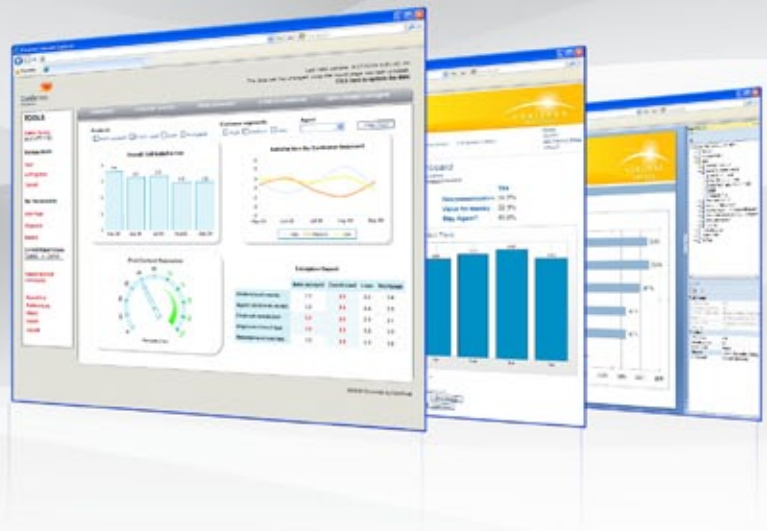


ZipRealty

CASE STUDY



Homing in on Great Service

ZIPREALTY: HOMING IN ON GREAT SERVICE

ZipRealty, Inc. provides home sellers and buyers with an innovative real estate solution. By harnessing the efficiencies of the Internet, they have streamlined the real estate process, providing greater value to the experience of buying and selling a home. The company's mission has always been to bring great people and technology together, providing a service that is unique in its industry.

Founded in 1999 and operating in 22 states and 35 metropolitan areas, ZipRealty is represented across the US by approximately 3,000 agents. Unlike traditional real estate brokerages, the business is not a franchise, so most ZipRealty agents are employees of the company. This somewhat unusual set-up enables ZipRealty to manage most agents in an effort to drive customer satisfaction, something that is not possible for companies with an entirely independent contractor agent force.

To understand the level of customer satisfaction that they provide, since its inception ZipRealty has run a customer survey, asking customers to rate their experience of working with a ZipRealty agent. Heidi Phan, Director, Customer Engagement, explains "Growth has changed our business a great deal, but one thing that has remained the same has been our focus on putting the customer at the center of everything we do. Our goal is to enhance the standard of service in an industry that, frankly, according to many consumers, isn't well trusted".

GROWING DEMANDS

For several years, ZipRealty used a self-service survey tool to e-mail surveys to customers shortly after the completion of their home purchase or sale. Phan adds "The surveys have been great in enabling us to understand the experiences we were offering to customers; they brought in a lot of valuable information. But as the business grew, the number of surveys we needed to send out rose, and because the process was quite manual it just wasn't sustainable for us to use in the longer term."

ZipRealty: Feedback in Numbers

- 100 surveys every day.
- 70% response rate.
- 95% satisfaction score.
- 1,500 warm leads generated.

To make the customer feedback process scalable, the team began to look for a new tool that would automate much of the process. Following a rigorous screening procedure, the team selected feedback management

platform Confirmit. Phan continues "We were looking for a solution that would not only deliver greater efficiencies, but would provide us with a technology partner for the long term. With 100 surveys being sent out every day, and our business growing, robustness and scalability were key. Confirmit was clearly in an entirely different league than our previous supplier and we could see real potential in implementing it at ZipRealty."

The independent and timely nature of the customer satisfaction survey is core to the success of the program. Every night, customer details are uploaded into Confirmit via FTP automatically and sent to customers 3 days after they have closed escrow on their property. Up to 3 reminder e-mails are sent to customers who haven't responded to maximize response rates, which are currently at around 70%.

