

Mike Epstein

Age: 26

Occupation: Software Engineer, Google

Are you a T.A. member? Yes!

Where do you commute to/from? Fort Greene, Brooklyn to the Garment District in Manhattan

What is your route? Typically, Ashland Place to the Manhattan Bridge, up Bowery to Broome, Lafayette to 13th Street, then up Sixth Avenue the rest of the way. Going home, I take Broadway most of the way.

What kind of bike do you have? I commute on a hybrid with a fascinating array of rattles and mechanical oddities.

What kinds of gear do you use (not gears on bike, but lights, helmet, rain coat, etc.)? Helmet, of course; front and rear blinkies. A bright orange messenger bag for gear and visibility. In the winter, a hat under my helmet, warm gloves and a breathable jacket.

How long have you been commuting? Almost two years.

Why did you start commuting by bike? The first time I dared to ride a bike in Manhattan (instead of just piddling around Brooklyn) was the day after the blackout in 2003, when the subways still weren't running and I had no other way to get to work. It turned

out to be way less intimidating than I'd feared, and I gradually started biking to work more and more.

What do you wear when you bike to work? I tend to ride in the pants I'll wear to work that day (with the cuff turned up), and above the waist I wear a wicking t-shirt plus breathable jacket in the winter. When I get to work I have a cold drink and change shirts. My office just got a shower, which may change my habits a bit.

Do you ride in all weather? I usually take the subway when it's raining, icy or below 20 degrees. Everything else is easy to adjust for with appropriate clothing. I used to ride in the rain, but I got tired of road grit everywhere.

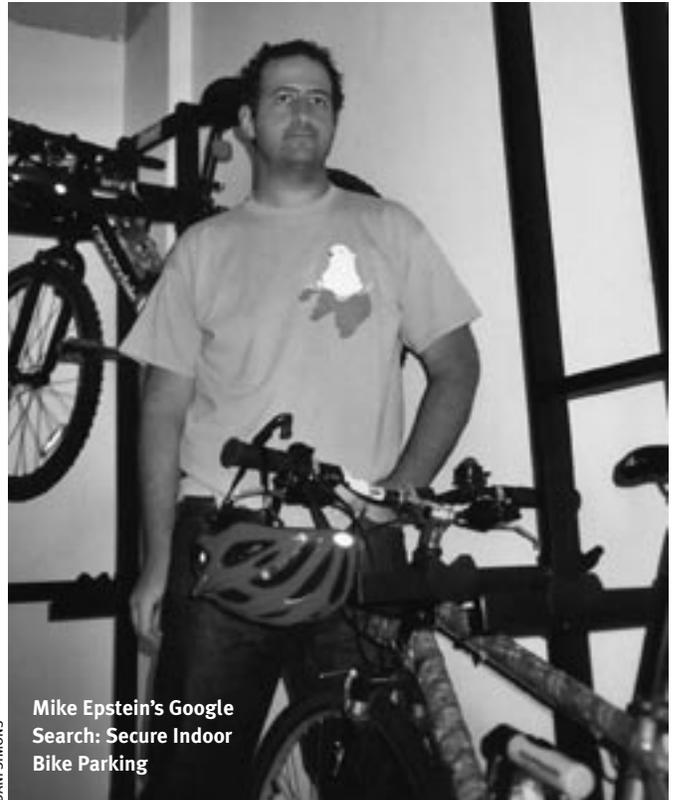
What are some memorable experiences? The time in December when, in the middle of the Manhattan Bridge, I stopped to find two people pulling up a woman who was trying to jump off. We held her there until the police arrived and removed her, unharmed.

Best commute: It's always fun to run into friends on the street—hopefully not literally.

Worst experience/commute: Getting doored by a taxi in the Sixth Avenue bike lane just a few blocks from work. I was OK, and the passenger was apologetic, but it's never fun to get thrown from your ride.

Advice for new bicycle commuters: The summer is a great time to try bike commuting for the first time, but I actually like it better when it's colder out: the first few blocks are chilly, but then you warm up, and the feeling of your own body heat sustaining you as you pedal along is a real rush.

Where do you park your bike? I used to park



Mike Epstein's Google Search: Secure Indoor Bike Parking

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out on the street, with a New York U-Lock and Kryptonite locking skewers, and never had a problem (in Midtown during the day). When I started my new job, I began to pester our facilities people for indoor bike parking. Despite massive opposition from our building management (who recited the usual litany of ill-informed objections), we managed to convince the building to convert an unused storage room near the freight entrance into bike parking. Now five to ten people from my office commute to work every day, compared with just one (me) before we got indoor bike parking.

My company (Google) is based in California, where hundreds of employees bike to work, and it sponsors Bike to Work Day events every year, but it took a lot of effort to bring that part of our culture to New York and encourage people to give it a try. This year we had our first Bike to Work Day in New York, and we got over 5% of the office to try it—a great start! We also managed to lobby for a shower in our office.

What's your riding style? Fast, using bike lanes when they're safe (Lafayette Street) and taking the whole lane when they're not wide enough to avoid being doored (Sixth Avenue). □

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