

Rather Than Convince You Ourselves

We have been using rBlock in our neighborhood for a few months now. Our initial reason for trying it out was to simplify the process of sharing contact information and other info for emergency preparedness purposes. It has been very helpful in this way since, now, each member of our neighborhood can update his/her information as it changes. (In the past, this was the responsibility of one or two individuals and often took forever to do.)

Beyond this, we've used rBlock (or plan to use rBlock) for the following:

- 1) Neighborhood news (we had a new baby announcement and a neighbor introducing us to their house sitters before leaving on a long trip).
- 2) Getting to know one another better. Ours is a relatively friendly neighborhood and we enjoy ourselves when we get together for a party but that never happens more than once a year. The rest of the time, we rush in and out, tending to our busy lives and only occasionally having the chance to catch up in person. It was wonderful, when new neighbors moved in, to meet them virtually before most of us had had the chance to say hi in person.
- 3) Sharing resources -- although we haven't yet done much with the lending and borrowing features of the site, we probably will in the future. There have also been some nice, informal exchanges such as a neighbor with a plentiful lemon tree letting us all know we were welcome to pick as we walked by.
- 4) Event postings and RSVP lists -- we recently had our annual pot luck get-together, which we announced in the events section of rBlock. We supplemented with an RSVP list which many people used to let us know they'd be coming and what they wanted to bring. (A lot easier than phone tag and less hit-or-miss than our usual approach.)
- 5) Emergency alerts -- we hope we'll never have to use rBlock for this but it's nice to know that we have it as a resource if we need to get the word out quickly about any problem that does not involve lack of electricity. (We are, by the way, printing out the emergency info so we'll have it in case of a blackout.)

There's a lot more but this is an overview of where we've started. It's a very helpful tool and we hope others will take advantage of it as well.

Posted by: Neighbor on rBlock

What I like about rBlock

* rBlock's developers are very responsive to input, concerns, and suggestions and since March, have incorporated many of my and my co-CM's suggestions into making our rBlock site better and easier to use.

* I like reading what other neighbors have written about themselves.

* The site is low-key, calm and pleasant, rather than hyper-active, jarring and intrusive, as commercial websites can be.

* Our rBlock site's unobtrusive format generates only links to messages rather than full-text messages into the recipient's email inbox. The message is from our rBlock site and not an individual, preserving the privacy of each sender's email.

* Being as busy as we are today, our rBlock site may be used once a week or once a month, but I like knowing it is there for enabling quick communication within our neighborhood when needed.

* Privacy and security are foremost at rBlock.

* I am impressed with the Company's mission, ethics, community orientation and trustworthiness.

Posted by: Neighbor on rBlock

Ever needed a plumber, or a roofer or even a babysitter and not had any idea how to find one that is reliable? Finding reliable service people from neighbors with experience was a major motivation for me to join my neighborhood rBlock site.

Now after a few months I have discovered many other aspects of the site that enhance the quality of life in this neighborhood. Some examples of these services are: reminders of local meetings and events, a list of items that neighbors are willing to share, alerts about activities in the neighborhood that warrant attention.

Probably the most attractive aspect of rBlock to me is that our site has fostered a sense of community in our neighborhood of busy, but well-intentioned people, and given us a non-intrusive way to connect.

I have found that I now check in frequently to see what's happening, and am continually coming up with new ways to use the site. But one of the attractive aspects of an rBlock community is that it is up to each member to decide how much to be involved, and the site is set-up so that security is protected foremost.

Our rBlock site is non-commercial and neighborhood oriented. It is very easy-to-use. It is an excellent example of internet use that improves the quality of daily life.

Posted by: Neighbor on rBlock

I think the site is useful in many ways, even if I only check it intermittently, and it's certainly a great way to build a sense of neighborhood.

Recent postings of recommended service providers are reminding me to add some of my own, because I think this feature can grow into a uniquely valuable resource.

Posted by: Neighbor on rBlock

I love the idea that rBlock is using technology to connect, rather than isolate each of us from the other. So often it's easier to send an e mail than talk to a neighbor, especially for the busy professional people who live on this block. But this simple to use and friendly website is a real community builder. It enables us to organize parties and find and share our resources and information. We can borrow tools, get information on good contractors and other service providers, keep up to date on local news and neighborhood alerts, all thanks to rBlock. This great little tool is helping us get together, not keeping us apart! This is what technology should do.

I'd like to add that rBlock's developer has been very responsive to our concerns and ideas. He has gone the extra mile to make sure that a range of people, some less techno savvy than others, can understand and use his product. His customer service is only exceeded by his patience!

I heartily recommend rBlock as a product whose time has come!

Posted by: Neighbor on rBlock

As one who uses the computer a lot at work and doesn't particularly want to be plugged in when I get home, I have come to appreciate rBlock not only as a resource for things to borrow and loan, but as a real community builder. It's an easy way to get to know neighbors beyond those across the street and on either side. I have used it to get recommendations on home improvement contractors and it's nice to have it as an informal "police blotter" to inform us of crime in the area. I've lived on this street for more than 20 years and I've never felt the sense of community that I do because of rBlock and the good will it has engendered.

Posted by: Neighbor on rBlock

rBlock uses accessible technology to facilitate and foster a sense of community within our neighborhood. I use it to check in on posts about crime, service providers, community or city events and neighborhood events such as block meetings or parties.

It is also nice to learn a little about ones neighbors (of course only what they want to share) by reading their discussion posts and their introductions.

The true value of rBlock is its ability to help neighbors connect and share information quickly, easily, and even meet face to face more often!

Posted by: Neighbor on rBlock

I am one of two block captains for my neighborhood of 100 neighbors, and have been developing Internet & Web technologies since 1997. I have been helping Vivek refine his ideas for online neighborhood communities for several years.

Many individuals in our community are extremely busy people. We see some of our neighbors often, but for our paths & schedules may mean that we never see other neighbors. We may meet once a year during the annual block party, or several times a year during our Neighborhood Watch meetings. However, these meetings & parties are often quite busy, and it is impossible to talk to everyone, much less remember everyone's names.

Our rBlock community has helped to enhance communication between busy neighbors, by allowing us to communicate our thoughts any time, day or night.

Many people accuse the Internet of creating artificial separations between individuals — what was once a promising and powerful communication tool is becoming an ad-filled wasteland, sucking up previous time while failing to help anyone communicate.

However, I feel that rBlock is pushing the Internet in the correct direction: they have been successful at encouraging communication between individuals and enhancing the existing community. If technology does not make our lives better, then what is the point? The fact that rBlock does this without spamming the users with unneeded advertisements and does not compromise an individual's privacy.

The Internet is powerful a communication tool. It should supplement our traditional communication methods, not replace them.

We recently used rBlock to organize a 4th of July block party, which was a raging success. We use it regularly to organize block meetings to discuss Neighborhood Watch & Emergency Preparedness issues.

The resource lists helps us to organize our individual collection of emergency supplies into a more comprehensive group list. One household may have the emergency generator, and another household may have the emergency lights. We combine the items into a list, print copies of the list out and keep them safe.

Our members even helped to catch a couple small-time criminals who were preying on the surrounding neighborhoods.

Posted by: Neighbor on rBlock