MARKETING WITH CRAIGSLIST

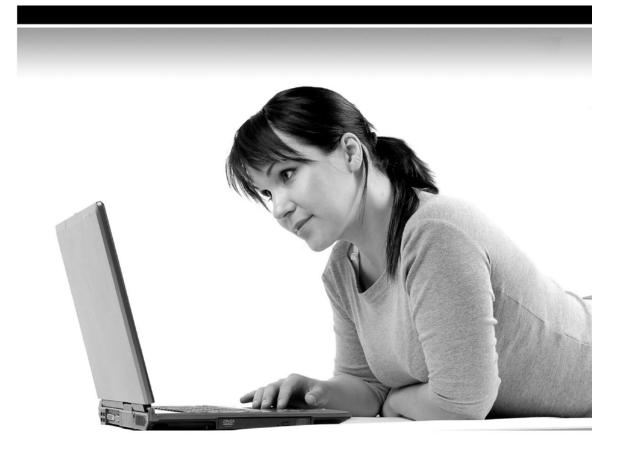


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SECTION ONE: MAKING MONEY WITH CRAIGSLIST

So you want to make money with Craigslist? The good news and the bad news, is that Craigslist is a free community resource. The good news is that it's free, except in certain categories, such as employment opportunities and even then they only charge a fee in certain cities. The bad news is also that it is free. Free, or at least nonprofit, is part of the Craigslist philosophy. You could say that it is a professionally run, amateur operation. A lot of people take that as a negative and think it means they can not make money on Craigslist. They are wrong, but that's OK because it just leaves less competition for people like you, the ones who know the real story.

PROFESSIONAL SELLERS NOT WELCOME

Unlike eBay, for example, Craigslist does not try to accommodate professional sellers. Sites like eBay are in business to make a profit. They base the bulk of their business on professional sellers who make their living primarily on eBay. Craigslist is not like that. It is first and foremost a community based resource. This is why they discourage people from listing ads in more than one city or area.

Not only does Craigslist refuse to accommodate professionals sellers, but they do all they can to discourage professionals sellers. Since Craigslist is a free site and a community resource, every self styled anti-capitalist living in their parent's basement, with two months, and access to a computer, decides that they are a volunteer administrator for Craigslist.

This means that they see themselves as censors, petty dictators who can choose what deserves to be on Craigslist and what doesn't. If they don't like your ads, and suspect you might actually be making money, they will flag your ads and mark them at for removal. We will get into this later. For now, just accept the idea that that this is another plus not a minus, because again it helps thin out the competition and make it easier for those of us who do know how to work Craigslist. The trick is that you don't want to appear like a professional seller when you advertise on Craigslist. You want to sound like some guy or woman who just emptied their garage, or is moving and needs to get rid of things.

THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT WHAT YOU WILL SELL

This means first of all, that you have to think about what you are offering for sale. Craigslist is usually not a place to offer brand new items for sale. First of all, this will instantly expose you as a dirty low-down profit-making dealer, rather than just an innocent party selling something you don't need. Secondly, people looking on Craigslist tend to be price-conscious bargain hunters. Unless you can offer your brand new items at discount prices, the chances are that would have and would have they won't sell any way.

So, before you can successfully market on Craigslist, you have to understand the Craigslist culture and how it works. You're dealing with people who think of Craigslist more as a giant electronic community bulletin board, or swap meet, than a place to do business. This means that you don't want to come off as being too professional. You want well written ads, so that you can attract buyers, but you don't want to make it seem as if this is your business.

It's a tricky game to play, but it can be well worth it. Craigslist is not only free, but it has a tremendous reach, with millions of viewers worldwide. If you spend a little time and learn about Craigslist, it can pay off for you in a big way. That's what this manual is about.

LEARN TO POST MULTIPLE ADS

If you post one successful ad, you will make some money. If you post two successful ads, you will not necessarily make twice as much money, but you will certainly make more than you will with just one ad. The problem is that Craigslist actively discourages the practice of posting multiple ads and they will flag your ads and remove them. So how do you get around this? Very simply.

