

How FACTS Management Company took the guesswork out of product decisions



COMPANY SIZE
275 Employees



HEADQUARTERS
Lincoln, Nebraska



INDUSTRY
Primary/Secondary Education

USE CASE

- Aligning communication between customer-facing teams and product
- Actionable feedback collection, wherever users are giving it
- Customer-centric product development

FACTS offers a comprehensive suite of services including tuition management, a student information system, payment administration and processing, financial needs assessment, admissions/enrollment solutions, and a fundraising and development platform. FACTS Ed's services include professional learning and development, instructional services, title funding consultation, and a coaching program that uses video technology to help teachers develop their skills. Combined, FACTS and FACTS Ed serve more than three million students and families at over 11,500 schools.

The challenge: Understanding customer needs at scale

As FACTS Management Company matured, the product team realized they needed a better way to understand customer needs at scale. Their user base was expanding, meaning they had more folks to hear from and consider when making product decisions, but they didn't have a scalable process in place for doing so.

At the time, the team relied primarily on customer interviews to understand customer needs. They quickly realized they needed a way to get a more representative understanding of their user base, beyond the small subset of users interviewed by the team.

Meanwhile, customer-facing folks like Account Managers, Sales, and Support would attempt to surface requests to the product team. Without a single system of record for customer requests, there was no way to quantify these. The team needed a means to understand whether a request was a "one-off" vs something impacting a large segment of users.

"We wanted to avoid the 'squeaky wheel' problem," says Megan. "We were always trying to get an idea of how often the same requests were made, but no one could give us answers. We would drive our Account Managers crazy, asking them things like 'can you count on a sticky note how many calls you're getting this request on?' It wasn't a good way to quantify the need across the thousands of schools that we work with."



"Before UserVoice, there wasn't a great way to quantify customer requests and understand more of the 'why' behind these asks."

— MEGAN FANGMEYER Product Manager

The team needed a way to solve three key challenges presented by their previous process for managing and making sense of user feedback:

- Objectively quantifying the importance of customer requests.
- Eliminating manual efforts to capture, aggregate, and prioritize feedback.
- Establishing a single source of customer truth to help inform decisions about where to focus next.

The solution: A single, centralized place for user feedback

UserVoice has enabled the team at FACTS Management Company to understand, prioritize, and respond to customer needs at scale by providing them with functionality to easily capture, aggregate, analyze, and close the loop on customer feedback.

With UserVoice, the team at FACTS has:

- Established an evidence-based framework for prioritization decisions that eliminates bias and “gut feel” decisions while also ensuring every decision is in the best interest of both the end users and the business’ current strategic objectives.
- Eliminated time-consuming manual feedback capture and aggregation processes, freeing up hours of the product team’s time each week.
- Created a centralized source of customer truth, driving visibility into the “why” behind product decisions across the organization.
- Demonstrated to their customers that their feedback is valuable and that they have a say in the future improvements made to the product.

Capturing and making sense of feedback

Previously, making sense of the thousands of ideas and feature requests their users have shared would have required a lot of work, but today the team at FACTS has a single centralized feedback repository where all feedback is automatically captured and aggregated.

The team has captured just under 9,000 suggestions with UserVoice, which has also made it easy for the team to merge and categorize ideas to keep a clear system of record.

With the volume of ideas in their system, it’s important for the FACTS product team to sort signal from noise — vote

counts help quantify the interest in an idea and eliminate the “squeaky wheel bias” the team had struggled with before.

Enriching customer requests with qualitative context

The team has established an evidence-based framework for prioritization decisions that eliminates bias and “gut feel” decisions while also ensuring every decision is in the best interest of both the end users and the business’ current strategic objectives.

UserVoice provides the team with qualitative context around every piece of user feedback; this data enables the team to understand the potential impact of every single request. The data FACTS looks at most frequently in their decision-making process includes: vote counts, number of accounts requesting something, potential revenue impact associated with each request.

This data is great and all, but what does it really do? It helps the team align product decisions with the company’s current strategic objectives. They integrate the data provided by UserVoice with their own round of research — they look at the complexity of ideas and possible development investments involved so they can make decisions with the big picture in mind.

Once a decision has been made, or a high-value idea is identified, the team interviews supporters of the idea to continue the discovery process and dig into the root of the customer challenges at hand. It’s easy to set up those interviews with UserVoice’s built-in communication functionality which enables FACTS to reach out to the right people for more information.

Aligning the organization around product decisions

With UserVoice, FACTS Management Company has a centralized feedback repository that can be shared across the organization. When product decisions are made, the team can convey the why via UserVoice data. Sharing the vote count and overall workability to each idea that makes it onto the roadmap, makes it easy to get support for product decisions across the organization.

Improving communication with users

Communication with end-users has improved, too. Users can see what ideas are most popular among their peers and easily understand why decisions are made. With the increased visibility, the conversation of why they decided to move forward with one idea and not another is much easier.

In addition, users get updates on the status of requests they have made so they are never left in the dark. This fosters a more trustful relationship and leaves the users delighted that their opinions are heard and have a real impact on product development.

FACTS has found their users appreciate and are thrilled about this level of communication. On one occasion Megan had a user comment, "I'm feeling heard and I love that I'm able to enter ideas into UserVoice."

"I have clients that I talk to quite often because of UserVoice — they're active in the system and are willing to give me feedback, so I've established relationships directly from UserVoice."

— **MEGAN FANGMEYER** Product Manager

The results: Removing the guesswork from product decisions

To date, FACTS Management Company's product team has successfully identified, prioritized, developed, and launched more than 800 customer requests with the help of UserVoice. The team is making evidence-driven decisions and is confident they are focusing on the right things at the right time.

"If anything is going to make me sick to my stomach as a Product Manager, it's finding out we chose to spend development time on something that wasn't the most important thing." Megan explains, "There are a lot of problems to solve out there, and spending time on something that isn't the most impactful for our users is heartbreaking."

"As a Product Manager, UserVoice forces you to challenge your own assumptions and biases. UserVoice challenges me to look at the overall picture of the struggles that our customers as a whole are having. UserVoice helps me balance the empathetic response to the more one-off scenarios," she says.

ABOUT USERVOICE

UserVoice develops product feedback management software that transforms the way businesses gather and analyze customer feedback and prioritize feature requests to drive strategic product decisions.

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