

Discover Simple Strategies For Posting Successful Ads On The Web (FREE!)

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Introduction



Have you heard of Craigslist.com? **If not you could be missing a FREE opportunity to post classified ads throughout the nation.**

Whether you are a seller interested in selling a one-time product, a small business owner with many products or services to sell, or any entrepreneur or marketer -- if you aren't using Craigslist, you are missing a valuable opportunity to **drive hoards of traffic to your site.**

Now you want to know, "What is Craigslist?" Haven't you heard of it? Perhaps you have, especially if you bought this guide!

For many, the "List" is a community website that uses Web 2.0 technology. This website, like many others of its kind, focuses on providing users the ability to build an online community. Serving more than twenty million users each month, Craigslist.com is among the highest-ranking sites on the Web today.

What does this mean to you? And how can you use Craigslist to benefit you?

What Is Craigslist?

Most community forums provide a place for people to chat, get to know each other, or share common interests. Craigslist is unique in that while it does offer a forum, it is also a place where people can promote and sell. Craigslist allows users to post classified ads to a community bulletin board. Most users can place ads free, although there are charges for certain services in certain locations.

The board on Craigslist.com hosts millions of ads and has billions of visitors every year. Sounds pretty exciting. As more and more people turn to the Web for their purchases, the "List" is rapidly becoming one of the most important places people bookmark.

Remember, most ads placed on Craigslist are free. Even when you do have to pay for ads, usually you will pay far less than you would if you paid for an advertisement in a local paper (or national one). And, more and more people are using the Net to find what they need, whether they want to find a job, a new home, a new car or anything else.

Brief History

Every month, more than 5 billion people hit Craigslist.com for information about products and services. Alexa.com reported in December of 2006 the site had 10 million unique viewers. That is a lot of publicity. Each day, more than 500,000 companies and individuals post job availabilities. Imagine, the biggest and best place to find a job, and even post a resume!

There are community listings, real estate listings, even some erotic and “massage” type services are listed. Founded in 1995 and incorporated in 1999, Craigslist offered listings in just nine US cities. Since then, Craigslist has expanded to include more than 450 cities across the globe.

The company became popular mainly by word-of-mouth as more and more people started using the site to place their classified and other assorted ads. The reason for its popularity? Ads are cheap and get a lot of exposure.

Why the name? Craig Newmark, entrepreneur, founded the site, without knowing how large it would grow. His early designs were to simply create a classified listing for local and regional events. Little did he know how fast his service would grow.

One reason for its popularity now is its simplicity. Who wants to log online and search paper after paper for job listings? Instead of posting a job in a local market, advertisers can place their ads in a forum that reaches both a national and international audience!

You can also search for items using a keyword search, greatly reducing the amount of time spent sifting aimlessly through irrelevant information.

As with any popular site, Craigslist has had its fair share of controversy, including opposition from some people opposed to the types of ads placed on the site. Some local newspapers have expressed fears that people would no longer turn to their local news listings for classified information, thereby reducing their subscriber base. Such is technology however.

Craigslist now offers forums and message boards for its members. Among the more popular forums on the “List” is the “Erotic” forum, (for users over age 18). Craigslist allows just about anyone to post information about anything they have

to offer. It is also heavily policed because of this to ensure ads are legitimate and legal.

Despite the controversy, Craigslist.com has earned its reputation and status as a leader in Web 2.0 sites, receiving many awards, including Best Local Website in 2003 according to a reader's poll and the Best Community Site by multiple agencies¹.

Now that you know a little about the site, let's take some time finding out how you can use Craigslist.com to make money. After all, that is why most people post ads in the first place.

How to Use “The List” to Make Money

Hopefully you can see the potential for making money by using Craigslist. Mostly, it is free advertising. As long as you follow a few guidelines and rules set up by the site, you can post classified ads relevant to almost 450 cities globally.

