

Visionary: Craig Newmark, craigslist Customer Service Representative and Founder

Palm® Treo™ smartphone Lets Craig Newmark Handle 24/7 Customer Service for craigslist



Challenge

After founding a website that boasts 2.5 billion page views per month and over 10 million monthly users, Craig Newmark could be excused for not wanting to handle the customer service for such an operation. But in the spirit of staying in touch with the community that has grown around craigslist, Newmark had no problem with naming himself Customer Service Representative and Founder.

Newmark estimates that he receives a few hundred customer service-oriented emails per day. While he sometimes delegates issues that should be handled by one of craigslist's 18 employees, he still personally replies to each email he receives.

It may seem like a lot of work, but Newmark explains: "I realized that I'm committed to customer service, and it's more effective if I respond personally."

In fact, Newmark is so committed to prompt email replies that he says people start to worry if he doesn't respond to a message within a couple hours. "There's a culture of trust on the website," he notes, "and I try to earn that by being obsessive with this."

However, Newmark used to find it difficult to obsess over customer service while on a business trip, or even when simply walking the streets of San Francisco, which he enjoys doing on a daily basis. A laptop is a cumbersome device to carry around just for email, and wireless Internet access isn't nearly as ubiquitous as cell phone reception. Newmark needed something else.

Solution

Newmark found what he needed in the Palm® Treo™ smartphone. While he did spend time considering other devices, he went with the Treo smartphone because of the ability to integrate his calendar and his address book with cell phone and email functionality. He also needed to run a Secure Shell (SSH)

"Being able to do email even in a cab on the way to my hotel makes life a lot easier.**"**

Craig Newmark, craigslist Customer Service Representative & Founder

Profile:

Craig Newmark—Customer Service Representative and Founder of craigslist—keeps his commitment to prompt customer service by using his Palm® Treo™ smartphone to respond to emails anywhere he finds himself on any given day, whether that's a neighborhood coffee shop or the back seat of a cab during a business trip.

Visionary: Craig Newmark

utility for the Palm OS®, which was a requirement for making a secure connection to the email server at the craigslist office.

Now Newmark can visit his favorite coffee shop during the day and still stay take care of customer service, ensuring that craigslist users continue to receive prompt replies to their emails. And he doesn't have to worry about delegating that responsibility to someone else while he's on a business trip, because he can simply take his office with him.

"Being able to do email even in a cab on the way to my hotel makes life a lot easier," he remarks.

When he needs a short break from his customer service duties, the Treo also delivers, letting him play a game of Klondike during downtime. Pocket Tunes provides music and spoken word books to listen to while traveling or walking the streets of San Francisco's Inner Sunset neighborhood, where 18 craigslist employees work out of a Victorian home.

While moving around San Francisco, Newmark relies on NextBus, which uses data from global positioning system (GPS) tracking satellites to serve up real-time bus arrival information and maps. The website covers San Francisco's Muni buses as well as the mass transit systems for several other cities.

Solution Summary

- Newmark can take care of customer service anywhere he happens to be, ensuring that craigslist users receive prompt replies to their messages.
- Quick replies to customer service emails build the sense of trust that is a big part of the craigslist user experience.
- The TuSSH Secure Shell (SSH) client enables Newmark to make a secure connection to craigslist's email server.

Technical Summary

- Palm® Treo™ smartphone
- TuSSH
- NextBus

More Information

craigslist
www.craigslist.org

NextBus
www.nextbus.com

TuSSH
www.tussh.com