



Bjorn Cassier

The Insiders

Using the oldest technique in the book to transform marketing



When Bjorn Cassier, Managing Director of The Insiders, began researching word-of-mouth marketing, he was surprised to find that he'd quickly become an expert, with most agencies knowing little about it. The Insiders was established to capitalise on this untapped marketing channel. We spoke to Bjorn about growing his idea into a business covering 25 countries in three continents.



You describe your company as 'Tupperware 2.0'. Can you explain that?

It's like Tupperware without the sales ladies, because no one sells. We've built a network where friends come together, indoors or outdoors, and share insights on products.

Word-of-mouth marketing in this way is new. It wasn't around five years ago, and we've established it as a valid alternative to more traditional methods such as television and print. The method is underpinned by a strong platform that gives multiple touch points with our insiders, enabling communication and feedback.

Your offering is very clear. Have you encountered much competition?

It is growing, largely through copycat players that compete on price. Their platforms aren't as extensive as ours and the results not as effective. But our biggest competitors are really the other media channels. We're educating the market to understand that word-of-mouth is a valid alternative to traditional marketing approaches.

Our objective is to grow word-of-mouth into a respected marketing channel. Some businesses are keen to try it, while others are more cautious. Today we have 20 of Belgium's top 50 FMCG companies as clients.

Our competitive advantage is that we offer something different. Typically our members have a six to eight minute conversation about a product, compared to a few seconds on a television ad or a billboard. It helps people engage with products they know about but haven't tried.

Research shows that word-of-mouth is four times more effective than traditional marketing and clients like that

idea. But they also want concrete results, which is why it's important that our platform captures feedback. We do this through conversational reports, surveys and partnering with respected research organisations, such as AC Nielsen, Ipsos & Symphony IRI.

How are you finding committed ambassadors for your service?

Unsurprisingly, through word-of-mouth! Typically, during their first six weeks, our new members talk to around 35 people about The Insiders. This brings people to the website and many sign up. We now have over 1,500,000 members worldwide.

Opening up new territories often involves working with partners. Social media plays a large part in our growth, both in recruiting members and scaling our team within the business.

What growth plans do you have for your business?

We have 16 offices in 25 countries, with our HQ in the Benelux. We recently expanded into Russia, which is an exciting challenge. We're in most South American countries and are now focused on North America, which has massive potential.

What has been the impact of being a Deloitte Fast 50 winner?

Internally, it is wonderful recognition for our 120 staff. Externally, being showcased in a highly respected competition has helped to open doors, particularly in Belgium, the UK, and perhaps surprisingly, Brazil.