You just write multiple ads, instead of trying to place multiple copies of the same ad. Yes, it forces you to get a bit more creative. It forces you to really think about what you are trying to sell and what you can say about it.

Maybe each ad can feature a different benefit that your product or service offers. The more benefits you can come up with, the more ads you can write. You can place them on Craigslist in different cities and/or different categories on Craigslist. This will greatly increase your chances of making sales.

PROFIT FROM PRICE DIFFERENCES IN DIFFERENT PLACES

It can also increase your chances to make profits. If you can buy things cheaply in one city and sell for more money in another city, this is an excellent way of using the world-wide reach of Craigslist. It is another way of getting paid for developing specialized expertise.

Whatever you are planning to buy and sell on Craigslist, research the average prices in different areas. Find out what the differences are between different areas and what kind of profits you might be able to make after deducting shipping costs. You may find that it's not worth it and you're better off just dealing locally, but you may find that there's good money to be made just buying items in one part of the country, or even one part of the world and then selling them somewhere else.

PROFESSIONAL AD WRITING AND PLACEMENT

There are companies that will write and place Craigslist ads for you in multiple cities. Of course this service is not free. Whether it's worth it, is something you have to research and decide for yourself. Again, it's a numbers game. Ask yourself what the service will cost and what you expect to get back in terms of increased sales and increased profits. If the numbers add up, then it's worth it. If the numbers don't add up, then don't do it.

Make sure to ask for references. You want proof of ads they have placed successfully and you want to see numbers that show how those ads paid off. You'll also want proof that their ads do not get flagged regularly and removed from Craigslist.

SECTION TWO: WHAT TO SELL ON CRAIGSLIST TO MAKE MONEY

So what do you sell on Craigslist to make money? The obvious answer is that used goods work best. Ideally, you want to deal in something that you know about, that you enjoy dealing with and that you know more about than most people. This way, you can buy low, sell high, and make a profit.

FINDING CHEAP MERCHANDISE TO RESELL

Of course, this is the goal of every business, but if you are going to deal on Craigslist, there is a definite way to do it. First of all, you look for people who need to get rid of things yesterday, either because they need the money desperately, because they're moving, or because they just plain want to get rid of it. These are the people who are ready to deal and sell you things for less than they are worth.

Most of them will be offended if they think that you are taking advantage of their situation and will resell their items for a profit, but there is no reason for them to know this anyway. It is not their business what you do with the items once you pay for them, but all the same, it is generally best to give the impression that you intend to keep the items for yourself and your own use. The fact that you are actually in business is your own business and no one else's. There is little or nothing to gain from bragging about it.

People are funny about things like that. If you're running a store and selling used goods, everyone expects you to make a profit. Most people won't question that or bother worrying about how much you're making. But online sales, particularly on sites like Craigslist, are different. You have to understand the difference, respect it and work with it, if you want to make money.

FIND YOUR AREA OF EXPERTISE

The more expertise you have with a particular item, or type of item, the better your chances of making money on Craigslist. It is particularly easy to make money if you know how to repair and restore used items that have fallen on hard times. Often the sellers will have no idea how to repair or restore an item and they will have no idea how much it is worth once it is repaired and/or restored. They just want to get rid of junk.

For example, let's say you know something about computers. Most people don't. If their computer stops working, they either call a repair person, or they go out and buy a brand new computer and sell the old one for whatever they can get, or even give it away. Many times, these computers can be repaired easily and resold for a good profit, if you know what you are doing.

The same principle can be applied to musical instruments and other items. The more you know, the more you make. It's not just a matter of knowing how to repair items, or restore them, it's knowing what things are really worth, so you know a real bargain when you see one and you know how much you can resell it for. This is why you want to start with something that you like, something that you won't mind spending time researching and learning about until you become a legitimate expert.

FIND HIGH TICKET ITEMS WITH A BIG MARKUP

Since Craigslist is not the place to advertise yourself as a professional seller, it's hard to make money by selling a lot of items and making just a small profit on each one. You need to find relatively high ticket items, with a good markup, so you don't have to make your money on volume.

