

Why Give For Free is Awesome

Give For Free is Singapore's first marketplace for the donation and exchange of pre-owned goods and items. On this platform, people can upload the pictures of an item that they no longer need or want. Subsequently, the item posted can be seen by their friends who can in turn indicate their interest for the item. After a certain date (determined by the giver), the giver will select the person to receive the item either manually or through a random draw.

We envision Gift For Free to be a potent force in the gift economy and as an alternative way of building relationships between people through freecycling – a portmanteau of “free” and “recycling”. In the market economy today, relationships built are based on the goods being traded. They are often transactional and transient. In contrast, the gift economy aims to build relationships between people, fostering a system of social ties and obligations in the process. Relationships built are often more permanent and meaningful.

What might potentially differentiate our application from the others is that it is actually to a certain degree, backed by market validation. We surveyed 115 respondents and asked them questions like: Do you currently have items in your possession that you would like to get rid of? (87% said yes.) How do you currently get rid of old items? Will you use a second-hand item if it is still functioning, in good condition and free? (93% said yes.) Will you be willing to try Give For Free out? (88.7% said yes.) If not, what are the reasons? Certainly, an online survey validates the idea only to a limited extent. But it was useful in providing an initial insight on the reasons why users would or would not use the app. Some of the responses mentioned that it was too troublesome to give things up, especially for free. “Carousell” came up a couple of times, with respondents mentioning that if they could sell it, they would. In view of this information, we decided to narrow down our initial target audience and focus on searching for early adopters, people who really needed our platform and could potentially become the advocates of Give For Free.

After some research, we realized that there were a couple of initiatives out there which were built upon the concept of freecycling. We decided to first approach the offline-centered communities because if they did not yet have an online platform to facilitate freecycling, GiveForFree could be something that they would want to use. Therefore, we headed down to the Singapore Really Really Free Market and spoke to the “vendors” and “shoppers”, showed them our app and got feedback. We concurrently performed usability testing with them and managed to obtain great insights. All of these feedback was channeled back into our application. For instance, one of our initial ideas was to

have a button that read “snag”. We all assumed that users would understand the meaning of the word. However, during the testing, some users failed to understand it and hence did not manage complete the uploading task. Based on this, we simplified the word to “want” instead and got much better results.

In addition, we got in touch with the administrator, Mr. Adwin Ang of the Singapore Neighbourhood Freecycle 2 Facebook group. In the group, users upload pictures of the pre-owned items that they do not want anymore. Other users in the group can then request for them in the Facebook comments. The group started in December 2013 and now comprises of 7,822 members. We told him about our idea and he was very willing to allow us to try the application with his users.

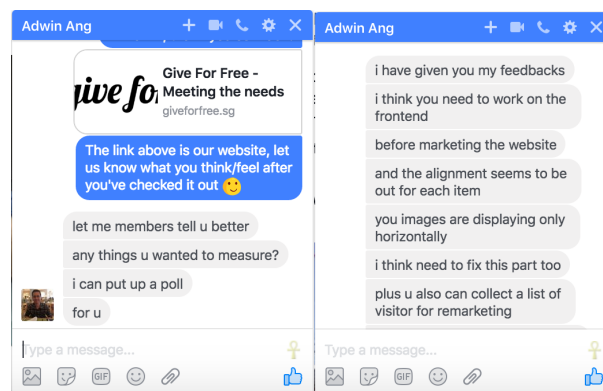


Figure 1

Figure 2

He later requested for a higher fidelity platform before rolling it out to his users. The point is however that, our team has attempted to look for potential partners and engaged in some sort of growth hacking to acquire users for our application. Furthermore, having Adwin as an informal advisor to this project provided us with important insights on the real-world execution and viability of the application as well. For instance, he told us that we had too little items on the application and that it would be insufficient to attract a greater audience. Therefore, we collected over 70 old and unused items and posted it on the platform in preparation to launch the application to the users. Hence, even though it was not part of the milestones, the final product that you see has captured at least in part, some of our efforts in wanting to truly create an application that is grounded in reality and one that will be used by real-life users.