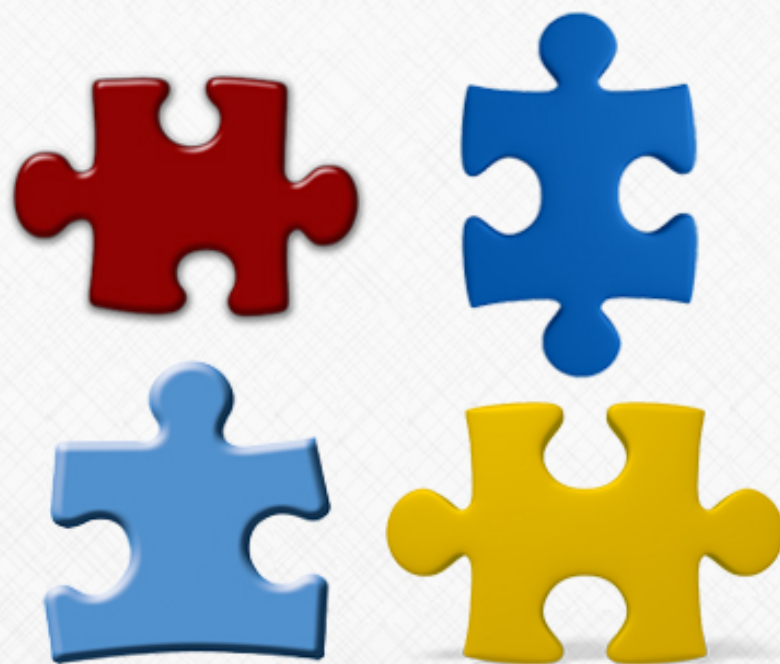


THE RESELLER'S GUIDE TO

PUZZLE PROFITS



STEPHEN SMOTHERMAN

The Reseller's Guide to Puzzle Profits

How to Profit from New & Used Puzzles

STEPHEN SMOTHERMAN

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The perfect board game pairing

When you're out sourcing board games and other toys, what is the one thing you almost always see right next to board games? Puzzles! It doesn't matter if you are sourcing at a retail store, a thrift store, or a toy store, you will almost always find puzzles.

Selling puzzles online provides another opportunity for you to make some good money while sourcing retail, garage sales, and thrift stores.



Just like board games, people all over the world enjoy sitting down with a good puzzle to relax or take their mind off whatever is going on in their lives. While board games usually need at least two people to play, an individual can work on and complete puzzles on their own.

Plenty of people don't realize the profit potential that puzzles can produce (I did all those p's on purpose – I'm sorry). In this mini-guide, I'll walk you through how to find profitable puzzles to sell on both Amazon and eBay. I'll share with you my methods of knowing which puzzles are worth your time and which puzzles you need to ignore.

Which puzzles sell for the most profits?

When you're out sourcing puzzles, it's a good idea to look for puzzles that are based on something that is popular. This includes TV shows, movies, children's characters, music artists, actors, etc. Once you start scanning a lot of puzzles, you will come across some trends. You will see that some puzzle makers usually don't have profitable puzzles for resale, but others, like Ravensburger, can produce many high dollar puzzles. When you're first

starting out sourcing used puzzles it's a good idea to scan everything. Scan everything until you start to become comfortable with what sells and what is not worth your time.

Vintage puzzles

Vintage puzzles are mostly found at thrift stores, garage sales, and estate sales and can be sold for some amazing profits. These puzzles might sell better on eBay than on Amazon, but double check both platforms to see which will sell the best for you. Most people who are buying high-dollar vintage puzzles will be shopping on eBay. They want to see multiple pictures of exactly what they are purchasing, and Amazon only allows pictures that are representative of new items. The key with vintage puzzles is you want to make sure all of the pieces are there. The last thing you want is a frustrated customer who gets all excited to build a puzzle, only to find that a piece is missing after they have spent hours working on that puzzle.

Selling used puzzles on Amazon or eBay could potentially be a profitable addition to your reselling business. Most people will look at used puzzles and think too much time is involved and it's not worth the pay out, but when you know what to look for, you know what to buy, and you know the shortcuts you can take, you can make selling used puzzles very profitable.