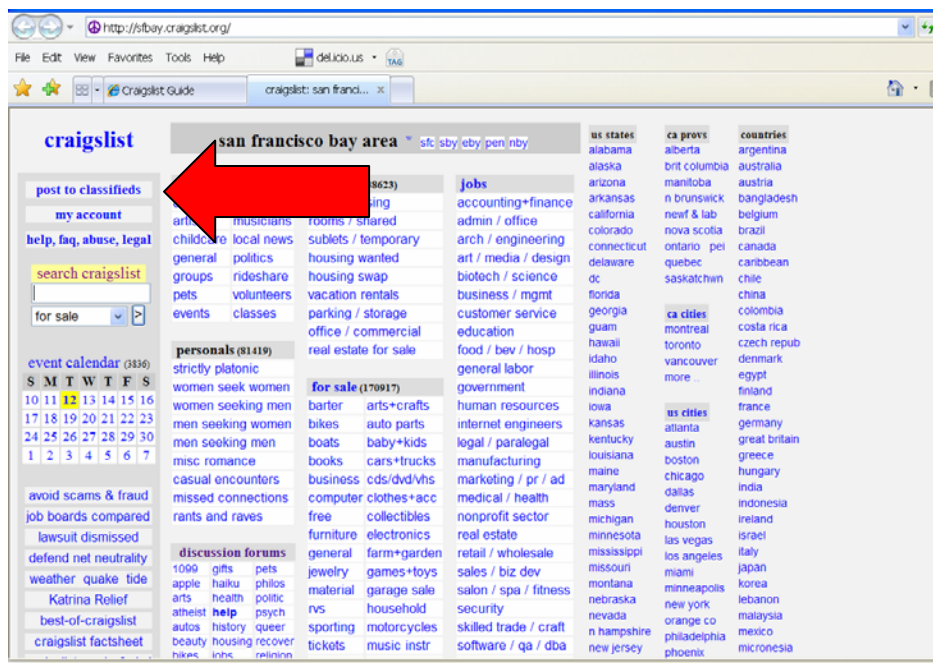
While some ads will cost you money, the rates are far less expensive than typical paper adverts. You can use ads to gain valuable exposure with minimal time and effort on your part. Most of the “paid for” ads on Craigslist are job listings, so unless you are an employer, you should take advantage of all that the site offers with no investment other than time. How often do you get a chance to present ads free?

Better yet, how often do you file an ad to a site or paper offering more than 10 million unique visitors each year? Not bad for an advertising site. And, it all begins with nothing more than a simple post.

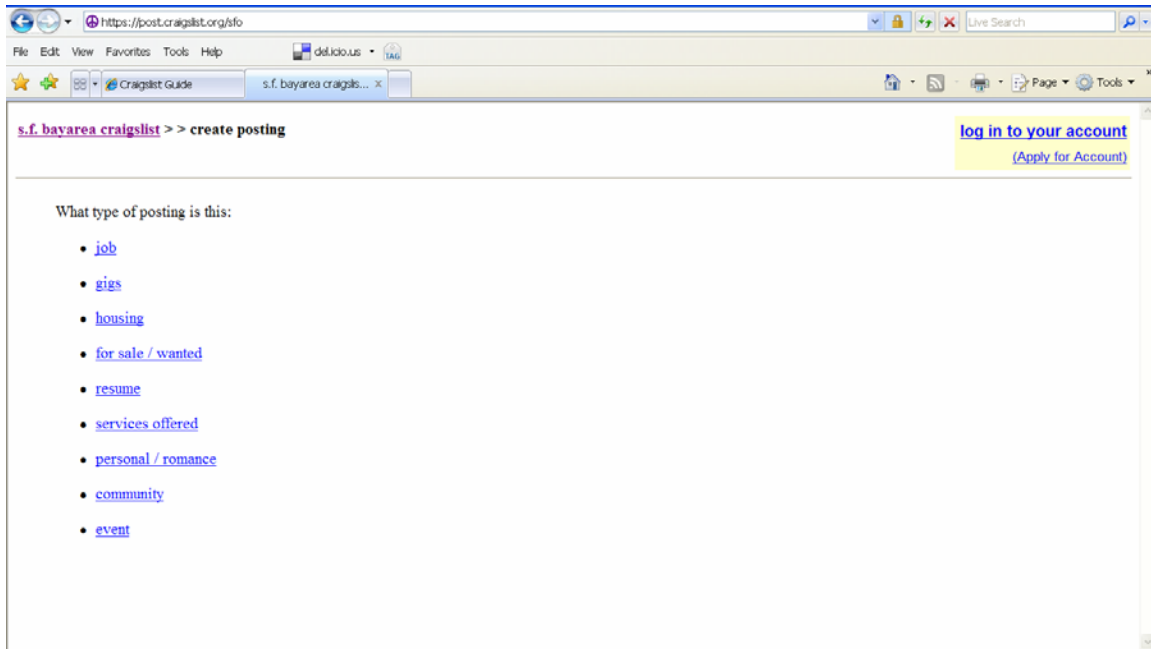
How to Post

OK, so you want to post an ad on the “List”. Great! Now, how do you do it?

