



RE-CODE.COM

Carbon Defense League & Conglomco Media Conglomeration

- + *Re-code.com* was a free web service that allowed its customers to share product information and create barcodes that could be printed and used to re-code items in stores by placing new labels over existing UPC symbols to set a new price - participating in an act of 'tactical shopping'. *Re-code.com* at its core was a shared database, updateable by our customers. Participation was free and required no special membership agreements or software download. After entering the web site, customers could choose to search and view information in the database currently or add their own collected data to the system. Using the custom barcode generator application, barcodes were drawn in real time and made available to the user. We utilised only UPC-A type barcodes, one of the most common varieties of barcode. It is used in most retail applications in North America and Europe. On the web site, we showed users a process whereby they could obtain cheaper prices for items in stores by simply re-coding items they planned to purchase, or switch the labels on items to reveal messages for customers and cashiers that might reveal the 'true' prices of goods. The *Re-code.com* web site itself was a mockery of *Priceline.com*, made to look nearly identical to its counterpart who uses a consumer as revolutionary advertising approach to entice people to name their own price for goods and services. *Re-code.com* simply wanted to take that concept to its logical completion, allowing any price to be named and re-coded in the store by the customer through barcode replacement. *Re-code.com* highly encouraged re-coding name brand items with their generic equivalents as both a safety tactic and a way to comment on the overpricing of branded items. The two



New to re-code? [Click here](#)
 Want to help collect data? [Click here](#)
 Want to help advertise? [Click here](#)



Go to our [video](#) page for more.

HOW TO PRESHOP



Search
Find the prices you want to pay using our Re-Code search utility. Find items that are sold where you shop.



Print
Copy, Paste, and Print your results at home on label paper through your favorite graphics program.

HOW TO SHOP



Find a store
Find a store that carries the item you have barcodes for. Try replacing brand name items with generics.



Compare
Here we compare a generic item that costs \$1.00 less to a brand name item.



Find the code
Locate the barcode and be aware of size and orientation.



Peel
Peel off the preprinted sticker for the cheaper item, or cut out at home.



Re-Code
Apply the cheaper item's barcode to the more expensive item.



Check out
Cashiers usually don't notice but machines never do.



Enjoy
Shopping is much more enjoyable when you determine the prices.

HOW TO POSTSHOP



Add to us
Use our add form to submit information about unaltered items you purchase.

RE-CODE Your Own Price™

There are 612 barcodes in the database currently.

Search the RE-CODE.COM Supercomputer!

Search Term:

MaxPrice:

[SEARCH >](#)

[SHOW ALL >](#)

Add to the RE-CODE.COM Supercomputer!

Category:*

Product Name:**

Product Brand:

Store Name:

Store Address:

Store City:

Store State:

Packaging:*

UPC ID:***

Price:*

ex. 12.49 or 0.98

* required field

[ADD >](#)



Find Cheaper Prices
Clip Barcodes
Not Coupons

Try Re-Code.com's BARCODE GENERATOR!

By inputting a 10, 11, or 12 digit UPC Type A number, you can instantly generate a barcode that can be printed and used for re-coding products with prices that you want to pay!



Enter 10, 11, or 12 digits

[GENERATE](#)

Pressing Generate will take you to a new screen with the .png barcode image displayed. Right Click PC or CTRL+Click on a Mac over image and choose Copy then Paste into your favorite graphics program.

[Learn How a UPC Type A Retail Barcode Works](#)
Support for multiple UPC Types coming soon!

Print Pre-formatted Re-Code.com Sheets

Try printing some of our most popular barcodes by store from these convenient PDF sheets:

- [Price Chopper - NY](#) - Updated March 14, 2003
- [Wal Mart - NY](#) - Updated March 14, 2003
- [Shaws Food and Drug - ME](#) - Updated March 14, 2003

[Help Create Pre-formatted Sheets for Re-Code.com](#)

Have an idea for a themed sheet? Send us [mail](#) about it or create it and [mail](#) it to us. Automated process to come soon.

[technical support](#) - [advertising sales](#) - [press contact](#) - [suggestions](#)

* We in no way endorse the theft of products or services. Re-code.com was created as satire. We intend only to make aware the prevalence of barcodes and begin a critical discussion about what their pervasiveness means. This is not a product designed to be used in any malicious or illegal manner. Any such use is strictly prohibited. You should not use any of the barcodes available from this site for any illegal activity. They are here for your amusement.

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unique processes we developed that are critical to the building of the database are known as 'preshopping' and 'postshopping'. The processes required visiting *Re-code.com* both before and after the process of shopping.



After going live on March 12th, 2003, the *Re-code.com* web site went unnoticed for close to 10 days when suddenly it began receiving attention on numerous weblogs¹ that understood the satire and appreciated the concept of the site. The project was presented on March 23 at the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Chicago, IL. This move behind the white walls made *Re-code.com* become Art. *Salon.com* published the first story on the web site on April 10th. That same day, the domain name WHOIS masking service employed by *Re-code.com*, Domains by Proxy, received a cease and desist letter from attorneys representing the world's largest retail employer, Wal-Mart. Domains by Proxy hid the registration information for the domain name from public view for a price. At that time *Re-code.com* was averaging over 50,000 non-unique hits per day with a highpoint of 96,000 hits in one hour alone. The servers running the site were bogged down and access became sporadic at best. The site had struck a nerve and the attention that was now being given to the site's creators was now much more a result of Wal-Mart's threats than of the site's actual content. Countless interviews were granted with multiple media outlets including morning call in shows, college radio programmes, investigative reporters, National Public Radio stations, the British Broadcasting Company, and others around the world. The site's attention was almost too much to believe. Not only was Wal-Mart upset by the site, but also angered were Price Chopper (a chain grocery store whose self-scanning check out aisles were featured), the Kellogg's corporation (whose *Frosted Flakes*



cereal product was re-coded in the instructional video), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Federal Trade Commission. After consulting with several lawyers who had offered the site's creators pro-bono legal counsel, the database and barcode generator portions of the website were pulled down and replaced by a 10 minute response video by the site's creators detailing the events and presenting an argument retaliating against Wal-Mart.

