



San Francisco Chronicle

## Internet company contests parking tickets for individuals, corporations San Francisco one of three covered cities

Matt Hines, Cnet News.com

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Glen Bolofsky doesn't think you should necessarily have to pay your parking tickets, and he's doing something about it.

Years ago, the New Yorker got sick of paying off the endless stream of tickets that he found on his windshield. So after running in circles to find the right methods to appeal the violations, Bolofsky decided to capitalize on his experience. In 1982, he started a company that sold a package of documents meant to help people navigate the frustrating maze of New York's parking-ticket appeals system.

By 1993, Bolofsky's enterprise had morphed into a software program for businesses that wanted information on fighting tickets. Then in 2001, he started Parkingticket.com, which provides a ticket appeals service online for several cities, including San Francisco.

This year, the company, which operates strictly via the Web, will take in more than \$3 million in revenue as it provides ticket-fixing services for individuals and a growing number of corporate clients.

Parkingticket.com's list of customers includes large companies with huge fleets of delivery vehicles, such as Anheuser-Busch and Kraft Foods. Other corporate clients are television networks such as NBC and CNN, whose vehicles are notorious targets for meter maids.

The reason the system works roughly 75 percent of the time and has helped clear an estimated \$100 million in tickets over its 20-plus years of operation is simple, Bolofsky said. He believes that most parking tickets are in violation.

For instance, it is legal for most commercial vehicles to double-park for up to three hours while making deliveries. General ignorance of such rules may be why United Parcel Service is another company that has

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approached the site about subscribing to its services.

"Most big cities use parking tickets as a method of generating revenue, not for creating an environment of safety for drivers and pedestrians, the reason why parking tickets were invented," Bolofsky said.

"If you begin looking at the actual regulations, you'll find that most tickets are not really enforceable."

The Parkingticket.com system is simple. If you live in New York City, San Francisco or Washington, D.C., you can log on to the site and submit the details of any parking violation. For half the cost of what the ticket charges, the company will fight the ticket for you, and it usually wins, Bolofsky said. If you lose, the company refunds your original payment.

Parkingticket.com refuses to appeal any tickets that involve perceived safety issues, such as blocking a fire lane or misusing a handicapped parking spot.

Bolofsky contends that successfully fighting most parking tickets is not that hard. The trick is in knowing how to find the right forms and regulations, learning the rules and filing an appeal.

Some cities, for example, will merely send a second notice to people who have filed for an appeal by mail without telling them that their complaint was never scheduled or heard. Most people incorrectly read this as a sign that they have already lost and simply pay the fine, he said.

"We're not trying to cheat the cities out of money," Bolofsky said. "We're helping people exercise their rights."

The Web has proved to be the killer application for Bolofsky's idea. Parkingticket.com has grown from a one-man operation in an apartment to an 11- person business in Paramus, N.J. He said the collapse of the Internet boom made it possible for him to start the site, for he couldn't afford sufficient hosting services and site design services until prices began to plummet.

The company will start Chicago and Los Angeles services later this year and has plans for similar offerings in Boston, London and Montreal.

Calls seeking comment on the site from the parking departments of New York, San Francisco and Washington were not immediately returned.

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