



HOW GONG HELPED ZILLOW THRIVE DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

THE CHALLENGE

The Premier Agent Sales team at Zillow Group was facing a new and sudden reality: its entire team was forced into a remote-only environment due to the global pandemic. More urgently, they needed to find a way to pivot their business strategy to meet the needs of an uncertain market.

THE OUTCOME

With the help of Gong's Revenue Intelligence Platform, the Zillow Premier Agent team significantly improved a key revenue metric and had its best year ever.

"Gong has been the single most impactful enablement platform I've ever used for a sales team." — Stephen Capezza, Senior Vice President of Premier Agent Sales & Partnerships at Zillow Group.

 Headquarters
Seattle, WA

 Website
www.zillow.com

 Founded
2006

 Industry
Real Estate

 Company Size
5000+

As someone who has spent most of his 20+ years in the professional world in various sales roles, Stephen has seen his fair share of sales solutions.

Stephen currently leads the sales and partnership organization that serves as the Zillow Premier Agent business's revenue engine. His team is responsible for building the company's network of the best real estate professionals in the country, as well as executing new revenue tactics, partner success initiatives, and Premier Agent experience design.

Before discovering Gong, Stephen lived in "Anecdote World," a place where opinions rule.

“We thought we knew what was driving sales excellence. We thought we knew what our partners thought about us, what the competitive landscape looked like, what the macro drivers in their space were. We thought we knew what drove sales rep behavior change.

We had an idea when we were in the office, but were far from exact. When we moved to remote, things got even murkier.”

All of it was anecdotal, an unfortunate “reality” of Anecdote World, of course.

As Stephen and the team began learning more about Gong, they quickly realized the platform’s awesome power to “index hundreds of thousands of interactions and get quantitative data that supports qualitative insights” that Zillow hears in the field.

“We hypothesized what was happening with our business, what was going on in the field,” said Stephen. “Gong has provided us an unprecedented line of sight (insight!) into reality.”



“Goodbye Opinions. Hello, Reality.” It feels a bit cliché to share our tagline, but it’s just so... true. Gong eliminates the guesswork, tosses out the opinions and anecdotes, and empowers teams to focus on reality and truth.

This story showcases how Zillow used Gong to:

- Significantly improve a key revenue metric to help Zillow thrive in 2020.
- Launch “Better Together Billing Relief” to support Premier Agent partners to best serve our shared customers.

All of the above happened in 2020... during a global pandemic.

THE VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER IN 2020: LET’S ASK GONG

2020 was a heckuva year [understatement]. The impact of the once-in-a-century global pandemic has been felt far and wide, affecting nearly all humans professionally and personally.

Team Zillow was no exception.

“We had a pretty big problem to solve,” Stephen shared. “Aside from the problems the unprecedented selling environment was having on our business, we had to mobilize thousands of ‘Zillow-ites’ from in-office to a distributed workforce. Before we could turn desk chairs around, the questions started:

What's happening on the phones?

Let's ask Gong!

Why aren't customers buying?

Let's ask Gong!

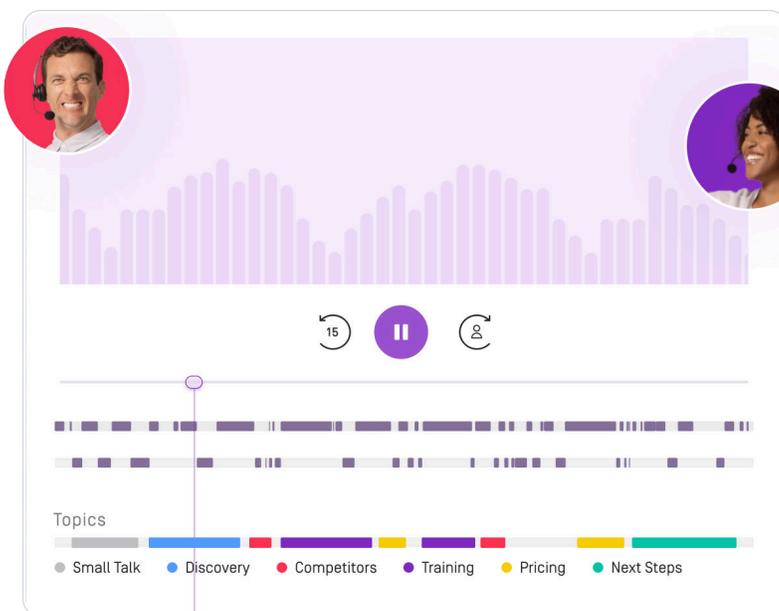
I literally cannot see what's on the horizon. What should we do?

Let's ask Gong!

Let's ask Gong.

Let's ask Gong.

Let's ask Gong.



A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE OF HOW TO USE GONG FOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

When Zillow's partners (aka real estate professionals) were forced to move all virtual thanks to the global pandemic, they could not show homes in person. For a real estate agent – and for the end customer (home buyer) – this lack of personal touch could be a deal-breaker.