Of course the drawback to this is that Craigslist is a community resource, not a place to buy and sell high-end items. You're not going to find multi-million dollar artworks or jewelry for sale on Craigslist, but you will find items where you can make a couple of hundred of dollars or more on each transaction and some items like cars where you could make thousands on each transaction. These are the types of items that you want to sell.

That means things like cars, computers, cars, other electronics, furniture, etc., anything that sells for a relatively high amount of money and offers a chance to make a decent profit on each transaction. Check the ads. See what is selling and what it is selling for. See what opportunities are out there and how you can best take advantage of them.

BECOME A DEAL BROKER

Some people make a good living just brokering deals, without even getting directly involved or putting up any of their own money They know how to get buyers and sellers together and they get well paid for it.

To do this successfully, you have to deal in something relatively rare and in demand and/or be able to find it at an extraordinarily low price, one that's low enough to allow you to tack on your commission.

There is no end to the creative ways that you can make a living with Craigslist. The only limit is your own creativity. Craigslist is a tremendous resource and it's free! It reaches millions of people all over the world. If you learn to use it properly, you can make big money. Many people do.

eBay bought 25% of Craigslist because they saw the profit potential. In many markets, Craigslist has killed the market for local newspaper classified advertising. It is a powerful marketing force if you can find the right products and the right approach to use.

SELL THINGS PEOPLE ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT

There are things that people need and then there are things that people flat out want and will go all out to get. Those are the things that people will pay top dollar for and so those are the things you want to sell on Craigslist. Again, start with something that you enjoy, something that you are excited about and then figure out how to write ads that will spread that excitement to other people and you will make a fine living.

One simple secret is to look in the wanted section. This is where people advertise for things they want to buy, rather than things they want to sell. Many times they will specify a maximum price they are willing to pay and all you have to do is find that item for less than you know they're willing to pay and you can pocket the difference. For example, let's say someone is willing to pay up to \$500.00 for any specific musical instrument, or a computer, or other type of electronics.

By using your knowledge of Craigslist and how to shop the difference cities, you find the item they are looking for, for \$350.00 or less. You can then broker the transaction and take a finder's fee for getting the buyer and seller together, or you can buy the item for \$350.00 and resell it instantly for \$500.00. This is a relatively easy way to make \$150.00.

SECTION THREE: MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME AND EXPERTISE

One important thing to remember is that you have to figure in the cost of your time, how long it's going to take you to buy the item and pick it up, how long it's going to take you to repair and/or restore it and how long it's going to take to resell it. You need to know how much you're going to make on an item and how much time you'll have to put in, before you decide if it is worth buying, or even brokering, with none of your own money involved.

SET A MINIMUM PRICE ON YOUR TIME

When you're selling things on Craigslist, you're selling your time and expertise. If people can easily find what you're selling on their own, at the same price or a lower price, then they don't need you. They are paying for your time. You are spending the time researching, Craigslist that most buyers don't want to spend. By marking up the price of what ever you buy and resell, you're paying yourself your time and research efforts. Therefore, you want to make the most of your time and skills. Set a minimum hourly, daily, and/or weekly wage for yourself. Measure every potential deal against this minimum standard.

In other words, let's say that you are willing to work for \$20.00 an hour. Any time that you consider buying something to resell it, or brokering an item, just ask yourself if you will make it least \$20.00 an hour on the transaction. If the answer is yes, then go and buy the item, or try to broker it. If the answer is no, then just pass on the item and wait for something else to come along that will be more profitable.

THE GOOD DEALS HAVE TO PAY FOR THE NON-DEALS

Also, remember that you have to count the time that you spent looking for items and turning down the deals that you don't want. This means that you actually have to make more than \$20.00 an hour on the items you do buy and resell and the ones you broker.

