

Press release from LocalPlaces.com Ltd.  
09 September 2007  
Without prejudice



## **If you were thinking about using Promailing.com (Eventhorizon) – read this first!**

At the start of 2006 I formed a new company called LocalPlaces.com Ltd. It aims to bridge the gap between traditional tourist information websites and online business directories by using a unique and highly pictorial method of navigation and display.

During 2006 we attracted almost 1000 entries, providing enough content to launch the LocalPlaces.com website. We planned to run a Spring marketing and advertising campaign during early 2007 to attract more entries onto the site, and to increase the number of visitors.

We scanned the internet looking for companies who could help us, and in February we found Promailing.com. Over several weeks we asked many questions to ensure the service we would receive was exactly as indicated on their website. We received satisfactory answers to our questions, and we could not find any adverse publicity to their company, so we paid for their service in March.

Maybe I should have been a little suspicious when they asked me to complete my personal and credit card details, and my signature, and fax it to them – which is highly open to fraud.

The bottom line is that 6 months after I paid, Promailing.Com has still not started the distribution of my campaign, and now, they are not even responding to any of my attempts to contact them.

Over the months, numerous dates have been promised to me for my ad campaign, but none of them have ever actually happened. Delays have been regular and frequent, and vary varied! So far, the LocalPlaces.com campaign has been delayed due to 'system updates', a disgruntled employee leaving the company and sabotaging my campaign (no idea why they would do this), the customer rep who replaced her was immediately taken ill for several weeks, and the reason given for further delays has twice been quoted as an act of God – with storms cutting the power (these 'reasons' were given several months apart, so it is highly unlikely it was the same storm!).

At all times it has been down to me to chase Promailing.com, as updates are very sparse at best. The only time Promailing.com has really chased LocalPlaces.com is for the payment – they were very prompt in doing this.

LocalPlaces.com Ltd, being a company in its infancy, has suffered greatly. A lot depended on this years Spring marketing and advertising campaign, but this has been completely destroyed by the continuing delays imposed by Promailing.com. This whole sorry episode has certainly cost LocalPlaces.com a lot more than the \$598 that was paid to Promailing.com for a service that is still awaited.

I can't tell you what to do, but I would recommend reading the full story before you decide to use Promailing.com - or not. Make yourself a cup of tea first, as it is quite a long saga, then read "the Promailing.com saga" below and make up your own mind. I wish I could have read this before I made up my mind.

Brian Smith  
Director  
LocalPlaces.com Ltd

# Promailing.com (Eventhorizon) – the saga so far...

*Italics indicate communication from Promailing.com to LocalPlaces.com. Bold indicates the reverse.*

## February

- 02/02 – **Adrienne Harris**, *Principle Marketing Consultant*: provided various items of marketing information.
- 03/02 – **I requested more information on reach within England, and their anti-spam policy**
- 05/02 – **Adrienne**: confirmed UK reach. Clients are all opt in, plus emails are all tested for an anti-spam score to ensure delivery to the inbox
- 07/02 – **I questioned UK, asking if the filter could be narrowed to just England**  
**Adrienne**: said she would see if she could get the England filter added free of charge, and would be in touch 'later today'
- 28/02 – **I chased for an answer as I had not received anything**