Chapter 2 – Sourcing Puzzles

Where to find puzzles

I have found puzzles at garage sales, thrift stores, retail stores, and online stores. You can also find puzzles on eBay, Craigslist, Freecycle, and Facebook buy/sell/trade groups. If you're already looking for board games, you'll almost always find puzzles for sale in the same general area.

Sourcing for brand new puzzles

Finding brand new high profit puzzles is very similar to finding new board games. If the puzzle is still factory sealed, then it's a good chance that it's actually still in new condition. Make sure the box is in good shape and that there are no big tears in the shrink-wrap. Even if the puzzle is still factory sealed, if the actual box is torn, cut, ripped, or damaged in any way, then it's best to sell the puzzle as "collectible-like new."

Sourcing used (collectible) puzzles

Obviously, selling new puzzles is a lot easier than selling used (collectible) puzzles, but selling used puzzles can still be very profitable and worth your time.

If you buy a puzzle, you must double check that the puzzle has 100% of the pieces. It's not only against Amazon's guidelines to sell an incomplete puzzle, but it's also a very fast way to earn negative feedback.

Always check to make sure all of the puzzle pieces are there. Even if the lady running the garage sale says all the puzzles are complete, double check. Even if your sweet old granny told you all of the pieces are there, double check. Even if you own the puzzle yourself and completed it two years ago, double check. Puzzle pieces are so small, and losing them is incredibly easy.

How to haggle down puzzle prices

Whether you are at a garage sale or thrift store, you have a great opportunity

to get your used puzzles at even cheaper prices.

The fact that a used puzzle box has been opened gives you the perfect opportunity to haggle down the asking price. No matter what the puzzle is priced, if you find a good puzzle, ask the person selling the puzzle if they know if all the pieces are there or not. No matter if they say yes or no, then you follow up with offering 50% of their asking price. You could say, "Since I'm not so sure that all of the puzzle pieces are there, would you take \$2 instead of \$4?" Having the \$2 out in your hand is also a good tactic, as the person selling the puzzle automatically sees that money as theirs and will usually be happy to trade the puzzle for the \$2 in cash. The same goes for a puzzle priced \$2.... Ask to buy it for \$1.

This haggle tip works best at garage sales, but also can work well with thrift stores too. Ask to speak to a manager of the thrift store and offer 50% of their asking price for the used puzzles. If the manager is smart, then they will almost always take that deal. They have so much stuff coming in through their donation door that they would be happy to move a lot of puzzles off their shelves.

Using this tactic of saying "I'm not sure all the pieces are there" is not a lie or manipulation. It is the truth. You, in fact, don't know if all the puzzle pieces are there, and you are taking a risk by buying this puzzle with the possibility of having missing pieces. With board games, it's easy to replace a missing piece, but with puzzles, if it's not complete, it's trash. So, you really are taking a risk, but when you pick the right puzzles, most of the time you'll find that all of the pieces are there.

When you are at a retail store sourcing brand new puzzles, it's sometimes possible to get the price lowered by bundling a lot of puzzles together. This is more of a possibility with puzzles on clearance, but it's always worth asking when it's a full price as well. My wife has been able to get a full cart of puzzles and board games at a percentage off simply by talking with the store manager.



If you find a lot of puzzles on clearance, you can ask the retail store manager for an additional percentage off because you are buying so many. Tell the

store manager you want to help them clear up some shelf space and you want to get all these puzzles, but that you'd definitely buy more of them if they are all 50% the current clearance price. It's not guaranteed that you will get the extra discount, but it never hurts to ask. Some of the time, you will get a yes, and that will end up as more profits in your pocket!

Retail store puzzle sourcing

I have found puzzles at good prices (and often times at clearance prices) at stores like Walmart, Target, Tuesday Morning, Big Lots, Barnes & Noble, TJ Maxx, and Marshalls. These stores have provided good opportunities to find puzzles in new condition that sell well on Amazon. As with other toys, there are times where a certain puzzle in a series is a short print (meaning: there are not as many of that particular puzzle printed as the other in the series). It might surprise you that if you go to Walmart, Target, or other stores and scan every puzzle in the section, you might find many puzzles that are good for selling Amazon. Once you find the puzzles that are worth reselling, you could try and source for that exact puzzle at every Walmart or Target in your area if you live in a larger sized city.

