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GoogleCompare had Steve Jobs Rolling Over – Insurance LeadGen to Continue Collapse

Steve Jobs was famous for saying; “A lot of times, people don’t know what they want until you show it to them.” He was most often referring to ‘focus groups’ and ‘industry experts’ as being the last place he’d look for ideas on innovation and disruption.

I’ve often wondered what Jobs would have said if asked to reimagine insurance distribution in America. I think he might have obsessed over ideas like; ‘a customer-centric mindset; a fierce focus on trust, a single place for managing risk.’ Not the likely rejoinders from today’s insurance industry LeadGen disruptors.

The Toxicity of Insurance LeadGen Drove GoogleCompare Out - Others will Follow.

TheZebra.com, Insurify.com, QuoteWizard.com, GoogleCompare ... the list appears to be endless these days – represent a group of ‘innovators’ who didn’t think to imagine what the consumer might want from an insurance experience, and in turn are delivering a toxic insurance shopping experience clouded by opaque offers like providing an ‘Expert Virtual Insurance Agent’. What’s worse, many in the FINTECH vertical – investors and media alike - are acknowledging these ‘innovations’ without ever taking them for a test drive. Imagine the Editor of Car & Driver simply publishing the latest press hype for a new FORD Truck model as gospel without taking the vehicle for a spin.

So, why not take a spin - ask for a quote from theZebra.com or QuoteWizard.com – AND give them your actual email address and cell phone number – then buckle up. Calls... emails... ad nauseam – and most of the outreach is not even from the LeadGen Company you connected to – in fact most of these LeadGen companies don’t actually sell insurance – they simply sell the customer and everything the customer has shared about themselves – to others. How can that be?

Their Words – Not Ours

TheZebra.com home page promises the consumer ‘**Insurance in Black & White**’®. Reminds me of Apple when it launched its iconic IPOD with the simple phrase; ‘*1,000 songs in your pocket*’ – pretty snappy. But unlike Apple, who simply delivered on its promise of 1,000 songs in your pocket – here’s what theZebra.com says they will actually do to the consumer and the personal information they provide while the customer thinks they are shopping for ‘Insurance in Black & White’® – and ironically enough - on their website, this privacy disclosure is in grey – as my Dad would say, there’s some things you just can’t make up. These are actual excerpts from the company web site – the underlining is ours; www.thezebra.com/help/privacy/

SHARING OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

The Zebra may rent, sell or share Personal Information or Location Based Information it collects about you to or with third parties. Personal Information and Location Based Information collected from you is commonly used to provide you with products and services and to comply with any requirements of law.

By submitting your e-mail address and/or phone number (as the case may be) via The Zebra or our properties, you authorize us to use that e-mail address and phone number to contact you periodically, via e-mail, SMS text message, and manually-dialed and/or auto-dialed telephone calls, concerning (i) your insurance-related or quote requests, (ii) any administrative issue regarding our services and/or (iii) information or offers that we feel may be of interest to you. We may also send e-mails to you periodically regarding updated quotes or offerings. You may opt out of receiving e-mails from us at any time by unsubscribing as set forth in the applicable e-mail. Additionally, by filling out information on The Zebra as part of your request for information about insurance policies and quotations, you authorize us to provide that information to various insurance companies, insurance agents and other related third parties that participate in our network. Some insurance companies or third parties may then provide your personal information to their insurance carriers, suppliers and other related vendors in order to generate price quotations and information relevant to insurance policies that you have requested. These third parties may use the contact information (including telephone number(s)) you have provided to contact you directly with quotations by means of telephone (manually or auto-dialed), fax, email and postal mail, even if you have registered your phone number(s) on local and/or national no-call lists. You further acknowledge and agree that each third-party that receives your quote request from this website or from our affiliates may confirm your information through the use of a consumer report, which may include among other things, your driving record and/or credit score. For purposes of faxing, it is understood that insurance companies or third parties have an established business relationship with each user of this website, if required to comply with the then current law.

We may also share certain Personal Information or Location Based Information with institutions providing possible product offerings to you based on the information you submit through the Website (e.g. financial institutions and/or insurance companies), and/or certain The Zebra vendors in order to allow them to use that information to obtain and provide us with additional information about you, and/or product offerings that might be of interest to you.

