

# Crowd control Needle

Location\_US  
Date\_2011  
Design\_In-house  
Website\_needle.com

**N**eedle is a new 'fan-sourcing' service that pays brand enthusiasts to assist its online shoppers. Needle hopes to transform visitors into shoppers by providing them with advice and recommendations from people who are 'just like them'. Brands that have so far signed up to the service include Urban Outfitters, Under Armour and Skullcandy.

Urban Outfitters integrated the Needle platform into its e-commerce site in December 2011. Now, a pop-up window will appear if a user clicks the 'chat' tab at the bottom of any product window, or automatically once they have been on the site for eight minutes. They can then choose to engage in an instant messaging conversation with a brand representative. Brand representatives can also create social coupons for customers to share with friends on Facebook.

To recruit 'Needlers', Needle uses Facebook and product recommendation sites to identify those who are already posting enthusiastically about brands online. Under Armour received 200 applications per hour from a post on Facebook.

Potential Needlers are screened for their ability to communicate and receive remote training. They are sent select products to test and they can also earn points to redeem against products. There is a scorecard for every interaction, which rates the quality and overall customer satisfaction. Needle is also able to identify which calls result in sales.

Needle's future plans include developing a mobile platform so that customers can access the resource while out and about via chat or SMS, with audio or video features in the pipeline.

123