Posting on Craigslist is easy. First, go to the main page, and scroll up to the left-hand corner where you will see a link to “Post to Classifieds.” Here is an example:



Next, you will want to select the proper category to post your classified ad in. Most people will search for advertisements by category, so be sure you put your ad in the right category. And don't worry too much if you don't... you can always change the category you originally selected.



You have a choice of posting categories, such as; “jobs”, “gigs”, “housing”, “items for sale” and more. Posting your ad in the right place will maximize your potential for exposure.

While it is helpful to have a registered account, especially if you plan to use the site more than once, you do not need one to post your ad. However, it takes about 5 minutes to set up an account, and it is free, so why not save yourself some time next time you log in? Makes sense doesn't it?

Now, when you register there are certain fields you have to fill out. These include the “title” field and the “description” field. People do want to know what you are offering after all, so a good description is essential. It helps to fill out the price section, but you don't have to. You may turn many otherwise interested parties off by listing price. Of course the flip side is you can do the same by not posting price.

Tip

When you post an ad, Craigslist.com places it in chronological order. So, the more recent posts get more attention because visitors see them first naturally. Many times your ad will remain listed for up to 30 days. However, if you want to gain maximum exposure for your ad, you will want to post your ad often, so it rises to the top of ads posted on the “List”.

You can also increase the odds of people searching for your posts by using keywords to describe your posts.

Try adding popular keywords to your item description, so when people search for items using key terms your ad is most likely to pop up.

Pumped up? Great! Before you place your first ad, make sure you read over the terms of use and rules. Why? If you don't, you may post an ad and find Craigslist bans your ad for life!

Now, wouldn't that be bad? No sweat, the rules are easy to follow.

Rules, Rules, Rules

As with anything, Craigslist has its rules, regulations and limits. You need to follow these carefully so your ad does not become accidentally banned from placement on the board. If your violation is severe, the “List” will ban you from posting in the future.

Now, how do you know what the rules are? First take your time and review the site completely. Pages you want to review include the terms of use and the general posting guidelines.

Check out:

<http://www.craigslist.org/about/help/>

On this page you will find a detailed explanation of the “List’s” rules, regulations, information about posting, reposting, publishing, buying blocks of posts and more. If you scroll to the bottom you will also find a section on “harassment, legal stuff, spam” which you should read carefully.

Here is a condensed version of some of the more common rules:

- ❖ **Do not post the same item twice without first deleting the matching material.**
 - If you plan to post in different cities or different categories, be sure to remove old posts before placing new ones.
 - If you want to place posts in several categories you will have to rotate your posts. Some people get around this rule by posting ads using different accounts and e-mail addresses. Just be aware if someone discovers your actions, you may be reported and you will lose your ad permanently.

- ❖ **Make sure you post an item only one time in any given 48-hour period.** That is the exact timeframe the “List” tracks. You should always give your ad a couple of days to circulate to determine its effectiveness. see what the response to your ad is. Craigslist is also terrific way to test multiple ads to see which one brings in the most traffic. However, if you post the same ad before your 48-hour term ends, the ad will expire at the end of the initial 48-hour period.

- ❖ **Make sure you do not post ads with links to commercial or auction websites.** This is a no-no! It seems like the “List” would be a great place to set up links to your products and services, right? Truthfully, the “List” does not allow this type of advertising. Now, I am sure you are scratching your head wondering, “How am I supposed to make money if I can’t link to my site?” Good question. The answer is easy.

While this rule isn’t one community members check up on often, you want to make sure you do things right to avoid penalty, especially if you are new to the “List”. One way to get around this rule is to provide your e-mail address. Interested parties can e-mail you, and then you can send them the link to your commercial website. This is an excellent way to produce leads without violating the lists rules or terms of use.

Craigslist makes it easy for users to post. You can have people contact you by phone or even by anonymous e-mail, where users click a link allowing them to respond to your ad and their message is forwarded to the e-mail account you appoint.