Decades of Trust put at Risk in a Digital Instant

Iconic insurance brands, like AllState, Amica, Esurance and MetLife – are just a few of the insurance carrier listed as the ‘*top insurance carriers*’ featured inside these LeadGen sites. This isn’t complicated. As consumers, all of us are very wary of providing our personal information to anyone – always looking for assurances that the receiver of our personal information is someone we can trust. As Insurance professionals, we will always require personal, non-public information to underwrite risk. It is critical as an industry that we preserve the public’s trust that we will respect their confidence and protect their data. In my company we do a lot of work with financial institutions - and even though they might

complain about regulatory overreach - most bank CEOs are proud to state in BLACK & WHITE - we will not share/sell your personal information with third parties. Look at the fight Apple and Google are prepared to wage to protect the personal data on someone's cell phone - so focused about protecting the assumption of trusted privacy implicit in their brands.

When insurance carriers specifically, and our industry in general, support, or worse, encourage these LeadGen models, they put our brands, our hard fought reputation of trust, and an emerging generation of customer centric, omni-channel licensed insurance advisors at risk. Insurance isn't a commodity – as long as underwriting is required, and regulators require massive balance sheets to stand at the ready to settle claims. Personal information, whether provided person to person, online, or via virtual driving analytics aggregation tools - it's the customers' data - and we as customers want to know who they are giving it to and how it's being used.

If carriers don't question this toxic experience called LeadGen, you can bet consumers and their advocacy groups will shortly assemble a collective voice to express their dissatisfaction to regulators – and the regulators will be quick to respond. I can hear Senator Elizabeth Warren and the CFPB decrying the misrepresentations and mistreatment suffered by the consumer when they provide their personal information under the guise of a black and white shopping experience - only to learn their information has in fact been down-streamed to others again and again - painting our entire industry with a very unflattering brush. Just as the outlandish behavior of certain mortgage origination companies drew harsh scrutiny for all lenders in the last decade - think of Insurance Commissioners and Congress taking aim at the 'grey print' of these LeadGen models - the CFPB alleging potential UDAP violations -because of their problematic impact on the consumer.

Going Forward

For the carriers - their dilemma is real. Traditional brick and mortar local agencies as distribution platforms are going away - they have no large, scalable, addressable markets that can be engaged digitally. GEICO is relentlessly accumulating market share by going direct to consumers. It's almost understandable that given those constraints, some of America's most powerful insurance brands are putting their brand equity at risk on these LeadGen platforms in an effort to remain visible, reaching for any option to remain viable.

An alternative solution is in fact emerging. Insurance Carriers and our industry must focus on imagining a new type of licensed agent with the tools that will let them provide a transformative insurance shopping experience for insureds – a lifetime of simple, comfortable, obsessively trustworthy insurance purchases and ongoing service. **And we, as agents, from the Big I on down, have to imagine a new generation of insurance advisors and insurance agencies - think of them as Meta Agents operating in Meta Agencies.** Can we imagine a new generation of agent that can instantly access all of the public and non-public information about a customer's character and collateral, deliver it to a stable of insurance carriers that are prepared to underwrite that risk, in exactly the format they need it in, get instant quotes from the carriers that reflect the customer's risk tolerance and assets to be insured, be available to provide any of the advisory insights the customer might want – all delivered exactly at the moment

the customer has an insurance need? A new generation of agents, operating in a new generation Meta-Agency - fulfilled in their work as risk managers and customer advocates, operating in a seamless, frictionless eco-system in life-long service to the customer. And all with an obsessive commitment to trust. Can you hear Steve Jobs in his iconic black turtleneck on stage wondering the same out loud?

A New Generation Agent and Agency

A new generation of Agent and Agency is emerging – empowered and excited to deliver insurance solutions to consumers, operating inside companies that have long and deep trusted brand equity with the consumer, an obsessive commitment to trust, and having earned that trust, have access to everything a carrier needs to know about the consumers character and collateral – eliminating the dreaded ‘insurance interview and application – or worse – the LeadGen hustle’. This new agent never prospects, sells or steers a customer – they simply focus on delivering a frictionless shopping, comparing, buying and post purchase service experience tailored to each unique customer exactly at the instant the customer needs it - again, with an obsession for trust. We believe the role of an agent, with a completely reimagined operating environment is more important and more valuable than ever before.

A new generation of Agents and Agency is emerging – reimagined to reflect what the customer actually wants, even though, in the iconic words of Steve Jobs – ‘they didn’t know it’.