Re-imagining aged care

Also in the issue:
- Aged care financing
- Mergers & acquisitions
- Antimicrobial stewardship
THE TECHNOLOGY START UP CHANGING
COMMUNITY CARE DELIVERY

Start ups like Better Caring are shaking up the community care landscape by cutting out the middle man and eliminating costly overheads. Ahead of drastic changes to home care funding arrangements in February 2017, how will your business compete with the next generation of industry disruptors?

Like most other successful innovators, Peter Scutt saw a problem, identified a gap in the market and set out to fill it. His problem was personal one that will affect many Australians at some point in life – how to ensure his parents received the best possible, affordable care in their home as they grew older.

And so he and co-founder Tony Charara created Better Caring, a two-way online marketplace connecting care givers with care recipients across Australia.

“We were struggling to provide adequate support so they could continue to live independently in their own community,” Scutt said in an interview with Start Up Smart, a blog run by national digital publisher, Private Media.

“I had to deal with these problems, and my conclusion was that the industry didn’t work well for my parents or the care workers. This made me realise that this industry was crying out for change.”

The advent of the modern share economy, or peer to peer services, is most commonly attributed to share accommodation provider, AirBNB, and share ride service, Uber. The huge success of these industry disrupters meant it was only a matter of time before direct service models were introduced into other service based industries such as home care.

Like other web-based peer to peer services, Better Caring effectively replaces the services of an agency or provider with its website and booking platform that connects people who require in-home or community care with nurses, care and support workers in their area.

While a team in the background carry out the same background checks and on-boarding process that any agency would do, in the eyes of a consumer it can offer greater value for money because it does not have costly overheads of a large HQ or permanent staff. It also offers total transparency about its fees and charges, with the workers setting their own rates that are advertised clearly on the site and Better Caring taking a 15 per cent – five per cent of the service fee charged to clients and 10 per cent of the fees paid to the worker, in a similar business model to both Uber and AirBNB.
Offering a simple, clear pricing structure and enabling people to secure services online via their phone, tablet or computer is going to be a key differentiator in February 2017, when consumers have greater control over where their home care funds can be spent. Service providers that enable people to book and pay for their care online in the same transaction as when they begin their search will have the upper hand because consumers are more likely to try something different if it is a convenient option and you make it easy for them to do so. This means providing instant payment options via your website.

The level of control that consumers want over payment options extends to selecting who they receive their services from and knowing there are no hidden fees or costs.

"Today’s consumers have a wealth of resources at their fingertips. No matter where they are in the world, they can access an infinite number of customer reviews, blog posts, and competitor websites. Even if they’re standing in the middle of your brick and mortar storefront, far away from a computer, they can still place orders — right then and there — from your competitors," says Neil Patel, author of Understanding Consumer Psychology.

Better Caring’s engagement model also offers benefits to employees, in what is increasingly a job seekers market. By allowing care workers to operate their own small businesses and connect directly with those needing care it avoids the cumbersome and costly IR framework at the same time as giving consumers the ability to specifically select their care worker.

Care and support workers can create their own profile that outlines their experience, qualifications, availability, hourly rates and interests. Consumers can then search, compare and choose the right care worker for their needs.

According to its website, all care workers using the Better Caring platform undergo a strict on-boarding process, including reference and qualification checks, police checks and verification of any specific requirements for nurses and those providing personal care. They also have comprehensive insurances arranged on their behalf.

There is a “rigorous” selection process to make sure all care workers listed on the site are safe and qualified, Scott says, with only 700 of the 2000+ applicants so far meeting the requirements to then be listed on the site.

While Better Care has only been available in Sydney since its launch in 2014. It has just undertaken a series B investment round which has returned $2.3 million that will be used to expand the service nationally. ■