Gong's insights spoke loudly. The team was hearing this frustration from its partners "in droves." This data drove Stephen to work with the Zillow Partner Success and Product teams to build the video tour concept that exists on Zillow today... one that is "driving success for customers and real estate partners."

That doesn't happen," Stephen says, "without a quantitative foundation to the qualitative insights Gong provides."

Gong enabled Zillow to understand the pain its partners were experiencing as it related to the environment. Even better? Stephen's team got partner suggestions... without even asking.

Gong really helped the team open their eyes to what was happening and what could happen. This, in turn, significantly helped drive decision-making – decisions that proved to be on point.

With the support of Gong, Stephen's team put together "the most aggressive relief and revenue initiative ever executed as an organization."

"Better Together Billing Relief" was born.

Just before the start of the pandemic (Q1 of 2020), Stephen's group was exceeding expectations, performing quite well. The question: "How could that run rate be maintained (or even grow) throughout the pandemic?"

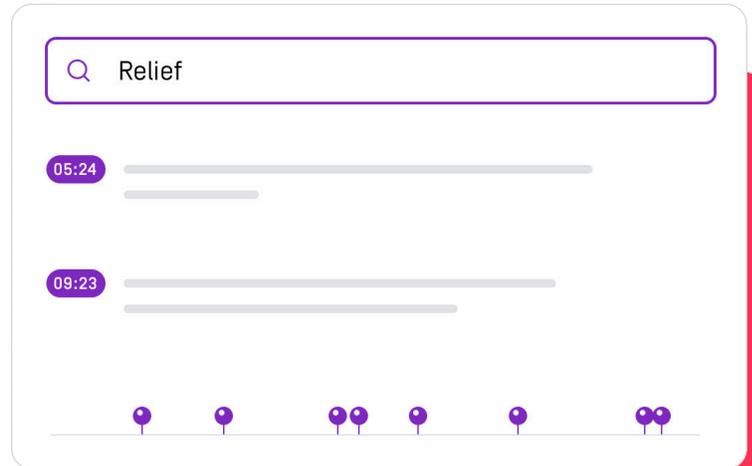
Insight from Gong validated that Zillow needed to (1) be aggressive with its partner relief (discount) during the pandemic, and (2) help its team understand how deep the discount needed to be.

“Gong was key to the success our business had when the pandemic first hit. Gong helped our partners navigate a really difficult time, helping drive clarity with decision-making. Gong enabled a truly intelligent approach to our business.” - Stephen

There is no way Zillow Premier Agent would have been as aggressive without insights from Gong. His team **“would have been blind to what was going on”** without Gong. They would have been stuck on questions like, *“What type of relief should we provide? Do we need to give a discount? And if so, what percentage of a discount should we give?”*

Gong’s insights gave the team confidence.

Gong enabled the team to observe how its partners (real estate agents) responded — in real-time — giving them confidence its approach was driving customer goodwill, reducing short-term churn, and providing future win-back opportunities.



Thanks to Gong trackers, the team could monitor key phrases and provide instantaneous feedback to reps. In turn, this real-time coaching significantly improved the reception of the discount when the offer was adjusted.

While the **“Better Together Billing Relief”** initiative was occurring, Stephen provided all of the executives a “daily briefing,” with at least one reference to Gong during every meeting, email, and asynchronous update.

“It was so powerful to stand up in front of the leaders of the organization and be able to lean on real data — Gong data — to support our decisions. Remember: This was a brand new initiative, and without confidence (thanks to Gong), we would not have proposed as aggressive of an initiative.”

Stephen stressed that the bonus of Gong was how quickly and efficiently the managers could amplify best practices learned in real-time by sharing call snippets across the organization for all to hear.

Outcome: Ended Q3 with an INCREASE in MRR... during a global pandemic!

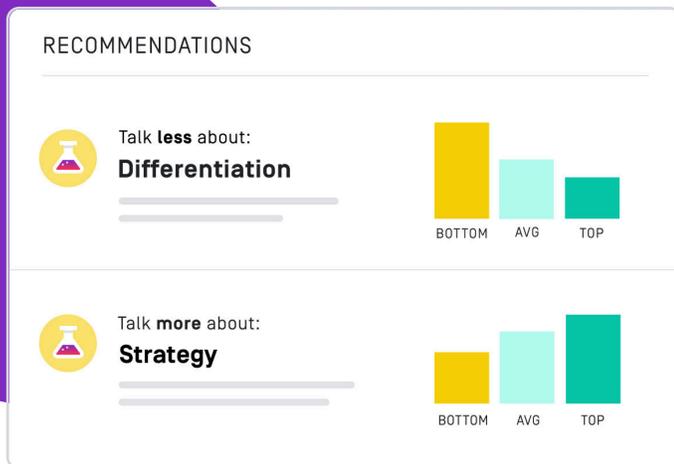
In the end, Gong helped Zillow Premier Agent have its BEST YEAR EVER. Not only were they able to retain partners and revenue, but they actually grew their business.

