

technology



LEFT:
Barney Williams (l) and Sam Ryan founded Zeelo at the beginning of last year

RIGHT
Both drivers and customers download an app which includes all the details they need

GROW YOUR BUSINESS WITH ZEELO

Founded last year, London-based **on-demand coach service Zeelo** helps connect operators with new customers, while also reducing their vehicles' downtime



Jessica Barton
/ Journalist

Customers are the most important asset for any business and providing outstanding customer service is pivotal to a business' success.

For coach operators, it is considering customers' comfort and overall passenger experience that is essential in guaranteeing they keep coming back.

While passengers are expecting on-board luxuries as standard, direct routes and affordable and convenient transport solutions for regular journeys are even more in demand than ever.

Zeelo's business model is built around the needs of the customer and delivering customer satisfaction. And for this model to work, there's a necessity for high specification vehicles and first-class drivers - that's where you come in.

Supply and demand

The driving force behind Zeelo is Co-Founders Barney Williams and Sam Ryan.

After selling their first business JumpIn -

a taxi booking and sharing app for students - to Addison Lee in 2014 and working for the private hire company for two years, Zeelo was set up at the beginning of 2017.

Now, a 10-strong team based in Shoreditch and five employees in Barcelona are working with UK coach operators to match travel demand to a supply network of coaches.

Says Barney: "At the moment we are focusing on two key areas: Major events - such as sporting events - and commuting.

"We partner with major sports teams and we use that fan data to work out what the popular routes would be.

"Then there's large corporates that want to make the commute slicker for employees whose only option is to drive due to poor public transport connections or problems with car parking, for example."

Using data

Zeelo uses data to understand where there is service and travel demand.

"Our algorithm compares that demand to the transport options that are already there," says Barney. "If the options aren't great - if it takes a long time or it's expensive - then we run direct routes to undercut in terms of time and price.



// We need vehicles, great drivers and operators that have the experience – Zeelo is all about working with them to help maximise their efficiencies and profits //

“The aim is to make travel much more convenient for the end consumer and make that whole process a lot smoother than it currently is.”

So rather than going head-to-head with businesses that offer crowd sourced travel, Zeelo creates new routes and complements existing services.

Says Barney: “Take our Cardiff City Football Club partnership where we’re running routes

to the Valleys. No one thought it would work, but it works really well because there are people so disconnected and there’s no other services available to them.

“So we create new routes rather than going up against more obvious ones, such as Bristol to London.

“With fixed destinations like events and commuting, you can really understand where people are coming from.”

Working with you

By identifying these routes, working with Zeelo gives coach operators access to new markets as well as an opportunity to take on extra work.

Luke Ryan, Zeelo’s Head of Operations, says: “We’re all about setting up new propositions for coach operators.

“We go out and meet with operators, present to them what Zeelo is, and they give us an overview of their business. We then discuss what the expectations are on both sides if we’re going to work together and deliver a great service for customers.”

Zeelo is not just looking to partner with big operators. “We’re also keen to work with smaller operators who are looking to grow,” says Barney.

But one criteria that is essential is the willingness to embrace technology.

Says Luke: “The ability for them to be technology-enabled – with their drivers having smart phones, for example – is really important if we are going to deliver what we want to the customer.

“We also look for operators that have the same mentality around being customer-focused, and whether they’ve got the flexibility and hunger to take on the work that we can offer.”

Partnering with Zeelo can have big results, but the impact it has on the operator’s vehicles and drivers is very minimal.

“It’s very simple,” says Barney. “The operator downloads our app, enters their phone number and the job is there. There’s no hardware they need to install or anything like that.

“It helps the drivers as it allows them to check passengers on and it gives them details of the stops. It also feeds back to the customer with real-time vehicle tracking.”

The benefits

Working for Zeelo is ideal for operators looking to further utilise their already-owned assets – their vehicles – by providing them with the opportunity for returning work.

Says Barney: “We have all this recurring work – football fans travelling every week, commuters travelling every day – so we make sure the quality is really good so that people will come back.”

Making long-term partnerships with coach operators is integral to Zeelo’s service.

“Our good relationships with operators makes the quality really good and enables us to deliver a great service to customers,” says Barney.

“We’re diving into certain locations and finding different opportunities that we can go after and involve operators.

“So, we can give them lots of work from just one partnership, which operators like because they know they can book in a long period of work that we’re guaranteeing them.

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