



Why word of mouth shouts loudly

Around 90 per cent of customers trust word-of-mouth recommendations, so FIDI Affiliates are being offered the chance to harness their customer comments using a new online platform. The directors of MoveAide.com explain why they believe their digital tool is a step forward...



While filing customer feedback forms as part of the FIDI-FAIM process, Christopher Ng had a 'light-bulb moment'. The forms contained some great comments from the relocation company's customers, but they were disappearing into a filing cabinet, where they often remained.

'I thought they would be an amazing marketing tool for the company,' said Ng, then a Santa Fe employee at their Singapore office. However, greater attention was being paid to negative feedback, as managers needed to talk quickly to unhappy clients to find out what had gone wrong.

Ng, who has a Master's degree in IT, later attended a seminar on social media for business: 'All the statistics presented showed that social media and word-of-mouth marketing could no longer be ignored.' More people are

The MoveAide team, from left to right: Ha Lien Doan, developer; Alan Wong, web designer; Wendy Heng, sales and marketing; Christopher Ng, product development; and Tedy Lim, developer

basing purchasing decisions - and posting reviews - on customer-rating sites. So Ng got together with his now business partner, Wendy Heng - who also worked at Santa Fe - to develop a bespoke tool that could help the moving industry capture customer feedback, effectively and neutrally.

'TAKING AWAY THE HASSLE'

After developing the concept over about 18 months, the two Singaporeans launched MoveAide (www.moveaide.com) in August 2013. Today, their clients include UniGroup Relocation in Asia - as well as some smaller moving companies in China - and they want to partner with FIDI.

'We needed a system that would help take away all

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the hassle and additional resources required to collect and manage customer feedback' said Ng, who points out that MoveAide has been improved after work with industry 'early adopters'.

'We wanted a system that would encourage customers of moving companies to help promote the great service they have provided, and a platform that would put movers where their potential customers are looking.'

At the core of it, according to Ng, it had to be 'intuitive and easy to use, for the moving companies as well as their customers'.

Heng, whose background is in sales and marketing, says working with FIDI makes sense, because her company and the federation are focused on promoting excellence in the moving industry.

'We both recognise that customer feedback is the ultimate measurement of customer satisfaction – and, therefore, the success criteria of any quality service system,' she said.

'Through a partnership with MoveAide, FIDI may be able to expand on those requirements, creating more opportunities for quality measurement and benchmarking. The standard measurements will also provide metrics for easy comparison.'

MoveAide wants to provide tools to 'allow FIDI to take the lead and raise the industry's standards' by improving service quality.

TRUSTED ADVERTISING

There is some scepticism about the value of an online rating platform to the moving industry, which knows its customers well.

One concern raised by a FIDI PFA member in Orlando was about the security of customer information, while others were unsure about working with a rating platform. However, about half of those present at the PFA indicated that they would consider using the platform.

Heng encourages FIDI Affiliates to try the MoveAide platform – on a purely voluntary basis – before judging it. She points out that online consumer reviews were listed as the second most trusted form of advertising in the 2012 Nielsen report, with 70 per cent of global consumers surveyed online indicating that they have faith in this source.

In addition, says Heng, 90 per cent of consumers around the world say they trust 'earned media' – such as word of mouth and recommendations from friends and family – above all other forms of advertising.

THE POWER OF GOOGLE

'Ask anyone between the ages of 20 and 40 about how they select a product to purchase, or a service provider to use, and their answer would most likely be "Google",' says Heng. 'People are going online to read reviews before parting with their money.'

Review sites in the United States – including Yelp, Angie's List and moverreviews.com – plus social media sites, such as Facebook, and Google, can cause problems for moving companies, by publishing unreasonable customer or competitor reviews without any easy means of recourse. MoveAide wants to put the control back in movers' hands; it invites all moving companies' customers – whether happy or not – to publish a review after their move.

All positive reviews can be consolidated in one place. MoveAide includes a free search engine optimisation (SEO) service to improve the Google rankings of a moving company's MoveAide-review page by using relevant 'key words' – for instance, the term 'removalist' in Australia.

The impact of TripAdvisor

Customer reviews site TripAdvisor has had a huge impact on the hotel and restaurant industries. According to one independent survey of 12,000 travellers, three-quarters of people use TripAdvisor before booking a hotel, and just over half use it before choosing a restaurant.



Because less happy customers are given the opportunity to vent their views on MoveAide, the company concerned can contact them quickly and, hopefully, turn the situation around. Having ranted on MoveAide, say Ng and Heng, the customer is less likely to post more negative reviews elsewhere.

TAKING CONTROL

On MoveAide, all the customer feedback received translates into quantifiable analytics that movers can use to manage service-quality scores within their organisations. Analytics are generated in real time and MoveAide allows for in-depth benchmarking against the industry.

'The digital age has thrown a curve ball at the moving industry – so much has changed over the past five years,' says Ng. 'With social media getting increasingly prevalent, we have to decide whether we continue to deal with problems in the same way, or whether we embrace change and try to take control.'

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WHAT IS MOVEAIDE?

- MoveAide is a cloud-based system that helps moving companies collect, showcase and manage their customer feedback
- It is designed to relieve moving companies of the costs, inefficiencies and complexities of maintaining a traditional (paper-based) customer feedback system, and provides real-time analytics
- MoveAide is subscription based, with no need for hardware investment. All moving companies require is a PC/laptop and Internet access
- Once subscribed, movers need to just spend a couple of minutes configuring the system set-up. They can then start sending feedback invites to their customers
- Customer feedback forms are designed typically to take no more than three minutes to complete
- Customers who post positive reviews will automatically be encouraged to share their review on their personal social media pages
- If a customer posts a negative review, the system will alert the mover immediately via email. The mover can then quickly respond by posting a management response
- Research shows that when customers read reviews online, they are not looking to find a company with only positive reviews. In fact, this is likely to indicate that the reviews have been rigged