Are puzzle sets worth buying?

Some puzzle boxes contain multiple puzzles (like one box that includes 4 different 100-piece puzzles along the same theme). Some of these are worth trying to see if all the puzzle pieces are there but unless the sales rank and ROI is really amazing, then I usually pass on the multiple puzzle boxes. There are just too many opportunities for a missing piece and I would rather just sell one puzzle set most of time.

Thoughts on puzzle conditions

Only buy used puzzles that have boxes that are still in very good condition. Unless it's a vintage puzzle, most people buying used puzzles will want a puzzle box that is in at least very good condition. Unless extremely rare, I don't think most people will buy a puzzle that is in good condition. The bulk of the used puzzles that are being sold online will be in either like new or very good condition. So be sure that the box you purchase is also in very good condition. Again, a vintage puzzle will be exempt from these guidelines.

Chapter 3 – Prepping Puzzles to be Sold

Why you don't need to count the pieces

Most people are scared away from selling used puzzles because they think they have to count all of the puzzle pieces to make sure the puzzle is complete, or they need to spend all of their time actually making the puzzle just to make sure the set is complete. The truth is that you don't have to do either one of those actions in order to make sure the puzzle has 100% of its pieces.



If you decide to count the puzzle pieces, then you are not only wasting time, but you also won't be able to accurately know if the puzzle has all of its pieces.

When a puzzle box states it contains 500 pieces, almost 100% of the time it will actually not contain exactly 500 pieces. Sometimes it will contain 510 pieces or 504 pieces or 496 pieces... But it almost never contains exactly 500 pieces.

The only time that the number on the box actually matches the number of pieces in the box are when it's a children's puzzle that contains 8, 16, 24, etc. pieces.

So if you find a 250 piece collectible puzzle that you think is worth reselling, it's not necessary to count every single one of the pieces in the puzzle box.

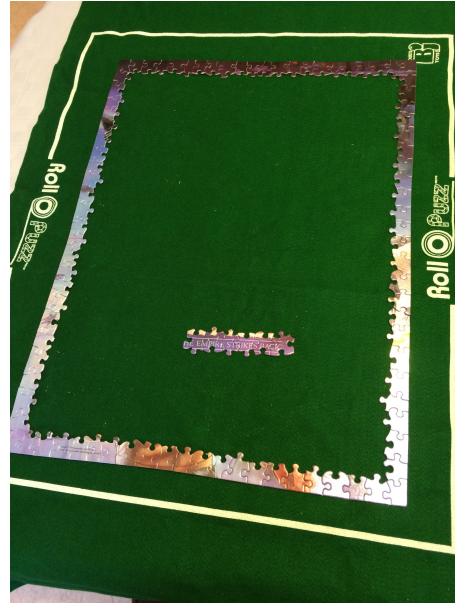
Why you don't need to complete 100% of the puzzle

Just like counting the puzzles pieces, you also don't need to make the complete puzzle in order to make sure all of the pieces are present. Sure, if you wanted to spend the time to make the complete puzzle, you are more than welcome to, but it's not necessary. You don't need to completely make the whole puzzle because (for most puzzles) there is a shortcut that will help save you a ton of time.

A quick trick to see if all the puzzle pieces are there

Here is an easy trick that will only take you about 5 to 10 minutes (depending on the size of the puzzle) to see if every puzzle piece is present.

1. Go through the puzzle box and remove all of the border pieces.
2. Take a few minutes and build the border on a flat surface.
3. If there is a border piece missing, then obviously this is an incomplete puzzle. If you bought it at a thrift store, try to return it and get your money back. Otherwise, put it in your recycling bin.
4. If the border is complete, then you can do a little math equation to find out the exact number of pieces in the rest of the puzzle.



Note: this math equation only works for puzzles that are on a grid pattern.

This means that there are the same number of puzzle pieces on each line of the puzzle. This equation will not work on puzzles that contain strangely sized puzzle pieces, 3-D puzzle pieces, etc.

