

Chatham Web Company Launches Daily Deal Site

by Tim Wood

CHATHAM --- Groupon and its clones are all the rage these days, allowing users to take advantage of steep discounts on all kinds of goods and services. But most of those websites are concentrated in urban areas, where high populations ensure a critical mass of users.

A local company has now brought the concept to the Cape. Cape Cod Daily Deal, launched Aug. 1, offers users savings of as much as 50 to 90 percent off on a specific product from a local Cape merchant every day. Details are sent via e-mail each morning, and is a way for businesses to market themselves to local residents with little cost and no overhead, according to Stephen Williams, who developed the service and its website.

"It's been growing pretty steadily," Williams said of use of the site, www.capecoddailydeal.com.

Developed out of the North Chatham office of Internet marketing firm Click Cape Cod, Cape Cod Daily Deal works like this: a merchant offers a service, such as a restaurant gift card, at a discount. An example is one of the first deals the site offered: a \$20 gift card at the Red Nun restaurant in Chatham for \$10. Buyers get double their money in food; the benefit for the merchant is that most people will purchase more than just the face amount of the card, and they may also get new and returning customers out of the deal.

Deals thus far have included restaurants, hair cuts, massages, museum admissions, bike rentals, harbor cruises and bumper boats.



"Family activities do well," Williams noted.

For merchants, the exposure is small, he said. There's no marketing cost, and any loss through the discounted product is usually recovered by attracting new customers or additional business from those who purchase the deal. Cape Daily Deal shares revenue from the sales with the merchant.

Users can customize their preferences to receive deals only from businesses in specific Cape towns, or from all

towns. When signing up, users are asked to provide a preference, which then filters the available deals.

Most deals are only available for a specific time period, some just a day. They site is also set up to offer "split-second" deals that must be taken advantage of right away, Williams said.

So far, the site is being marketed through word of mouth and social media like Facebook and Twitter. Users have referred friends to the site by posting daily deals on their Facebook page or utilizing a widget to post the link on their website. Each link has a specific referral code, and if three people use that link to buy a deal, the person who posted it receives the Daily Deal free.

Williams said a marketing representatives was hired to work with local businesses while the seven staff members at Click Cape Cod handle the technical side of things.

Williams said he first began thinking about the idea last February when he visited a cousin in Florida who was working on a similar project in San Francisco. He was aware that Groupon and similar websites like Living Social were enormously popular in cities and were growing at a rapid pace, but none had yet made inroads on the Cape; Boston and the South Shore are about as close as they'd come, though some occasionally offer Cape deals. The Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce's "Try It Local" is similar, though the deals are offered on a weekly, not daily, basis.

Knowing that local sells on the Cape, Williams, who grew up in Chatham, figures that a local service working with local businesses would be attractive to residents and merchants alike. That's where he thinks Cape Cod Daily Deal will have an advantage over other similar services owned by large media corporations that he believes are poised to enter the Cape market.

"Our entire team is from the web side, not the print side, and I believe we understand and can leverage social networking and online marketing more effectively than the print, radio and TV media groups," Williams said. "That should give us another edge."

The site isn't just for local residents; Williams hopes that summer folks and visitors will also sign up, especially those who come to the Cape on a regular basis. He also hopes the deals will help expose people to businesses and services they might not otherwise have known about or tried before. As we head into the shoulder season, he anticipates more merchants will be interested in getting involved in the site - the summer is a tough sell since most are straight out with the heavy summer traffic. Golf courses, restaurants, inns and other merchants could benefit from such off-season promotion, he suggested.

"I think as we get into the shoulder season the deals are going to get better and better," he said. "Maybe people will be more motivated."

As an incentive to get people to sign up, Cape Cod Daily Deal will give away an iPad once it hits 3,000 users. "We're pretty close," Williams said Monday.

While developing the site from the ground up took a lot of work, and making sure the daily deal e-mail gets out glitch-free can be time consuming, Williams is happy with the sites reception after less than a month live.

"It's been an interesting model," he said. "It's been fun to do."

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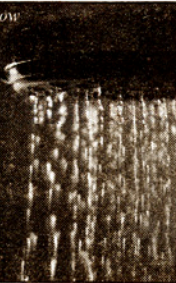
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