The survey allows customers to rate any agents they dealt with during their home buying or selling process, as well as allowing them to provide feedback on other companies the client worked with during the transaction (such as a mortgage lender) and any other aspects of the service they received. Phan adds "Being able to comment on the services provided by multiple agents was an important change we were able to make as a result of the move to Confirmit. In the past, customers could only comment on a single agent, but in many cases, they'd dealt with multiple agents through the home buying process. This change may seem small, but it demonstrates the way in which we've been able to improve our surveys to better reflect the way we do business. We don't have to compromise on the feedback we want because of the way we gather it."

Agents take the feedback they receive very seriously. Not only is it a matter of pride for a company that sets itself high goals in customer satisfaction, but agents are given bonuses when they receive the highest satisfaction rating. Phan adds "The fact that the surveys are controlled centrally by ZipRealty, rather than at an agent level, maintains the integrity of the survey results, which is very important to us. Furthermore, the professional look and feel of the surveys that we're able to achieve with Confirmit builds increased trust in the data—and the program as a whole."

The process varies for a few of ZipRealty's markets, but in most areas, as responses are received from customers, they are filtered into e-mail alerts which Confirmit automatically sends to the relevant District Director. All key information from the survey is included, enabling the Director to get clear insight into the customers' views. District Directors monitor the feedback they receive and follow up with agents who receive negative feedback to try to understand the issues and consider ways of avoiding similar situations in the future. They also take any negative feedback to a monthly customer feedback meeting where a task force works together to focus on the common issues that customers have raised. In this way ZipRealty can take the experiences of existing customers and use them to improve those of future customers.

Why it Works

"Warm leads go cold, so Confirmit's immediate alerting action maximizes the agents' ability to turn referrals into new business."

-Heidi Phan, Director, Customer Engagement

MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

The customer satisfaction survey also drives some core marketing activities. The company Web site highlights satisfaction scores for all agents, as well as testimonials from customers which are gathered through the survey. The survey drives lead generation activities by including an option for customers to refer friends to ZipRealty. Phan explains “We get a significant number of referrals through the customer survey. While our Web site generates many more leads, the referrals generally provide a higher quality, or warmer lead. Confirmit’s alerting feature is really important here too. As soon as a referral is made, Confirmit sends an e-mail to the appropriate agent so they can follow up quickly. Warm leads go cold, so this immediate alerting action maximizes the agents’ ability to turn referrals into new business.”

Feedback drives many activities within ZipRealty, and the company continues to work on making the data accessible to all sales leadership so that service remains as the focal point at all times. To that end, Phan’s team exports the data from Confirmit to the company data warehouse and is currently working on making it easily accessible through the company’s intranet.

Implementing Confirmit to run their customer satisfaction program has enabled the research team to become more efficient and productive. Phan summarizes “Confirmit has allowed us to automate much more, so we spend our time working to create great customer experiences, rather than being bogged down in creating

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surveys and analyzing reports. We currently have a customer satisfaction rating averaging 95%, and we’re proud to put that on our Web site—our competitors are not in a position to publish that kind of data.”

“There’s a lot more we could do with Confirmit and we’re now looking at ways of automating even more of the process, and developing more advanced reports for our District Directors. Whatever we choose to do to enhance our customer satisfaction program, we know that Confirmit will be able to support those changes—it really does provide us with the ability to create a long term feedback plan.”



ABOUT CONFIRMIT

Confirmit is the world's leading SaaS vendor for Customer Feedback, Employee Feedback, and Market Research applications. The company has more than 200 employees and offices in Oslo (headquarters), Guildford, London, Moscow, New York, San Francisco, and Yaroslavl. Confirmit's software is also distributed through partner resellers in Barcelona, Kuwait City, Madrid, Milan, Pattaya, Sydney, and Tokyo.

Confirmit targets Global 5000 companies and Market Research agencies worldwide with a wide range of software products for feedback / data collection, panel management, data processing, analysis, and reporting. Customers include British Airways, Dow Chemical, Farmers Insurance, GlaxoSmithKline, Halifax Bank of Scotland, HSBC, Intrawest, Ipsos, Nielsen, The NPD Group, Safeco Insurance, Statoil, Symantec, Virgin Media, and Wells Fargo. Visit www.confirmit.com for more information.



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