## March

- 01/03 – **Adrienne**: responded to confirm England filter could be added at no extra charge
- 06/03 – **I questioned further aspects including the cost, and VAT, saying "Sorry if this seems petty, but I have sent cheques to other companies only to find the service I receive is not exactly as I was led to believe, so I am just trying to get a better understanding of the details first."**
- 09/03 – **Walter Flance**, *Overnight Technician*: replied to say all filter fees were waived, and that my email would be "produced by one of our top designers". He confirmed he didn't know what VAT was, and attached a credit card form requesting payment.
- 11/03 – **I placed my order online - \$299 for a top designer to design an email advertisement, and £299 for a 1m email broadcast (with 3 filters applied at no charge, to target opt-in business owners within England).**
- 12/03 – **Adrienne**: asked me to complete the Credit Card order form and fax it back to them.
- 13/03 – **I returned the CC form as an encrypted ZIP file for security, telling Promailing.com that they shouldn't ask for full personal and credit card details to be added to a single document for faxing, as this was extremely open to fraud. I also included within the email a lot of information about LocalPlaces.com, including copies of mailings that we had previously sent out ourselves. I stressed my Unique Selling Point was the unique navigation and display. Initially this email failed as it was too large so I split it and successfully sent it as two emails on 14/03.**
- 14/03 – **Walter** (promoted to "Senior Overnight Technician" with the past 5 days): sent me a receipt, and asked how I managed to encrypt a ZIP file. He informed me my Customer Service Rep was Rachael and she would contact me the next day.
- 15/03 – **I explained how to use various ZIP utilities to Walter**
- 16/03 – **Adrienne**: said I needed to sign the receipt and return it before they would start working on my media piece.  
**Rachael Brown**, *Account Services Department*: introduced herself, saying she would contact me "early next week as we begin the construction of your ad"
- 30/03 – **I chased for an update, saying I wanted the emails sent before Easter.**  
**Adrienne**: said they were still working on the email.
- 31/03 – **Rachael**: sent the draft ad through to me.

## April

- 01/04 – **The quality of the email/ad was poor, with no mention of my unique selling point, but I was so eager to get the campaign started I just requested some minor amendments. I also asked for details on how I could track progress of the campaign.**

- 02/04 – **Rachael:** confirmed they were rushing the revisions through within the next day or so, and as soon as I signed it off, distribution would be scheduled.
- 03/04 – **Rachael:** sent through a new ad with the revisions.  
**I signed it off, asked for it to be sent out asap, and asked how long it will stay on file for, for potential re-use later.**  
**Rachael:** confirmed the campaign was scheduled for April 15, and the email design would remain on file indefinitely.
- 16/04 – **I asked for an update as the campaign date had been missed, and I had not received details on how to track the campaign.**  
**Rachael:** confirmed there was a delay due to “system updates”. She said that additional emails would be sent out as compensation.  
**I asked for a new date.**
- 22/04 – **I chased for an update as I had still not been contacted with a new date or details of the tracking, or the compensation.**
- 24/04 – **Adrienne:** replied to say Rachael no longer worked for the company and my new customer service rep would be Annette Galvan.  
**Annette:** introduced herself and told me that Rachael had taken my ad with her when she left. She confirmed that the ad would need to be redesigned/regenerated and confirmed that I would get ‘extra campaigns free of charge’ as compensation.  
**I replied explaining my dissatisfaction and explained that this was part of a 3 month Spring campaign I had planned, which must finish before the summer holidays. I sent a copy of the ad that I had previously signed off.**
- 27/04 – **I chased for an update as I had not heard anything**

## May

- 01/05 – **I chased for an update as I had not heard anything**
- 03/05 – **Annette:** apologised for the delay, explaining that she had been off sick. She confirmed the date for my campaign was now 7<sup>th</sup> May, and that she had increased my “follow-ups to 5”.
- 07/05 – **I asked for details of the tracking mechanism to watch my campaign.**
- 08/05 – **Unsigned:** email confirmed that a technician would send it to me.  
**I asked for an update as the campaign date had been missed again. I also asked to see the regenerated email, as I had not signed it off.**
- 09/05 – **Unsigned:** single word response – “Absolutely”.  
**Walter:** (addressed to Mark Whitlock, whoever he is!) saying that the servers had been paused “due to power loss from the storms and we are running our emergency units”  
**I replied to ‘unsigned’ to say thank you for the detailed and informative response. I asked again for sight of the final email (which I had not actually signed off after it had been regenerated); details of the tracking mechanism (which I still had not received); and a new target date for when my campaign would restart.**
- 11/05 – **Walter:** sent me a copy of the regenerated email, and told me that I was ranked as “first priority”.  
**I responded to reject the email, which was different to the one I previously signed off, and the pictures added had absolutely nothing to do with my business - so please remove them. I explained the delays were unacceptable, so far caused by ‘system updates’, a disgruntled employee sabotaging the campaign, then her replacement going off sick, then an act of God cutting the power!**
- 12/05 – **Annette:** contacted me to say I needed to choose between the original email I signed off (but with a large watermark saying ‘Stock Photo’), or the one I had just rejected with irrelevant photos awkwardly stuck over the top of the watermark.
- 13/05 – **I replied to say that this was totally unacceptable. I attached an ad which I had created. In my opinion it was superior to the 2 versions that their ‘top designers’ had produced over several months. I told Annette to use this one, and refund me the \$299 I paid for the**