A = the number of puzzle pieces on the top or bottom row

B = the number of puzzle pieces on the far left or right column

$(A - 2) \times (B - 2)$ = The number of remaining pieces in the puzzle.

5. Count the remaining puzzle pieces and see if it's the same number as you found in step 4. If it is, then you have a complete puzzle.

Examples of this easy trick in action

Let's see this trick in action on a small scale:

I find a vintage Scooby Doo puzzle from the early 1980's that looks like it will sell on eBay for a great ROI. The puzzle box says that it is a 50-piece puzzle. Now, I could decide to count out the pieces as 50 is not a big number, but that would be a mistake. I'll tell you why in a minute.

So, I make the border of the Scooby Doo puzzle and find that there are 7 pieces on the top row and 7 pieces on the left column. Here are the numbers plugged into the math equation:

$$(7 - 2) \times (7 - 2) \\ (5) \times (5) = 25 \text{ remaining pieces}$$

I count the remaining pieces and see that there are, indeed, 25 pieces left, so I know that this puzzle is complete.

Now, if I had simply counted the puzzle pieces of this “50-piece puzzle,” I would have only counted 49 and might have assumed that there was a piece missing. I would have thrown away or recycled a puzzle that was actually complete! See, the puzzle was a 7 by 7 puzzle, so even though the puzzle box says it’s a 50 piece puzzle, it was really only 49. So, again, just counting the pieces you’re not always 100% certain to know if the puzzle is complete.

Let’s see this trick on a larger scale.

I find a really awesome 1000-piece Peanuts Charlie Brown Christmas puzzle for only \$1 at a garage sale. The nice lady says that all of the pieces are there, but I want to be 100% sure. So when I get home, I find a flat surface and open up the box. I pull out all of the border pieces and make the border. After I complete the border, I do my math trick. I see that there 38 pieces on the top row, and 27 pieces on the far left column. I plug those numbers into my math equation:

$$(38 - 2) \times (27 - 2) \\ (36) \times (25) = 900 \text{ remaining pieces}$$

I count the remaining pieces, and find that I do have 900 pieces left. Now, counting out 900 puzzle pieces can take up some time, but it’s soooooooooooooo much faster than actually creating the entire puzzle yourself.

Bonus Tip: when you count out a large number of pieces, be sure to group them together in stacks of 10 or 25. That way, if you lose count, you don’t have to completely start over. You can just pick back up where your last stack left off.

Once you know your used puzzle is complete

Too many people just put the puzzle pieces back in the box and forget a very important step. Depending on the size of the puzzle, pick an appropriate size Ziploc bag and put all of the puzzle pieces inside the Ziploc bag. Then put that bag in the original box.

Just like board games, I would not tape a puzzle box closed. The tape could potentially tear the puzzle box. Many puzzle customers like to store all of their puzzles in the original box, and some people even like to display their boxes. Just like board games, I highly recommend shrink-wrapping your puzzles before sending them to an FBA warehouse or to the customer. If you don't have shrink-wrap, an impulse sealer, or a heat gun to seal your collectible puzzles, then poly bags will do nicely as well.

The bottom line is this: You want the final owner of the puzzle to never doubt for a moment that the puzzle is complete. Even the possibility of a missing piece takes most of the fun out of making a puzzle. No one ever wants to make a puzzle and find out there are a piece or two missing. So, you don't even want a hint of that possibility for your customer. Putting all of the pieces in a Ziploc bag, and shrink-wrapping or poly bagging the puzzle box is a great way to help the customer feel good about starting and completing their puzzle.

Chapter 4 - Selling Puzzles for High Profits

Selling on Amazon

When selling a new puzzle, I always put in the condition notes that the item is brand new, but a used (collectible) puzzle needs more to help you get the sale.

When you write your condition notes on Amazon, you want to stand out from all of the competition. I usually write up my used (collectible) puzzle condition notes like this:

“All puzzle pieces are included and have been accounted for. This puzzle is guaranteed to have every piece of the puzzle. The puzzle pieces have been placed in a Ziploc bag inside its original box. Puzzle box is in very good condition, and box has been shrink-wrapped to ensure all of the pieces remain in the box during shipment and storage. Overall, the puzzle is complete and in very good condition.”