Depending on where you live, what you plan to sell on Craigslist and how much expertise you have, \$20.00 an hour, may not be realistic. You may have to settle for less. On the other hand, \$20.00 an hour maybe unrealistically low. You may be able to make quite a bit more. There are people that make hundreds of dollars an hour buying and selling on Craigslist, but they have it down to a system, where they use their time efficiently and don't waste any of it.

BUY THINGS YOU CAN STORE AND RESELL

This is what you have to do. If you want to make a business of buying and selling things on Craigslist, then you have to think of it like a business. Is it going to be practical for you to pick up and store the things you intend to resell? For example, you may play the piano. You may love pianos. You may think that you know enough about pianos to make money buying and reselling them, but how practical is this?

Do you have a truck to pick up the pianos? Do you have a crew to help you? Do you have a place to store pianos until you can get them resold? And are you willing to deliver the pianos after you've resold them, since most buyers probably will not be prepared to pick it up themselves and will expect it to be delivered? Is this the best use of your time?

If you can make more than \$20.00 an hour doing the deliveries and you don't mind doing that kind of work, or you can hire someone else to do it, then the answer may be yes, but the chances are that you would be better off sticking to smaller items, smaller musical instruments for example, that you can either ship or have the buyers come and pick up.

SECTION FOUR: WRITING THE RIGHT ADS FOR CRAIGSLIST

If you are trying to wheel and deal on CRAIGSLIST and make money, you'll quickly learn the truth of the old statement that time is money and if you want to make money buying and selling things on Craigslist, then you'll have to learn how to avoid the time wasters. You have a business to run and you want to run it efficiently. You have a lot of items to sell. They're buying one item and as far as they're concerned, they have all the time in the world to make up their mind. They are in no hurry. It's a hobby to them.

TARGET THE PEOPLE YOU WANT TO SELL TO

These are not the people you want to deal with. You want to deal with people who know that they want to buy what you want to sell. The question is, how do you find those people? And the answer is, you find them by wording your ads right. Make it clear in your ad that you have something to sell quickly and at what you consider a rock bottom price.

PHRASES TO INCLUDE

You want to include phrases like "serious buyers only", "cash only, no checks or credit cards" AND "No trades" in your ads. This lets people know right away that you don't want to waste time and you want to get your items sold quickly and for a definite price.

PHRASES TO AVOID

You want to avoid phrases like "Or best offer and "call any time". You don't want to be too rigid and inflexible, but you don't want to be too accommodating either. You don't want to seem desperate or even anxious. You always want to retain the upper hand in the negotiations, so you want to make it seem as if you only want to sell if you get your price and terms and if it's convenient for you.

Saying that you will accept the best offer that comes along, is just asking people to make lowball offers, rather than paying what you're asking. It's basically telling people that they would be foolish to pay what you're asking without trying to bargain. This costs you time and it costs you money, so why would you want to do it? Set a realistic price and then stick to it, least initially.

If people like what you're selling, but don't like the price, then let them make you an offer. Then you can think about it. You can always expect their offer if you decide that's the best you are going to get. You can always lower the price if the item is not selling, but to put "best offer" in your ad, is to admit defeat, before you even try to sell anything.

Telling people that they can call you at any time, gives the idea that your time is not valuable. Set definite times of the day when people can call. During those hours, you should be expecting calls. People don't have to know that those are your business hours.

Let them think that you have another job, or you go to school, or you have something that occupies most of your time and you only have a limited amount of time to devote to selling whatever it is that you have advertised. If it becomes more trouble than it's worth, you will just give up. Therefore, if they want to buy whatever it is you're selling, then they have to accommodate you and your time schedule.

Let people know in your ad, that you only accept cash. This eliminates all kinds of problems. First of all, there are people out there who are flat out dishonest. They will write you a bad check, or they will write you a good check and then stop payment. Even if the check is good, you still have to go to the bank to deposit or cash it and that takes valuable time, so cash is just easier to deal with.

It also involves a psychological commitment on the part of the buyer. Once they've gone to the bank and withdrawn cash, they are at least partially committed to buying whatever you have to sell. They're much less likely to change their minds, then they are if they know they can just whip out a checkbook at the last minute if they decide to go ahead and make the purchase.

