



Overview

Founded in 2005, Wego is a travel meta-search engine, headquartered in Singapore. Its focus is equally split between flights and hotels, and in terms of location especially on emerging markets in South-East Asia: Singapore and Indonesia at first, but its audience is now also shifting towards the Middle East:

Saudi Arabia is Wego's number one Middle-Eastern market, where it has around 2m unique users per month, and UAE is also listed in its top 5 markets overall. In fact, 4 out of its top ten markets are from the Middle East, as it quickly shifts focus to fully cover the entire region.

Background

Wego has been active in automated advertising since mid-2013, when it began building an ad tech stack, establishing a publisher trading desk and allowing DSPs and buyers to run retargeting campaigns on behalf of clients using its proprietary first party data.

Next, Wego implemented Lotame, a data management platform which allowed it to segment audience in a more refined way. This was not just around destination, but any number of data points—from class of travel, hotel star rating, spend on airfare/hotel room, to traveller status (i.e. parents, couples, solo travellers etc)—and it was then able to offer these datapoints as targeting options to buyers.

As Wego was becoming more sophisticated in its approach to programmatic, and ad revenues grew as a result, it was also looking at additional ways of making the business even more efficient.

Typically, it was seeing 80-90% of revenues coming from just 5-10% its clients, so immediately identified an opportunity around some of the buyers that fell outside that group—those with whom it was most obvious Wego was losing money by dealing with them in a manual way.

Solution: Automated Guaranteed

So in late 2014, Wego's relationship with Rubicon Project extended to the use of its self-serve product, allowing the seller to work with buyers directly on a guaranteed basis, with greater efficiency, regardless of campaign size.

Wego considers this offering as a sweet spot for the more forward-thinking or independent agencies, as well as the more sophisticated direct advertisers. And its main selling point to them is around the time saving it represents at their end. It says that once they understand buying through Rubicon Project saves them 20% on planning time on an average campaign, many of them quickly accelerate their adoption of this approach.



This was a completely new way of executing guaranteed orders for us—in fact, previously the process had remained largely unchanged since the dawn of the internet in 1997/8.

Until we started working with Guaranteed Orders, in fact, it was exactly the same old way of doing things, involving an RFP, an Excel sheet of pricing availability, rounds of negotiations, a paper I/O, faxing—the whole rigmarole. And every inefficiency has a cost impact for us, especially as we are trying to operate without the scale of bigger legacy media companies and giant multinational digital competitors.

**Rick Mulia, Chief Advertising
& Media Officer, Wego**



Maximising Mobile

With 60% of its audience now coming from mobile, and three-quarters of that traffic coming via apps, mobile is already the core part of Wego's business.

The challenge is especially acute when you consider the accelerated approach that is required, given that mobile has grown from 20% to 60% of that total audience share in just the last year, while desktop inventory is flat.

A contributing factor to this urgency is the fact that people are more and more comfortable shopping on mobile. And not to mention another critical point—that although the conversion rate between mobile and desktop is much the same, the value of mobile transactions is actually a lot higher, perhaps in part because there is more urgency around buying via smartphone, or that tickets are purchased with less notice.

This is the major trend Wego is seeing, but another challenge is figuring out 100% how we tailor ads differently on mobile, while respecting the user experience.

For instance, mobile campaigns have the potential to be even more real-time, and even more relevant than on desktop.

Native is another area the seller is exploring. Where Wego sees the opportunity, it aims to start rolling out more native ads in app, and believes this will be a natural part of how its mobile product evolves—a further way to monetise without compromising the user experience.

Results



Comparing the whole of last year, January to December 2014 with January to October 2015, Wego has seen impressive increases across yield and fill rate as well as overall revenue through its partnership with Rubicon Project.

A doubling of fill rate over the period was accompanied by growing eCPM, a key measure of publisher yield, which increased more than 60%. Finally, overall revenue grew almost threefold, leaving the success of its approach in little doubt.



"More than with any other technology in this space, we see Rubicon Project as more of a partner who adds a lot of value, and one that we trust.

Also, it's a business with great people and teams: a lot of companies say they're global, but what they mean is they have one or two guys on the ground who aren't connected that well to the rest of the operation.

But Rubicon Project is unusual in that it's the exact opposite.

We feel that Rubicon Project is a true global player that can match our current needs as well as where we're heading next."

Rick Mulia, Chief Advertising & Media Officer, Wego