You might think that the above is going overboard, but I’ve noticed that the more I write in my condition notes, the more likely I’ll get the sale. Think about it... which used puzzle would you pick to buy?

Cost \$19.99 with the above detailed italicized condition notes.

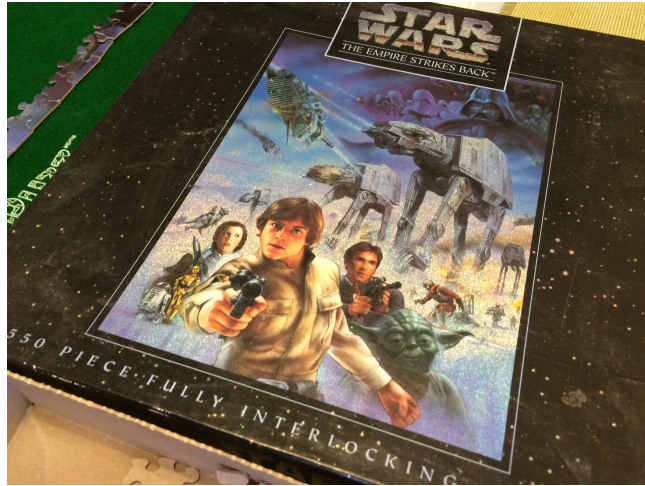
Cost \$17.99 with the condition notes that only state “very good.”

For me, I’d want a guarantee that I’m getting all of the pieces. It’s also more likely that you’ll be able to sell your used puzzles for more profit because of your detailed item description. For many, those \$2 are worth it for the peace of mind knowing they are buying a puzzle that has been counted and is guaranteed to be complete.

Selling on eBay

I’m going to talk about vintage puzzles on eBay because I believe that if a puzzle is from recent production, then you can get higher profits by selling it on Amazon. When listing a vintage puzzle on eBay, it’s important to take as many pictures from as many angles as you can of both the puzzle and the box. If there any puzzle pieces that are bent, then you want to make sure you

include a photo of the bent puzzle piece so the eBay customer knows exactly what they are getting. You do not want to try and trick a customer into thinking they are getting a near perfect puzzle when in fact, upon closer review, the puzzle pieces are damaged. Some buyers are OK with damaged puzzle pieces as long as they know what to expect. I've sold some vintage Charlie Brown Peanuts puzzles as well as some vintage Star Wars puzzles that were not in near perfect condition at all. But the buyer read my item description and knew exactly what they were getting.



Chapter 5 - Bonus tips & tricks

Use a “Stow and Go” puzzle mat – One reason some people might not want to sell used puzzles is that they have to use up their table or floor space for making the border of the puzzle. When you use a puzzle mat, that excuse is gone. All you need to do is roll out the puzzle mat, work on the puzzle, and roll it up when you need a break or need the table for dinner time. Once dinner is over, you can roll the mat back out and continue where you left off. I use a puzzle mat and it has helped out a lot. You can find a good puzzle mat by going to <http://amzn.to/1ih29EX> and picking which puzzle mat you want.



Use a “Sort and Go” puzzle sorter. This helps if you want to sort out all of the colors in different sections to make completing the border of the puzzle (or the whole puzzle, if you want to) much faster and easier. You can find good puzzle sorters on Amazon at <http://amzn.to/1Ljhw2B>.



Store used puzzles in Ziploc bags – Some people, when they are done counting the puzzle pieces, simply put the puzzle pieces back in the original box, but it's much better to first put the pieces in a Ziploc bag and then into the puzzle box. This means that the puzzle is pretty much guaranteed not to lose a piece from when you count the puzzle to when you sell the puzzle. If you are selling the puzzles via FBA, then if a warehouse worker drops the puzzle box, they won't lose a piece, as they are all safely inside the Ziploc bag.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

While selling used (collectible) puzzles does take more time and energy than selling brand new ones, the potential for good profits are definitely there. Over time, your skills for how to process puzzles will improve, and the time it will take for you to make sure all of the pieces are there will become shorter and shorter.

If you find some awesome puzzles, I'd love to hear about it. Send me an email at stephen@fulltimefba.com and let me know about your awesome find. I look forward to hearing about your puzzle successes!