use of their 'top designers' as they were obviously unable to produce an acceptable email.

17/05 – **Annette:** *called to say she was still waiting for a response.*

I resent the email, requesting that my ad was sent out during the start of the school holiday – 21-23 May. I also sent the email without the attachment in case this was causing the delivery to fail.

23/05 – **Adrienne:** *I received a completely empty email.*

I replied – asking for an update.

23/05 – **Annette:** *replied to say that 'we expended the resources to have the design made' so I couldn't have a refund, but they would increase the quantity of emails sent (no figures were mentioned but I thought I must be up to several million emails by now!).*

I resent the email again, and complained about the refusal to reimburse the design costs. I also explained that their failure to process my campaign had cost me a lot more than the \$598 that I had paid them. My spring marketing and advertising campaign had been completely destroyed – at best my fledgling business had been put back a year, at worst, it could end my business altogether given its fragile 'early days' status.

24/05 – I noticed that the above email never made it through as Promailing.com had started to block my emails!

25/05 – I tried resending the email, but it was blocked again. I tried contacting Annette on a different email address, this also failed.

26/05 - I contacted the helpdesk, who gave me an aol email address to try. This time my email got through.

29/05 – **Unsigned:** *I received an email from this aol address to say my campaign was now scheduled for 3<sup>rd</sup> June.*

## June

04/06 – I contacted Promailing.com to ask for an update as my campaign had failed to happen yet again.

05/06 – **Annette:** *told me they were still waiting for me to send my ad to them, and then they would treat it as a first priority.*

I pointed out that they had actually responded to the email which contained my ad, but included it again, in case they had mislaid it.

07/06 – **Unsigned:** *I received a totally empty email for Promailing.com.*

**Annette:** *I received another email saying they had found the ad that I designed, and could I confirm this was the one that I wanted to use.*

As I had designed this one myself, and already forwarded it to them numerous times, I confirmed that this was indeed the one I wanted to use. I asked them to simply add a hyperlink to LocalPlaces.com when they sent it, and provide me with the tracking details as I still hadn't received this despite asking on numerous occasions.

13/06 – I chased for an update as I had not heard anything

14/06 – **Annette:** *told me they were still having difficulties with their servers due to severe weather (the same storms that started 9<sup>th</sup> May?). I was assured that I was a top priority!*

## July

06/07 – I chased for an update as I had not heard anything. As well as asking all the usual questions again I asked for the name and address of the Promailing.com CEO. I also pointed out that if I did not receive a satisfactory reply I would document the whole sorry saga and issue it as a press release

10/07 – I chased for an update as I had still not heard anything

17/07 – **Adrienne:** *contacted me to say they did not know which version of the email to send out – one of the two versions they created, or the one I supplied.*

18/07 – I replied with the correct email to use again, and all other relevant details (e.g. filters to use, hyperlink to add etc). I asked for details of the compensation emails (again), and the tracking mechanism, and the CEO details (again).

24/07 – I chased for an update as I had not heard anything

25/07 – **Adrienne:** *asked which email I would like to use!*

26/07 – I supplied all information yet again.

## **August**

02/08 – I resent the information again as I had not heard anything. I sent my ad as an attachment, and separately as an embedded picture in case the attachments were being blocked.

12/08 – I resent the information yet again and chased for an update.

## **September**

Today – As I have not heard anything from them since 25 July I assume they have given up with my campaign altogether, hence the release of this press release. If you were thinking about using Promailing.com, I hope this has been useful!