Here are some other unique features Craigslist has to offer consumers:

- **You can use plain text or HTML to design your ad.** Web addresses are automatically converted to links to matter which format you use so be careful.
- **Feel free to add any photographs that will enhance your post.** Remember a picture is worth a thousand words.
- **You can use free software programs to enhance your ad and improve the odds someone reads it.** Many companies have programs available that convert craigslist HTML code into full-color images. We'll talk more about this in the FAQ section.
- **You can access millions of users across the globe and in multiple cities by placing a simple ad.** No other paper offers you what craigslist can, plain and simple. With more and more people surfing the Net, you would be foolish not to try placing your ad on "the "List"."

Now you know why you should create an ad. So, how do you do that?

How To Compose A Winning Ad

An ad is only as good as the words contained within the ad itself. If you don't write good copy, get someone to write it for you. You have a limited space to work with here, so your job is to entice the potential buyer as quickly and succinctly as possible. How do you do that?

There are many different ways. Here are some great steps for creating posts simply and effectively:

- **First, compose an alluring post.** It should adequately describe what it is you have to offer, and why a potential buyer will benefit. Remember, people want to know not only what you're providing, but how it fills some need they have. So tell them. Don't use much fancy language or big words. DO use urgent language, such as "Hurry" and "Act Now". Great

descriptions like, “Stunning” and “Amazing” work wonders. Be bold, be brave. Consider this ad: “Diamond ring for sale 14k.” Now, this one: “Stunning White Gold Brilliant Diamond Hand-Crafted 14k.” Which do you like better?

- ◆ **Then, if you haven’t already, create an account, because you can’t post your “post” without one.** While you’re at it, review your post a few times. Come up with at least one or two alternate posts that describe the same item. If you find you don’t get a huge response when you post your first post, you can try placing it in a different category or using one of your alternate ads.
- ◆ **Next, look at other people’s posts that are similar to yours.** What is good about them? What makes your product or service different? Look at high-ranking posts. What makes them successful? Is someone offering a product or service similar to yours? If so, make note. Find out what makes your product or service better and be sure to mention it. Do not bad-mouth your competition, this could get you in trouble. Just do your job and tell people why you are the best.
- ◆ **Now, review your post one more time and make sure it is up to snuff with the other posts you reviewed.** Ask people what they think. What can you do better? Chances are high you will have a few opportunities to modify your ad, so don’t be shy. Ask people what they think. It pays off.
- ◆ **Submit your post.** File your post often, remember you can submit a post as often as every two days (see next tip) but be sure when doing so to delete old posts (again, following the rules here!).
- ◆ **Let your post sit at least 48-hours before checking in.** Try not to be a maniac about checking in. Millions of viewers get to see your post. If someone out there is looking for what it is you have to offer, you will make some headway. Checking your stats every five minutes will drive you crazy. Relax! Go create some new ads for another product already.
- ◆ **Now, after a couple of days, go back to your account. If you want, rerun your post (don’t forget to delete it first). That way, it goes to the top of the “List” again.** You can also edit your post before reposting to make it fresh and new to see if the new post attracts better results or

interest. If you want, you can also try reposting your original post in a different category to see if you get more responses from customers.

You can repeat the steps above as many times as necessary to get the attention of your prospective customers. Try using different ads for different products and services. You can also post your ad in different categories to see which ad categories your ad receives the most attention in produce more results. Try using different keywords in your ad when describing your product or the items you sell. Most people search by keywords, so if you have really good ones, they will help your ad pop up when people search. How do you know what hot keywords are?

There are dozens of resources on the Web. Check out:

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

It's a good starting point.

Now, let's find a few other resources you may find handy...

Craigslist Resources and More

Not what one might call a “shy” guy, Craig has promoted his site many ways, including through his own blog. Find out what goes on in the mind of the creator, just visit:

<http://www.cnewmark.com>

You’ll find a wealth of posts about the site and about life in general. It is, if nothing else, entertaining.

Next, why not visit Mr. Newman’s other venture, Craigslist Foundation, located at:

<http://www.craigslistfoundation.org/>

Started in 2000 by Craig Newmark and associates, this nonprofit organization provides support for people in various communities. The goal of the site is to provide knowledge and resources to nonprofit leaders throughout the world. Its mission? “To empower and help people connect.” The Foundation achieves this by providing resources to train and empower nonprofit leaders, by connecting leaders with others working in their sector, and by providing support and guidance to any interested.

