

Case Study 2019

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COO and Co-Founder



The Inner Circle

Creating brand ambassadors through providing
trustworthy and enjoyable customer experiences

Published by
engage
business media

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The Inner Circle explains how it works to provide safe, trustworthy, fun, and unique dating experiences for its users, to the extent that they become ambassadors for the brand.



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In the digital age, over 20% of relationships and 17% of marriages now begin online. With an increasing number of dating apps available, The Inner Circle sets itself apart through its assurance of a safe and trustworthy community of like-minded singles, its exclusive events, and its dedicated and personable team who meet users face-to-face around the world. The app launched in 2012 and is now live in 49 cities across 26 countries, with over one million users total. In 2018, the company won the Deloitte Technology Fast 50 for being the fastest growing technology company in the Netherlands.

As part of its commitment to providing quality dating, The Inner Circle has firm user guidelines in place. These include: 'Be Real' in not misleading users, 'Be True' in using realistic and recent photos, 'Be Interactive' in being genuine and communicative, 'Be Decent' in keeping conversations clean, 'Be Respectful' in being considerate of others' feelings, 'Be Reliable' in treating dates with importance, 'Be Inclusive' in embracing diversity, 'Be Kind' in never ghosting (disappearing without explanation), and 'Be Vigilant' in reporting unacceptable behaviour.

Michael Krayenhoff, COO and Co-Founder of The Inner Circle, summarises the purpose of the brand: "At the core we are an app that helps people make real and meaningful connections. The Inner Circle is part of so many people's journeys to help them meet 'the one'."

He describes the company's approach to its relationships with its users: "Apps in themselves can be pretty disposable, so it's very important as a brand to build a strong connection with your users. To do this, we screen all members to ensure a safe and trustworthy community of singles. We also host events around the world for users to connect in real life; we create special tailored experiences like cocktail masterclasses, or hosting a day party in a park."

Krayenhoff says that the live events have proven successful in helping The Inner Circle's users build more impactful connections with each other. "In the end if you want to meet 'the one', you have to meet in real life, and these events can be a helpful bridge for people." By extension, positive experiences at these events, and in their dating experiences through the app more generally, help to develop

stronger brand loyalty from its users than an online-only experience.

The popularity of The Inner Circle's approach to the service and wider benefits it provides for its users has been utilised in the creation of the brand's ambassador programme. "We identify our users that love using the app, and we turn them into fans by treating them like VIPs. We encourage them to spread the word and we give them lots of extras by inviting them to our events, letting them bring their friends for free, giving them full memberships, and more. We also offer the members who get really involved the opportunity to host their own events for their friends and for fellow users, and in that way they truly become ambassadors for the brand by bringing people together in real life."

Krayenhoff explains that this dedication to providing excellent customer experience extends to encompass a wide variety of elements. "Our support team go above and beyond to give our users a positive experience, no matter what. This could mean helping with profile advice, giving a refund, inviting users back to one of our future events, or whatever needs to be done."

For the team at The Inner Circle, the biggest successes of all are hearing from members that met through the app. Krayenhoff says: "When users get in touch and send us baby cards or wedding cards, we send them a congratulatory card signed by the team in return. All of the baby

cards and wedding cards that we've been sent hang in our office as a reminder for the team of the positive impact we're making."

He emphasises the personability of his team, and how much they care about providing a worthwhile experience to users. "Our support team is run by people who thrive on genuinely helping our members, which is of course key to creating a trusting relationship with them. Everyone on our team is on the app. Even those who are not single; they state in their profile that they are there for work and they are in a relationship, but it just helps to show our members that we are real people and a real team. Anyone on our team can expect questions from members, including the CEO."

"All of our team members attend the events to connect with each other and our users. Events are a great opportunity for us as a team to meet our members, and for our members to meet our team and see that we're real people really genuinely trying to help them meet 'the one.'"

Furthermore, Krayenhoff explains the way in which The Inner Circle manages the feedback it receives from its users. "Our members are very pro-active about sharing their ideas in what they'd like to see, which is fantastic." However, he explains that through trialling some ideas raised by users, it became clear that it was far more effective and efficient for the team to focus on resolving the root causes and underlying issues behind the suggestions raised by users, rather than taking every idea proposed by users into consideration. "We work on the underlying drivers and barriers that make members contact us in the first place."

Moving forward, Krayenhoff says The Inner Circle is looking to increase the scale of their events significantly to create more "exciting, tailored experiences" for its users. This will be achieved by creating "partnerships with brands and companies" and having events "hosted by investors around the world" to help bring users together. "We've got a very exciting 12 months ahead of us!"

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