

Anchored in Advocacy

FICO Supports Strategic Growth
with Customer Advocacy



In the Business of Better Decision Making

Since its inception sixty years ago, FICO has applied its expertise in the use of Big Data and mathematical algorithms to more than just credit scoring. Roughly three-quarters of the world's largest banks use FICO to help them manage their loan origination, credit, and collections activities as well as customer communications. The organization also offers a wide array of cross-industry applications to support efforts ranging from business analytics to marketing and customer engagement to fraud prevention and security, with data and analysis for better decision making.

Taking the Broad View

While many organizations see reference management as a way to help close more business, FICO takes a broader view. Pete Appl, head of customer advocacy at FICO, characterizes it as engaging with customers and building long-term relationships that translate into value for FICO and create a positive experience for the customer. On FICO's side of that equation, value equals more than just sales references.

FICO's vision is to leverage customer advocates to provide feedback on topics such as company strategy, product features, market trends, and industry requirements, just to name a few. Doing this effectively requires knowing which customers are best suited for which opportunities and managing them appropriately. This strategic approach was one of the initial drivers behind their search for a reference management tool.

“Personally, I leverage Upland RO Innovation for sending multiple documents on a particular solution. It is especially good at finding webinars quickly that address a particular solution. It is also great to see if my contacts actually download artifacts.”

—Steve Ritchie, Client Sales Partner Canada

upland **RO Innovation**

FICO™

FICO, originally Fair, Isaac and Company, is a data analytics company based in San Jose, California focused on credit scoring services. It was founded by Bill Fair and Earl Isaac in 1956. Its FICO score, a measure of consumer credit risk, has become a fixture of consumer lending in the United States.

Industry: Data Analytics

Location: San Jose, CA

Website: fico.com

Challenge

- + Salespeople weren't using the hundreds of unmanaged assets the marketing team created, such as white papers and case studies.
- + The VP of Marketing wanted to leverage the voice of the customer in a number of company initiatives, such as product strategy or industry knowledge, but there was no easy way to find the right customer.
- + Salespeople were keeping their best references in their back pocket. Leveraging FICO's customer advocacy program would require a cultural shift.
- + Customer references were being overused, leading to an abuse of the customer relationship.

“While we had a fledgling customer advocacy program, we didn’t have a good way to manage these assets,” said Appl. “As a consequence, we would often overuse references for certain things and abuse their participation in the program. We needed to have a way we could systematically scale this initiative, bring those managed assets in, tie them to potential opportunities, and then control how often we used them.”

Sales complained that they could never find the right document when they needed it and were never sure they had the most current version. One of the reasons FICO chose Upland RO Innovation was for its ability to help them manage their unmanaged assets.

Appl elaborated on some of the features that attracted him to RO Innovation. “We could tag assets and build that tagging into the search capabilities to help salespeople find the right asset for their opportunity. We could also prepackage assets through the Spotlight feature and see which assets customers opened.

“Of course, the integration with Salesforce was a critical element. That is our tool of record, and everything that gets sent becomes part of the opportunity record, so having that integration was a big plus. Had it not been there, I don’t think we would have gone down this path.”

An Unexpected Turn

Appl and his team started to see references influencing and accelerating sales cycles, so they turned their attention from unmanaged assets to building up a store of managed assets, i.e., referenceable customers the sales team could call on to provide advocacy at key points during the sales process.

Meanwhile, a parallel value path emerged with analyst relations. As Appl explained, “The organization was implementing an initiative to engage more aggressively with industry analysts. Many of those interactions require some level of customer advocacy, some sort of customer reference. As we worked on building our store of sales references, we realized we had a fairly good opportunity to provide value to the analyst relations efforts by providing more robust, targeted advocates.”

FICO Sharpens Its Focus

To promote adoption, the customer advocacy team at FICO has also had to develop their change management skills. Like a lot of organizations, FICO’s salespeople were accustomed to keeping a handful of their best references in their back pocket. Appl and his team needed to help them develop a new approach: nominating their customers for the reference program and engaging with Ana Bauer, FICO’s lead reference manager, when a new reference is needed.

“By trying different approaches, we continue to learn what works and what doesn’t,” said Appl. “We communicate our message to salespeople across different venues: one-on-one, in select small groups, at their bigger events such as a sales conference and in newsletters.”

Solution

FICO chose Upland RO Innovation initially because of its ability to help them manage their unmanaged assets and help sales find what they need easily. The team soon discovered that managing customer advocates well helped them contribute value to initiatives across the entire organization.

Benefits

- + Integration with Salesforce makes it easy for salespeople to see which assets are most suited for an opportunity.
- + Upland RO Innovation lets FICO tag customer advocates for specific reference opportunities: e.g., industry analyst calls, presentations, case studies, etc.
- + FICO is able to manage how often they use a reference and avoid the reference burnout that so often accompanies a manual reference program.
- + The Customer Advocacy team is now supporting a wide variety of strategic initiatives such as sales enablement, marketing, and analyst relations.

“I am very happy with this new FICO reference tool. As a new Client Partner at FICO, it has been very helpful for me to have this new reference program available for my new prospects. The program is very easy to use, and the internal support from Ana is extraordinary. It is a very fair program for our FICO clients that are participating as a FICO reference, besides the several benefits they could get for participating.”

– Juan Lopez Rodriguez,
Client Sales LAC

Those efforts are starting to pay off. Some regions like Latin America have aggressively embraced customer advocacy, and perhaps not coincidentally, they are having increased success. FICO's reference management team is getting to the point where they can use individuals and regions, such as Latin America, as champions for the customer advocacy program. And because RO Innovation gives Appl and his team the ability to tie the use of customer advocates to new business, they have the evidence to back up their message.

Exploring the Power of the Tool

Bauer feels she is just starting to tap into the power of Upland RO Innovation. "It really helps to have visibility into all of our referenceable customers in one place and to be able to track their participation in the program. I'm still learning how to analyze the data, but the reports are really helpful."

While Appl is supporting analyst relations and other strategic initiatives, Bauer finds herself working with marketing a great deal to help them create case studies and other customer-focused assets. She's also reaching out to the different lines of business to determine what types of case studies are still needed so she can find and nurture potential future references.

Plans for the Future

As FICO customer advocacy evolves, so does their relationship with Upland RO Innovation. "As we use the tool, we discover new ways Upland RO Innovation can help us take the program to the next level. Ana, our super user, is in constant contact with Upland RO Innovation discussing how to implement these ideas as well as enhance the product to provide even more value."

At the end of the day, however, the main objective of the FICO customer advocacy program remains driving sales success. Appl's one objective is to have every salesperson ask themselves, for every opportunity, "How can I use a customer advocate to help me close this business?" By keeping the program's focus on the customers and supporting sales, the customer advocacy team is sure to have the support of the entire organization for years to come.

For more information please visit:
uplandsoftware.com/roinnovation



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