

Snapgoods: Like Zipcar for Gadgets

by **John Biggs** on July 26, 2010

Let's pretend that you don't have very many geeky or sporty friends. It could happen. Say you wanted to try an iPad or a bike or a **Kubb set**. What would you do? Walk up to complete strangers? Ask them for theirs? Well, in a way, **Snapgoods** hopes you will.

Think of Snapgoods as Zipcar for stuff. You reserve an item – an iPad, a bike, a pommel horse, a chainsaw – pay a small amount per day (\$10–\$15 or more for pricier items), put down a security deposit using your Paypal account, and you pick up the item after meeting the lender or, barring that, you pick it up and drop it off at a place local to you both that acts as an escrow point.

In short, Snapgoods assumes that most people won't break your stuff and that there are people out there who want to try or use your stuff for a few hours. This could be an iPad or, in a more practical case, a concrete drill. In order to ensure that the renter doesn't break your stuff, they require a number of verification measures including SMS replies, Facebook connections, and "group" creation for different parts of each city. Most important, however, is that Snapgoods is hyperlocal. You're not going to get offers for people in Kansas City (unless you're in Kansas City). In fact, Snapgoods is New York only for now, and will be expanding over the next few months.

They have a few competitors including **Zilok** but this is the first time I've heard of something like this specifically for New York.

The product hyperlocal in three ways: first, you create groups and deal with only people in your area who are physically close to you. You need to be able to *meet* these people to rent from them. Second, you meet in local businesses that could be affiliated with Snapgoods either as a partner or as a drop-off point. Finally, you rate those you did business with ensuring weirdos get weeded out. They call it an access economy.

Obviously someone can break or steal your stuff and I'd be loathe to rent out something that could be hideously contaminated by some crazy person. This is built into the deposit process. If they mess up, you tell Snapgoods and the deposit is yours. The company hasn't put any insurance in place yet, but that may be coming soon. This is probably the biggest problem with the service as it stands – if you rent out your camera and someone breaks it, you're kind of stuck. However, if you buy an iPad and rent it out 40 times, you could make back your investment in a few months. It's obviously not an ideal way to make lots of cash, but if you're not worried about wear and tear on your gear it can make you a little dosh.

Snapgoods could also work with marketers trying to spread the word about new products. A new phone could rent for \$5 a day or so and early adopters could try before they buy. Partnerships are in the works right now.

Want to give it a try? You can sign up **for the beta** if you live in New York (mainly Brooklyn, around Dumbo, where all the cool kids live) but you can enter your email address to be notified when Snapgoods opens in your town.

Bottom line? It seems like a great way to rent out that leaf blower you're not using. It still has a few

issues, but it's worth a look if you don't have friends who will let you use their stuff.