GIVE A PHONE NUMBER, NOT AN EMAIL ADDRESS

For many people, making a phone call is also a kind of psychological commitment. For some reason, people are much more likely to waste time in an e-mail, than a phone call. Some people will take endless time emailing back and forth, wanting details, etc. it's much easier to weed out time wasters on the phone and set up an appointment for people to come and see the items you have for sale.

If you don't want to give out your home phone, then you may want to get a cheap cell phone with a prepaid calling card, just to use for your business. It can save you a lot of time and hassle, particularly if you intend to do this on a regular basis.

MAKE YOUR ADS AS CLEAR AS POSSIBLE

If you don't want other people wasting your time, then do not waste their time. Make sure that your ads are clear and easily readable. Make sure that they give a good clear description of what ever it is you're selling.

If there's confusion, it wastes your time and the buyers time, if someone comes out to see your item only to discover that It's not what they're looking for, then neither one of you benefits. You both lose.

INCLUDE PICTURES WITH YOUR ADS

You know what they say about one picture being worth a thousand words. Putting pictures in your ads, will make your goods sell faster. People will be able to see what they're buying. It will eliminate confusion and save you time. If you just give a verbal description of your product and possibly a model number, people can easily get confused. But if there's a good clear picture or two, then people know that what they see, is what they get. There's less room for haggling and other types of time wasting later

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Just like with real estate, location can be everything when you want to make money buying and selling through Craigslist. The same piece of musical equipment, or computer equipment or other electronics that might sell for \$100.00 in New York, or Chicago or Los Angeles, or San Francisco, or some other big city where things are readily available, might sell for \$300.00 Or \$400.00 in some small town where computer, music and electronics stores are not readily available.

Likewise, you can often pick things up in small towns and rural areas at low prices and resell them for a profit in the cities. Again, this is where practicality comes in. You want to deal in items that will not be too expensive to ship. Whether you charge your buyers for shipping costs or absorb the costs yourself, as part of your sales price, you have to take them into consideration

BUY ON CRAIGSLIST, SELL ON eBay

Another way to make money with Craigslist is to use it selectively, more for buying than for selling. Sure, you can place your ads for free on Craigslist and so there's no reason why you should not go ahead and do it. But, if you are going to do this as a business, then you may have to face the fact that the Craigslist culture makes it a much better place to buy things, than it is to resell them for a profit.

It is not impossible by any means, to make a profit selling things on Craigslist, but sometimes it's easier and more profitable to sell them on eBay, or other for profit web sites, even after deducting the fees involved.

Craigslist users have a low price mentality. This is good when you want to buy things. It is not so good when you want to sell things. Craigslist discourages sellers from advertising in more than one city at a time.

Although there are ways to get around this, mainly by writing a slightly different ad for each city, it is still useful in keeping prices down when you're buying something.

When you want to sell something, you want to reach the largest, widest audience possible. You also want to reach buyers who are used to dealing with professional sellers and paying retail prices, rather than people who believe that most things should really be free and don't want to pay any more than absolutely necessary for anything.

WORK THE NUMBERS TO SEE WHAT WORKS

Like most business questions, it comes down to a simple matter of mathematics. Let's say you buy an old guitar, or an old computer on Craigslist for \$100.00. You can resell it on Craigslist for \$200.00, without paying any fees and without having to ship it anywhere. The buyer will be local and will pick it up from you.

On the other hand, you can sell it to someone on eBay and get \$350.00, but you'll have to pay approximately \$35.00 in fees to eBay another \$20.00 in shipping fees. It will also take about an hour of your time to ship it. You will make an extra \$150.00, minus \$55.00 in charges, or \$105.00. net profit. Is that worth one hour of your time to ship the product?

If the answer is yes, then you want to buy it on Craigslist and sell it on eBay, but not every deal will be this clear. You just have to do a little research and find out where you can get the best prices when you're buying and then again, when you're selling. Don't let yourself get seduced by the fact that Craigslist is free. It should be part of your marketing plan but not your entire marketing plan once you're starting out with little or no money and you really have no choice.

