'Working The Data Game'

At a time when customers need the greatest assurances, the tenet -- and the technology of insurance -- is facing its greatest test.

And Newport Beach, California-based Citytwig (citytwig.com) has branched ahead of the curve.

Founded in 2012, the FinTech firm is turning data and analytics into customer connections for some of the nation's largest insurance carriers. The company has an enormous database platform, primarily focusing on InsurTech, mostly in the life and health areas.

"What we've found since building the company – and, now that we have several multi-national insurance companies in our platform – is that companies, despite having an immense amount of data, didn't necessarily know how to discern or triangulate different products that could be sold, or clients that those products could be sold to," says Citytwig Founder and CEO Mike Kratzer.

Its data models comprised of over three years of comprehensive information from over a million agents and tens of thousands of members, Citytwig's ML platform is providing modernity to a trade long reliant on old fashioned exchanges.

With Citytwig clients – including heavyweights New York Life, Farmers Insurance, Pacific Life and Chase -- the process of streamlining old school handshakes into New Millennium mouse clicks didn't take much massaging.



Citytwig Founder and CEO Mike Kratzer.

Citytwig's proprietary scoring system provides modernity to a trade-long reliant on old-fashioned exchanges.

"When we first built the system and went to a couple of the large carriers, it was about presenting the trends going on in their organizations, and that had a lot of these carriers championing what we were doing," Kratzer says. "A good portion of that initial championing was coming from the management and agency levels."

Working with its proprietary scoring system, Citytwig presents agents with a greater understanding of customer data -- helping them utilize the information to make better products and provide enhanced service for clientele.

"A big part of it is scoring a client which is relevant to a carrier or agent's specific book of business," Kratzer explains. "Most of these businesses, they all have a certain population that they serve very well – even though they may not realize that. And our data enables them to have a far more specified approach

for their marketing, instead of casting out too wide a net."

Those concerned about any Big Brother effect need not worry.

"Most of the information we receive is what we call, 'De-identifying Data,' anything that's publicly and readily available – and not stepping over the line of personal identification information," says Kratzer, adding that Citytwig doesn't pay for data. "We're not so much concerned with personal information, but rather information such as age, geography or zip code instead of a specific address. We only use the core pieces of the data to create our models and develop our A.I."

The models are built around about 100,000 different types of insured people and 100,000 licensed insurance brokers or agents, creating well over 100 data points with which agents can understand clientele.

"We'll look at your current book of business, and then extrapolate, based on our models, where an agent or broker may have missed providing people a product that may be beneficial for them," Kratzer says.

“Sometimes, we'll find, say, an agent that's very comfortable selling life insurance – and that's all they ever sell. But the client is always interested in other products. And these questions or opportunities from the agent may never come up, so the customer isn't being presented with these additional, beneficial products."

And yet, despite working the data game, Kratzer sees Citytwig's tools as a medium to ultimately craft more valuable connections between carrier and customer. At the end of the information highway, those numbers are people -- and clients aren't One Size Fits All.

Most agents do a good job of accumulating applications and bringing in new customers, but the amount of data that comes in, sometimes the agents weren't taking the time to focus-in on all the information they had right the in front of them.

“They were always worried about the client *they don’t have*, instead of worrying about the client *they do have*."

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a global pivot towards more effective remote work has seen Citytwig well-positioned with agents who are a step-ahead instead of chasing customer needs.

"We've had several recent conversations with big carriers in which they've expressed their enthusiasms for going in our direction, and that they're now really seeing the benefits," Kratzer says of 2020's spring and early summer.

The past four months has found firms grasping the full value of different verticals, further embracing an enhanced use of analytics.

"Carriers have a greater understanding of how they can better service their customers, how they can reach out to them more and better serve them. From both sides, for agents and client, everybody wants to have these similarities," Kratzer says. "The more you can understand your customer and their respective life challenges or milestones as they occur, the agent becomes a better conduit of success, proves a better guide with better service for the customer."

Along with tapping deeper into the tech-savvy client pool of twenty-and-thirty-somethings, Citytwig's new school tools are aiding agents in real-time across the days of coronavirus.

"In the past, the steadiness of the insurance industry was accomplished through face-to-face sales, office visits, one-on-ones, going to businesses and meeting people through referrals – but since the virus, it's now made the data more powerful, because now agents don’t have that luxury of these in-person visits," Kratzer says.

"Will that change and will we go back to the way things were? Right now, who knows? At least for the foreseeable future, agents will need to utilize information to get new clients in the door. Our platform allows them to come to the customer with information that's viable and informative."

During uncertain times, customers are seeking more personal salve than ever; it just so happens that said modern comforts come via their own data. "Insurance will not be done the way it's always been done in the past," Kratzer concludes.

"The carriers will need more of these data-driven skills, and need to work more with remote tools instead of office or in-person visits. The data we accumulate and then present to these carriers is really at the forefront of the issues we're all going through with COVID right now." — By Judd Spicer, California Business Journal.

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