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Shipbird turns everyday commuters into couriers

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A hot car ride through Houston to pick up a check should have taken about an hour and a half for [Marc Diamond](#)'s brother. It ended up taking three-and-a-half hours due to rush-hour traffic. On the plus side, it gave [Diamond](#) the idea for his current business.

"I just started thinking about how many people were making that drive and would be interested in making some extra money," he said.

The result was Shipbird, a startup that connects everyday commuters with businesses seeking couriers. Launched in May 2014 with \$100,000 in funding, the service has delivered over 1,200 packages without fail and on time. In November, Shipbird partnered with Farmgirl Flowers and will handle Farmgirl's extended Bay Area deliveries (i.e. outside San Francisco).

The service works by having users sign in and give a time window of their availability, their commuting route, and how far outside of that radius they're willing to travel. If something needs to be picked up or delivered along that route, the user will be notified by email or text message. Delivery prices are determined by an algorithm that factors in time, distance and gas costs, with a minimum delivery charge of \$17. The courier keeps 85 percent of the money, with Shipbird taking the remaining 15 percent. So far, it's a formula that's worked out well for customers.

"It's awesome," said [Alison Mountford](#), CEO of Square Meals, a San Francisco-based meal delivery service. "I've been telling so many people about them."

While Mountford raves about Shipbird, she was skeptical at first and did a trial run.

"In the first couple weeks, I told my clients what we were doing and asked for their feedback," she said. "Across the board I got fantastic feedback. That was actually the turning point for me."

Mountford valued that Shipbird guaranteed her food would be delivered within a certain time, which was important because the food needed to be delivered while still hot. Not only has Shipbird proved more reliable than other delivery services Mountford has tried, she said it saves her between \$5 and \$7 per delivery.

Farmgirl Flowers has had similar experiences, General Manager [Rhiannon Smith](#) said. During a soft launch in which Farmgirl used Shipbird for over 100 deliveries, Shipbird delivered each one on time. "They've been very helpful, easy to work with and reliable," she said.

To be a potential Shipbird courier, you need to have a Paypal account. In the near future, Shipbird plans to implement a background check option as well as an insurance option. Currently, the company recommends that all shipped items be less than \$50 in value. Right now, Shipbird has around 5,000 users.

"We predict that when we get up to 15,000 or 20,000 users, almost every possible delivery will be accounted for," [Diamond](#) said.

Shipbird is profitable and has just four employees. Since all the couriers are commuters of some sort, the company itself can be relatively small while still being able to scale and expand easily.

"We could go live within any city in the world with a couple hours of programming right now," he said.

Shipbird's expansion plans would ideally include Southern California where there are a great number of drivers and "delivery is tough," according to [Diamond](#). Expansion may come sooner rather than later as Shipbird is in talks to partner with more companies.

Company: Shipbird

What it does: Lets users sign up to deliver packages for businesses

Founder: [Marc Diamond](#)

Founded: August 2013

Initial funding: \$100,000

Employees: Four

Website: shipbird.com

Richard Procter is an intern for the San Francisco Business Times.