

THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

Dominating Craigslist

If you remember the “good ol’ days” before Amazon and Craigslist when your biggest competitor was the music store across town, you’ve undoubtedly spent at least a few sleepless nights trying to devise a competition strategy for what has become a global resale market. Anyone with a cell phone and the most basic computer skills can set up an online store and compete with your brick-and-mortar business. Thankfully, most folks don’t possess the marketing expertise we indie music retailers do, and — with a little effort — you can dominate sites like Craigslist in many of the same ways you’ve come to dominate your local music retail markets. Here are a few tips to help you succeed on Craigslist:



‘Don’t be afraid to post ads on a wide variety of products and services on Craigslist.’

ADVERTISE TO DOMINATE. Just like you would for any good ad, make sure each product you decide to sell on Craigslist is displayed in the very best way. Take good, clear, colorful photos that make your product look amazing. Make sure to photograph the features or included accessories that set your products apart from other items on Craigslist. A good picture is truly worth 1,000 words. Title your ad with a short, yet irresistible label. Next, describe what makes your product and/or service special in the shortest, most poignant way, using bullet points whenever you can. Include a “boiler plate” that highlights your business at the end of each description. It should include a quick note about included services (like shipping or delivery), financing options or accepted payment methods, any trade options you offer, relevant links to your website, and a contact phone number. Do what you can to stand out. Most people can’t offer all the services and support you can. Be sure you include these points in your ad. Additionally, at the bottom, include a list of generic search terms that will help your product come up in a Craigslist search. Imagine what terms people will use to find your product and include them — even some of the common misspellings. Your goal is to get as many clicks as possible. One final tip: Don’t be afraid to post ads on a wide variety of products and services. I’ve sold high-end grand pianos, small keyboards, piano

lessons and even piano tunings from Craigslist ads. Don’t limit yourself to just the inexpensive or low-end products. You might even create an ad just to promote a YouTube video that tells people how to shop for the products you sell on Craigslist. Be creative!

KEEP COMPETITORS DOWN. Each day, as more and more new ads appear on the site, your ad will move further down the list. You need to renew your ad (with minor changes to the title and description) at least a couple of times a week to keep your ads on top. You also need to see what other people are doing so you can make sure your offers are competitive.

EJECT SCAMMERS. Use your good judgement and weed out the scammers. Consider creating a specific Gmail account just for your Craigslist business. However, while nine out of 10 emails/texts might be scammers, nine out of 10 phone calls are probably legitimate. Make sure you have a valid phone number in the ad. Scammers won’t risk a voice chat — usually.

Craigslist is nothing to fear. With some superior marketing skills, it can become a critical source of potential customers. **MI**

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