Just as the original Craigslist worked to empower the community, the foundation does the same, reaching out to next-generation leaders interested in changing the way people do business.

Creating Stellar Ads

Earlier in this guide we talked about the many ways you can make your ads stand out. If you still feel less than confident about your ability, don’t worry, there are plenty of resources on the Web to get you through this process. You can always conduct some Web searches to see what types of ads people run for the kinds of products you sell.

You can also review sites offering tips and advice about writing good ads.

Here are a few links to check out:

<http://www.greatnewspaperads.com/>

<http://www.smalltownmarketing.com/greatads.html>

<http://www.e-comprofits.com/121.html>

You can probably find a billion more on the Internet. If you are going to create a simple, clean ad for a site like Craigslist.com, here is what you really need to know:

- 1) **Grab your reader's attention.** You do this with a great headline. Keep it short, it's an ad, not a sales page.
- 2) **Capture their interest.** What makes your ad interesting? Are you offering an interesting product, and if so, why is it interesting?
- 3) **Create a need and want in your audience's mind.** You want your target audience to salivate over what it is you have to offer. Describe your product or service strongly and succinctly and you will create desire. Even if your audience doesn't want what you are providing, a really good ad may make them want it. For example, imagine you are browsing through the grocery store. You are there to buy cereal, however, you notice a new chocolate bar featured in the candy aisle. Your desire peaks, you buy the chocolate. Your original purpose may have been to buy cereal, but any ad, whether for chocolate or for a home, can create need in almost any consumer when well presented.
- 4) **Fill a need.** If you can't create a need, try to make sure you are filling an existing need your potential customer has. Are they looking for a home? Are you selling one? Do they need a job? Do you have one? You get the picture.
- 5) **Create a need and want in your audience's mind.** You want your target audience to salivate over what it is you have to offer. Explain your offer strongly and succinctly, and you will create desire. Even if your audience doesn't have a wish for what it is you offer, a really good ad may make them want it. For example, imagine you are browsing through the grocery store. You are there to buy cereal. However, you notice a new chocolate bar featured in the candy isle. Your desire peaks, you buy the chocolate. Your original purpose may have been to buy cereal, but any ad, whether

for chocolate or for a home, can create need in almost any consumer when well presented.

- 6) Call your visitors to action.** If you don't ask for the sale, you will not get it. This is the number one mistake people make, whether creating simple copywriting ads or long sales letters. You have to ASK for the sale. So do it.
- 7) Provide your visitor contact information.** Don't ask for the sale and then forget to leave them a way to contact you. No matter how good your ad, you won't get a response that way!

Last, but not least, if you do get people to respond to your ad, make sure you follow up with them quickly, within 24-hours if you can. The longer you wait, the higher the chance they will turn to someone else to find what they need. There is nothing worse than asking a question about a product for sale and not getting a response in a timely matter.

You probably have a few more questions, so we'll try to answer them next...

Frequently Asked Questions

Now that you know the basics, you probably have a question or two about how it all works. No problem, we are here to help. While you can find most of the answers you need directly from Craigslist.com, we've compiled some answers to some of the more common questions for your convenience. If you do not find what you need, check out the help section or FAQ's on Craigslist.

Q. How long will it take for my ad to post?

A. Generally it takes 15 minutes or less for ads to post when sent, provided they follow the sites specifications. You can usually look for your ad in the category you selected for it or by using keywords you appoint to your ad. If you have to register, you'll spend about 5 minutes total posting your ad. Pretty easy stuff here folks.

Q. What is flagging and how do I prevent it?

A. Flagging is a tool moderators on the board use to identify posts that may be inappropriate. If your post becomes flagged, you are not banned from posting again, just be sure you double-check your post to make sure it complies with all the rules and controls set up by craigslist. You are not officially "banned" unless your post is blocked, and then there is no way you can re-post it. Sometimes posts are flagged because users do not classify them correctly, other times because they need review, and still other times because they contain restricted content or constitute spam. So post with care!