The criminalisation of such a project by Wal-Mart, the world's largest retail corporation that serves to underline the double standard, critical deviant micro-networks and individuals must observe. Wal-Mart is a corporation that has shut down efforts of employees to organise labour unions and works hard to hire primarily part-time employees to avoid the cost of health insurance in the US. They are only one example of a normalised corporate strategy which in the name of capitalism serves only to punish individuals and protect boards of directors.

According to the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights, the deregulation of energy and the hidden handshakes between government and corporation is responsible now for the accumulated theft of over \$71 billion from the California taxpayer.² If we take this as only one instance of corporate theft and compare it to the estimated 9 - 12 billion dollars in consumer theft estimated yearly, we see that there is much work to be done to liberate capital, when the corporate criminals go unpunished and shoplifters face harsh prison sentencing.

With such gross injustice on the part of these large corporations, consumer theft, as a process that works to radically liberate stolen capital, has much more work ahead of it. While consumer theft is still below the yearly estimated averages of corporate theft, it is working hard to bring justice where courts have failed. It should also be noted that the risks associated with consumer theft are usually much greater than those associated with corporate theft. This means that an 18 year old girl stealing a set of AA Batteries from Wal-Mart faces most likely a longer prison sentence than a board of directors member of Enron Corporation, responsible for billions of dollars in theft and the loss of countless pension



plans for its retiring employees. It's a tough job liberating capital, but due to uncontrollable circumstances our heroes are out there in the aisles everyday. These shoplifters are engaged in a micro-network of critical deviant practice.

These statistics were compiled by Hayes International, a theft consultancy firm. These numbers might look staggering, but some simple math by means of subtraction from the numbers we see below, shows that shoplifter liberators still have a lot of work ahead of them. Total retail losses are approximately \$33.21 billion annually, with 30%-40% of those losses coming from shoplifting.³

Table 1: Theft Incidents and Dollars lost to Shoplifters ⁴

Time Frame	Dollars	Incidents
Annually	\$10 - \$13 Billion (\$9.963 - \$13.284 Billion)	330 - 440 Million (332.1 - 442.8 million)
Daily (365 days)	\$27 - \$36 Million (\$27,295,890 - \$36,394,521)	900,000 - 1,200,000 (909,863 - 1,213,151)
Hours (24)	\$1.1 - \$1.5 Million (\$1,137,329 - \$1,516,438)	38,000 - 50,500 (37,911 - 50,548)
Minutes (60)	\$19,000 - \$25,300 (\$18,955 - \$25,274)	630 - 840 (631.85 - 842.47)

From this position of limited power, the critical deviant is afforded the ability to radically engage the administrators of the status quo, which in the capitalist US are the corporations. Direct theft is one such effort. Simply the idea of theft, which is what essentially *Re-code.com* became about, scares the mega-corporations straight into defensive attack mode. Corporations like Wal-Mart issue countless cease & desist letters to protect the system they have constructed, that benefits only corporate deviance but harshly punishes the critical deviant practitioner. If only we had our own lobbying group then perhaps we might stake claim to having some role in governance. For now in the US we exist primarily as sacrificial lambs to shove fear into the hearts of all those that might consider deviant anti-capitalist activity. This is of course not to say that all critical deviant practice must work to overthrow a capitalist regime in the US. Such an argument would be contrary to the essential principle of critical deviant practice that is



occurring forever in a cycle of dissent. To clearly define an ideology as rigid as anti-capitalist (take that to mean whatever you like) as an essential part of critical deviant practice, limits the power of its flexibility. It will dominate eventually because it is fertile ground for continued and contradictory dissent, unlike capitalism.

Re-code.com began to address issues of humour as well as property and theft. The project worked very much in the tradition of the trickster mythology. Hyde warns 'beware the social system that cannot laugh at itself, that responds to those who do not know their place by building a string of prisons' (Hyde 1998: 72). In discussing property and theft Hyde states:

'Our ideas about property and theft depend on a set of assumptions about how the world is divided up. Trickster's lies and thefts challenge those premises and





in so doing reveal their artifice and suggest alternatives.’ (1998: 72)

This reinforces the notion that law is defined by the powerful by way of alleged democracy, or more appropriately, a supposed rule by the majority. The laws serve to uphold a notion of property which at its core is also subjective. By questioning a law or boundary as *Re-code.com* did, hidden and unfocused deeper questions emerge. Hyde asks ‘who gave all of Pennsylvania to William Penn’ (1998: 72)? It is the root of the question we ask where we find the essential questions. To accept that *Re-code.com* promoted theft requires first to accept that property ownership is not theft.

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Text excerpted from forthcoming publication by Carbon Defense League.

NOTES:

1. A weblog is usually a personal website with periodic updates and journalistic style entries.
2. <<http://www.consumerwatchdog.org/utilities/rp/rp002193.pdf>>.
3. Both University of Florida and Hayes International surveys.
4. Hayes International survey.

Re-code.com is a collaboration between Carbon Defense League <<http://www.carbondefense.org>> and Conglomco Media Conglomeration <<http://www.conglomco.org>>. The web site <<http://www.re-code.com>> is currently offline after a second legal threat from Wal-Mart attorneys in Winter 2004.

REFERENCES:

Lewis Hyde (1998) *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, & Art*, New York: North Point Press.

