
FAST FEED

RELAY FOODS LETS YOU ORDER LOCAL PRODUCE FROM YOUR PHONE

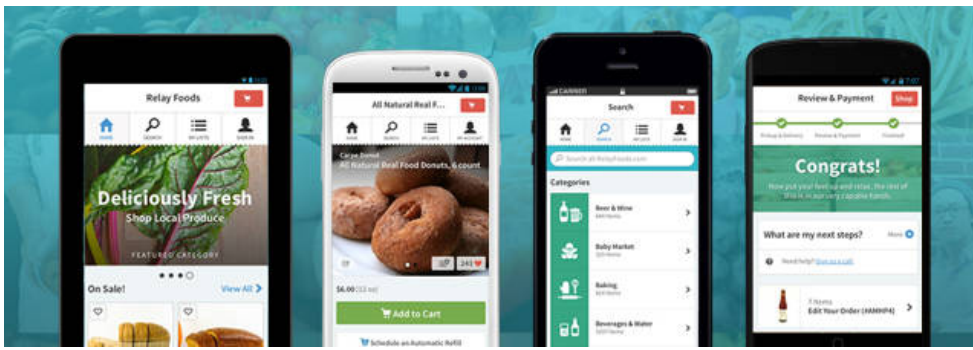
TO REDUCE OVERHEAD, RELAY FOODS CHOOSES GROCERY PICK-UP LOCATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY, CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT FEELS KIND OF LIKE A FARMERS MARKET.

BY: ALICE TRUONG

Grocery-delivery startup Relay Foods today unveiled a new mobile website allowing customers to order local, organic produce directly from their phones.

"We really believe that online grocery is the wave of the future for buying food," cofounder Arnie Katz told *Fast Company*. Though Relay offers door-to-door delivery for a premium, the company aims to create a farmers market-like atmosphere by having customers pick up from a convenient location in the community, such as a shopping center or school. Most customers opt for the pickup option because it's free, which also helps Relay keep costs low.

"We can make 20 deliveries an hour instead of three deliveries an hour with home delivery," said Katz, who serves as the company's president and chief operating officer. "We're also making connections between producers and consumers. We think for too long there were too many layers of separation between food producers and people."

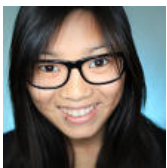


Relay decided against building a responsive site that would work across desktops, tablets, and smartphones because there were different demands for the devices. The company also chose not to create platform-specific apps to dedicate resources on a single mobile site that can be accessed on all smartphones and tablets. "We know people are doing utility driven work on the phone, and groceries is utility," said Matthew Smith, art director at Relay.

The mobile site, currently in beta, has features that let users search for items, browse curated lists, place orders, and learn more about their food by providing sourcing information and producer profiles. Based in Charlottesville, Va., Relay Foods has a presence in six Mid-Atlantic markets and has aspirations to expand nationally.

"We plan to go south to North Carolina, Georgia, and then toward Florida, and from there toward the Midwest," Katz said. "We have a business model that works very well in suburban areas, so for us going south is the right direction."

[Images: Relay Foods]



ALICE TRUONG

Based in San Francisco, Alice Truong is a staff writer at Fast Company. As a special contributor for USA TODAY, she wrote a weekly tech column and hosted a corresponding web show. She previously reported in Chicago, Washington D.C., New York, and most recently Hong Kong, where she (left her heart and) worked as a staff reporter for the Wall Street Journal.

CONTINUE

August 22, 2013 | 12:43 PM