Q. When I place a post, how long will it last?

A. It depends on the type of post you list and its location. There are many different types of ads you can run on Craigslist. These include:

- Classified ads, which can last up to 45 days, or only 7 days if posted in high-traffic cities including Boston, Chicago, LA, New York, Portland and a few others.
- Resume ads, which usually post for between 30-45 days.
- Job ads, which like resume ads last for 30-45 days.
- Gig ads, again, post for 30-45 days.

You can even post events on Craigslist. These posts will usually stay online until the day of your event or the day before your event. Classified ads usually post for the shortest time because people sell their products or delete their ad to repost it in a new category, or to keep it listed in the top ranks of craigslist.

Q. If I can't post commercial ads, how do I advertise my services?

A. You may post classified ads for services if you post them under the title "services offered." There is no charge for doing this. You are not, however, allowed to place commercial posts in other categories, and if you do they are likely to be removed. There are subtle ways of getting around these rules, as discussed previously. If you want to send people to your site where they can review a comprehensive list of your services, you can structure your ad in a way that does not directly market your services and encourages visitors to contact you for a link to your site or more information.

Q. How can I become a Craigslist "power seller" much like an eBay power seller?

A. The answer is simple. If you really want your ad to stand out, if you want to make some killer money and promote your website legally, you will have to take a few steps not outlined in the guide so far.

Many people primp up their ads using pictures and images. There is a tool you can use however, to make your posts pop much better. If you are a webmaster familiar with HTML coding, you probably don't have to worry about making your posts stand out. But, you can use the tools naturally provided to you to create a winning ad.

If you are clueless when it comes to web design, check into software called the "vFlyer" personal plan. Check it out:

<http://www.vflyer.com/>

This unique little tool allows you to create dynamic classified ads simply and easily. You can use this tool to create eye-catching ads for Craigslist.com and any other site you might post your ads on. The best part? All you have to do is click a few buttons.

Here is how it works, first you sign up for a plan. If you sign up for anything other than the personal plan, it will cost you a little money, but remember, your listing on craigslist is free, so it pays to spend a little money to make a lot of money. Best of all, you can try it out and if you don't like it, you'll get your money back. Try it out for a full 30-days! Risk Free!. Chances are you will sell your first product or service long before you hit the 30-day mark, so vFlyer pays for itself.

Now you CAN sign up for the personal plan, and frankly I recommend it. It is free. Try it out see what you think. You can create five ads. Now, what you do is create your own flyer. VFlyer offers multiple templates you can choose from, whether you sell office space, condos, boats, a car or any other item worthy of a classy post.

Now, edit the information in the "flyer" as vFlyer calls its ads, by adding a title and a description of the item you plan to sell. You will then copy and paste any information craigslist gives you or the HTML code assigned to your ad when you post it normally in HTML (do this first, so you have HTML code to post to vFlyer).

In case you are curious, we are not an affiliate. It is just a great tool you can use to make your ads sizzle!

With VFlyer, you get a customized, handcrafted ad that is unique, eye-catching and much more likely to grab attention than the ordinary posts you see on the lists. Full color, custom imprinted images, just a click away. If you are only posting a few items here and there, this is an ideal way to make your images pop.

Q. Why can't I just use the database craigslist offers for posting pics?

A. You can. However, keep in mind you have a choice of only four pictures when using the default selection on craigslist. When you use software like vFlyer, you have 15 photographs you can upload, custom photographs that will entice your buyer much more than four. You can even create a slide show for them to view your product.

Hope that helps! On to our final thoughts about the wonderful world that is Craig's "list."

Conclusions

Web 2.0 is changing the way consumers do business. There are many sites using networking technology in exciting new ways. Craigslist.com started out as a small site with a few ads for local consumers.

Today the site receives billions of hits yearly. Millions of people list their ads, most of them free. You can join community forums, network with others and find new and interesting ways to get people to visit your websites or buy your products and services.

You can post your resume, look for jobs or buy a house. The best part? You don't have to spend hours and hours searching online. Craigslist hosts ads in over 400 cities around the world.

If you want a cheap and innovative tool for promoting your business and making more money, check it out now.

Go to:

<http://www.craigslist.com>

Warning

Make sure you go to: <http://www.craigslist.com>

Click the link or copy and paste it to your browser. Misspell the word, and you may end in a place you never expected. Thanks! Don't say we didn't warn you, because we did 😊

ⁱ See craigslist fact sheet, from craigslist.org