CASE STUDY

Weight Watchers

"ANYSITE IS HELPING US PHYSICALLY MAP OUR BUSINESS FROM THE GRASS ROOTS TO ENSURE WE ARE DOING OUR BEST TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR CUSTOMERS."

Joseph Saad, Managing Director, Weight Watchers Australasia

WEIGHT WATCHERS EXPLOITS NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES WITH PITNEY BOWES SOFTWARE'S ANYSITE LOCATION INTELLIGENCE SOLUTION.

Challenge

Weight Watchers required a location intelligence solution to help in the identification of potential business expansion areas and suitable meeting venues for its customers and team leaders.

Solution

In partnership with Pitney Bowes Software, Weight Watchers implemented an AnySite-based solution that has given the company a powerful, scientifically driven tool for business growth throughout Australia.

SUMMARY

Since opening its doors for business in 1969, Weight Watchers in Australia has become the country's largest and most successful weight-loss organisation. In fact, according to research by Newspoll for Weight Watchers, it has been estimated that one in four Australian women aged 18 years and over have attended a Weight Watchers meeting. Today, around 1,500 Weight Watchers meetings are conducted each week, across the country, with people from all walks of life seeking to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

Yet while Weight Watchers' enormous business success is undeniable, it faces a constant challenge in identifying meeting venues that best match a broad range of requirements. Among those requirements are travel distances, parking facilities, security, public transport and even public restrooms.

According to Weight Watchers Managing Director Joseph Saad, the selection of meeting venues is one of the more critical factors in the company's service model. "We're a service business that functions without our own bricks-and-mortar presence in all the areas in which our leaders hold meetings," he explains. "Rather, we take full advantage of publicly available venues, such as community centres, church halls and clubs."

The company, though, was finding that while many selected venues were within the same suburb or postcode area of customers, there was a growing concern over the distances people had to travel. "We recognised that it simply wasn't good enough to choose a venue that was in the same general area as our customers," Mr Saad says. "We needed

something that would help us pinpoint venues that had the right facilities and were within reasonable travelling times of the majority of the local members; and this is where AnySite has given us a very real advantage."

The result of that recognition was a partnership with Pitney Bowes Software on the implementation of a location intelligence solution that has addressed the immediate issue of venue selection, while also providing a valuable tool to more comprehensively – and quickly – identify areas of potential business growth.

MEETING THE CUSTOMERS' NEEDS

Using AnySite, Weight Watchers is now able to generate a map of any area within Australia then, drawing on its own customer database, overlay that map with the home locations of existing members living within that area. Immediately, this gives operators and meeting planners the ability to gain an immediate view of areas in which there is the greatest number of customers.

That is only the start point, though. Taking full advantage of Australian census data and comprehensive Australia-wide point location data sets, operators can quickly construct a set of parameters that possible venues must meet. These often include proximity to train stations, travel time required by team leaders, and available public amenities.

Of particular benefit is the ability to apply weights to the search criteria, Mr Saad explains: "If, for example, there's a large number of elderly people who will be

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attending a meeting, then we can apply greater weighting to factors such as public transport and proximity to commercial hubs. Similarly, in cases where we need to consider distances being travelled by a team leader, then it's just as easy to create a search with travel time and distance as a top priority."

"Essentially," he continues, "AnySite is helping us physically map our business from the grass roots to ensure we are doing our best to meet the needs of our customers. And in the industry in which we operate, where we are striving constantly to make ourselves more accessible to customers, this is nothing short of critical."

PROACTIVE BUSINESS GROWTH

Despite the proven success Weight Watchers has achieved over the years, the company is finding itself facing increasing competition from lookalike start-ups and those businesses claiming to offer a quick fix to their customers' weight concerns. In

meeting that competition, Weight Watchers has worked hard over the years to appoint team leaders and conduct meetings in new areas. Once done, the positive lifestyle changes gained by customers quickly helps establish market leadership for the company in that area.

But the real challenge has been assessing the viability of setting up in a new area. "The difficulty is in determining suitable future locations," Mr Saad says. "Again, this is where AnySite is proving to be of immense value."

By conducting AnySite location searches, Weight Watchers is able to identify areas anywhere across Australia that may, for example, have been experiencing high population and household growth. Weight Watchers is also able to predict areas that are expected to grow in the next five to ten years. The search can just as easily be reconstructed or refined to generate a report of those areas where there are significant numbers of women aged between 20 and 54, which accounts for around 70 per cent of the company's membership.

"Once we see certain trends in areas where we don't as yet have a presence, we can then conduct an AnySite search for suitable meeting venues, then negotiate rates and terms with the owners," Mr Saad explains. "This gives us a secure foothold right from the start. What we're gaining through the use of AnySite is an intelligence tool that helps us sustain and grow our business."

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