Stephen agrees: “Without Gong (the product) and without Gong (the team), we would not have had the insights and decision-making confidence that enabled significant growth in 2020.”

Those are the results, but how does it actually work?

FROM CALL SHADOWING TO DATA-DRIVEN RECOMMENDATIONS

One key aspect of Gong's Revenue Intelligence platform includes a way for teams to hear the unfiltered voice of its market, pivot strategy accordingly, and coach as needed.



It empowers teams to understand both what the market is saying and what its reps are saying.

Are reps pitching the product in the right way?

Are they adopting new messaging?

Are they talking about a new product?

Are these talk tracks closing more deals?

Before implementing Gong across the Premier Agent Sales group, the team used to call shadow— a far cry from anything “intelligent.”

In early 2020, Zillow began aggressively using Gong's data analysis capabilities to understand what worried their partners (agents). Were their pandemic concerns financial or health-related (or both or other)? Zillow wanted their team to be more strategic about their responses.

To avoid randomness and create more order and structure, the team leveraged Whisper by Gong.

Whisper ranks sales team members based on their performance and then analyzes their calls to help determine how top-performing team members are pitching differently from the rest of the team with regard to talking about certain topics.

The results: Whisper empowered Zillow to hone in on precisely what was important. Sales reps were able to get personalized — and more timely — coaching on calls. Bonus: managers also leave comments on call snippets, coaching up sales reps in near-real-time.

According to Zillow's senior enterprise customer success manager, Lauren Mattick, Whisper *“helped to validate Zillow's hypothesis that top reps who were able to exceed their goals throughout COVID had more strategic conversations with agents. They knew more about their business and were able to make a better case as to why they should stick with Zillow during the early months of the pandemic.”*

Speaking of top reps...

HOW CAN WE MAKE OUR SALES REPS BETTER?

That's the question Stephen is always asking. He's continuously challenging those around him to grow, to improve, to get better.

Stephen believes that the quality of each sales professional can be continuously improved. He's always looking at ways to "clone the all-stars," as we say here at Gong. Even moreso, Stephen wants his top producers to also keep growing and improving.

As with all sales teams, the stronger each individual is, the better they are at their jobs, the more business gets closed... and the more money each sales rep and the company make!

Realignment is one such sales lever for Zillow — a powerful one.

As you'll recall, one of the revenue drivers for Zillow is the facilitation of connections between customers looking at homes and the real estate professionals who are selling homes (aka, "Connections"). Each market has its own budget cap, the maximum total amount allotted to each area.



Zillow regularly reviews this budget cap amount to optimize the return on investment for its partner, the real estate professionals. This "realignment" process, in Zillow-speak, is the **"restructuring of the Zillow marketplace to release more inventory for its partners to invest in"** by either raising or lowering the budget cap.

This realignment, in turn, is tied to the Zillow sell-through rate (the percentage of inventory sold of the extra inventory released).

Specifically, Gong helped Zillow understand how the best SMS strategies were being leveraged to increase the sell-through rate, a significant KPI for the Premier Agent Sales team.

Thanks to Gong (and Gong trackers), Zillow was able to see what the SMS strategies and tactics (and conversations) looked like for its top performers... so it could "clone" them and replicate them across the entire sales organization.

"Gong was integral in helping our team optimize sales rep touchpoint frequency, event positioning, and the impact on SMS connection rates," Stephen shared.

And the data support this optimization: **Thanks to Gong's insights, Zillow increased revenue from that single sales lever.**

But all of the above is just the tip of the iceberg. That was 2020. In the past, Zillow is looking forward to 2021 and beyond.

WHAT'S NEXT IN THE ZILLOW/GONG PARTNERSHIP?

Stephen has lived through the first wave — the first “big shift” in how Zillow approaches coaching conversations.

“We went from this world of co-selling and managing to actually coaching and leading... being able to truly help reps close a deal and (bonus) reflect on what happened so they can reproduce the results without having to have someone on the call with them the next time.”

Stephen is fired up about his team’s ability to “easily scale” this newfound coaching culture. He loves the ability to “get an insight and have it validated” in short order. He sees this validation continuing to play a vital role going forward.

Stephen shares that Gong has “fundamentally changed how [the team] approaches measuring the effectiveness of training.” Stephen can effectively measure the actual change in behavior associated with the time he takes to develop an individual.



“This is pretty amazing,” says Stephen. “I’m excited to see this aspect of our relationship with Gong continue to grow. Revenue intelligence is literally the future of understanding what we do within our Sales and Customer Success teams here at Zillow, and I can’t wait to keep learning more about how Gong can help us.”

Revenue Intelligence is here, now, and will only get more intelligent over time.

The future is now.

GET STARTED TODAY

See how Zillow uses Gong.io to achieve these results.
Request your demo today.

See it live