If you are starting on a limited, or nonexistent budget, then marketing with Craigslist should be an essential portion of your strategy. It's free. Craigslist offers tremendous resources with world-wide reach and a limited number of people who have figured out how to use it properly to make money, which means less competition.

Yes, there are also drawbacks to dealing on Craigslist. If you want to let them hold you back, they will, but if you learn the Craigslist culture, understand it and learn how to work with it, it is relatively easy to build a good money making business, with little or no upfront expenses and little or no money out of your pockets. This is what makes Craigslist so exciting.

Since Craigslist is not really designed for marketing, it is a wide open field, with a relative handful of professionals making all the money. With just a little bit of time and effort and creativity, you can easily be one of them. You can have your own business, work your own hours and work from any location you choose.

All you really need is a computer with an Internet connection, an interest in some product or service that can successfully be bought and sold on Craigslist and the time and effort necessary to become knowledgeable about the product or service. After that, you're in business and how much you make is up to you. There is virtually no limit to what you can make.

SECTION FIVE: NEW WAYS TO MAKE MONEY WITH CRAIGSLIST

New opportunities pop up all the time. People are always thinking new ways to use the resources of Craigslist to make money. We have already covered most of the traditional ways to make money with Craigslist. Now are going to throw out a new and relatively controversial way to make money using Craigslist and your own ingenuity, but very little of your own money.

Craigslist started out in the San Francisco Bay Area as a local community resource. As it spread to other cities, the idea was still to create a local resource in each community. The fact is, that you now have an advertising market with global reach. You can use Craigslist not only to buy and sell things in different cities, you can use it as a marketing tool for the import export business.

BECOME AN OUTSOURCING CONSULTANT USING CRAIGSLIST

You can also get into the business of being an outsourcing consultant, just by using Craigslist. Pick any field that is a good candidate for outsourcing and then run ads on Craigslist in other countries, seeking work-at-home help in those fields. Then you run ads in various cities in this country, offering to do that kind of work on a freelance, low price basis.

For example, let's say that you know something about computers. You can run ads in English on Craigslist sites in countries like Russia, China, Vietnam, the Philippines and get computer programmers who will work for a fraction of what American programmers would charge.

Or you can run ads for accountants, or helpdesk employees to answer phone calls, or collection agents, or any one of dozens of jobs that can be done over the phone and the Internet, by anyone with a reasonable command of English. **This is an idea that has not caught on widely yet, but there is surely someone out there, doing it already**.

CRAIGSLIST PROVIDES THE RESOURCES; THE REST IS UP TO YOU

As we said, this is just one of many ideas, one of many potential ways of making money using the resources of Craigslist. Everything is there waiting for you. You have a giant network with sites in cities all over the world.

You have a chance to reach millions of people for free. You have a chance to buy things in one city or country and sell them in a different city and country, often for a vastly inflated price. You have a giant database of people to use as a research and marketing tool.

There's even a whole manual out there, based on the simple idea of using Craigslist, specifically the wanted section to find your buyers and then using eBay to finding to find the items that these people want to buy and then make your money as an eBay affiliate, getting affiliate commissions for signing up new customers for eBay and getting a piece of eBay's transaction fees.

This is one more way to make money using Craigslist. It's not necessarily the best way, simply because eBay does not make that much on each transaction to begin with. You don't get any portion of the profit that the seller might make on the item. You only get half of the eBay transaction fee, which could amount to about 5% of the selling price or less. Plus, you can earn a \$25.00 commission for each new e-Bay user you sign up, if they actually buy something on eBay within the next 30 days.

It can work. It's one more way to make money using Craigslist. The chances are, you will make more money either brokering the items, or buying them with your own money and reselling them, but you never know until you try and the more ways you can come up with to make money, the better off you'll be.

It's up to you to make the most of these resources. Hopefully this manual has given you some ideas and you'll take it from here and create new ideas of your own and come up with new ways of making money marketing with Craigslist.