

NEWS

ODR2014 Conference Held in San Francisco Bay Area

The 14th annual meeting of the ODR Forum was held between 21 and 27 June 2014 in the San Francisco Bay Area. The week began with the first Tech for Justice Hackathon, held over a Saturday and Sunday in the offices of Code for America in downtown San Francisco. Teams of online dispute resolution (ODR) experts, designers and coders built prototype ODR platforms and demoed them at the end of the weekend, with finalists presenting TED-style in front of Silicon Valley veterans. On Wednesday the 25th, the meeting moved to UC Hastings College of the Law for a full-day meeting entitled “Breaking Mad: Turning Customer Disputes into Brand Gold” that focused on online dispute resolution in the sharing economy. The last two days of the conference took place at Stanford Law School, focusing on the continuing expansion of ODR and its positive, disrupting effect on law and business. Speakers at the conference included Kent Walker, General Counsel of Google; India Johnson, CEO of the American Arbitration Association; Jim Silkenat, President of the American Bar Association; Mitch Kapur, Founder of Lotus and the Electronic Frontier Foundation; Amanda Long, Director General of Consumers International; and Charley Moore, CEO of Rocket Lawyer. The 2015 meeting will be held in New York City this coming June, so stay tuned to ODR2015.org for more details as they emerge.

Youstice Selected as 2014 Game Changer Award Winner

At #CustFest2014, Europe’s Customer Festival, Youstice collected the Game Changer Award for the best newcomer. The Game Changer Award singles out new European companies with the biggest potential to make a positive impact for businesses and consumers. Five finalists were selected out of all the submitted companies, and Youstice took the big prize. This award will help Youstice continue to make progress in improving standards for customer care. There are millions of unresolved customer disputes around the world each year, and thousands of customers who do not know how to find justice. Youstice is helping to educate businesses on the reality that empowering customers to get resolutions is essential for continued growth and success. In our time of social networking and global access, having customers suffer bad experiences is toxic for a business. Youstice’s leadership in making this point, and developing advanced tools to address the problem, is why they were selected as Game Changer for the Year. This award will certainly help them convince even more businesses to take their resolution processes to the next stage.

Modria Acquires Juripax

Modria acquired Netherlands-based Juripax B.V., an online mediation software provider. Juripax hosts the leading European online dispute resolution platform, helping mediators and dispute resolvers, companies and consumers resolve disputes of many kinds, from divorce to e-commerce. Through its acquisition of Juripax, Modria is underscoring its commitment to the European market and adding new technology for the provision of fast and fair resolutions to cross-border disputes. Under the agreement, Modria acquired all technology and intellectual property assets of Juripax, and the Juripax co-founders are joining the Modria advisory board. The Juripax platform will continue to be available to existing customers during the term of their subscription agreements. These customers will have an opportunity to upgrade to a larger suite of services, including the powerful Modria Resolution Center, over the next year.

Taobao Resolves Disputes Using Crowdsourced ODR

The leading Chinese e-commerce site Taobao has announced that more than 575,000 amateur adjudicators are working in the Taobao User Dispute Resolution Center, which opened in December 2012. These users are settling about 2,000 consumer grievances a day over a host of e-commerce issues. Unpaid jurors sit on 31-member panels that review cases submitted by buyers and sellers, with a simple majority vote deciding the outcome. Assessors can choose cases according to their interests, and may participate in up to twenty cases per day. As the Yahoo Small Business Advisor site explains: “The center was originally established as a way to tap into the Taobao community, crowdsourcing the dispensation of justice in minor everyday disputes that inevitably occur between shoppers, merchants and the website that hosts them. At the outset, assessors were called in to help resolve disagreements between Taobao merchants and Taobao itself in cases where store owners believed they had been unfairly penalized by the company for violating website rules. In June 2013, the system was expanded to include consumer complaints against merchants. Last year there were more than 12.7 billion transactions on Alibaba platforms, so leveraging a volunteer army to settle minor cases was seen as a way to ease some of the pressure on paid employees, at the same time giving Taobao users a voice in how the website is run. In the past thirteen months, more than 238,000 online-shopping disputes have been settled by the center. Taobao officials stress that disputed transactions last year accounted for less than 0.08% of total orders placed on Alibaba’s China retail marketplaces. Currently almost one out of every three complaints that reach Taobao’s customer service department are shunted to the center.” Read more at <<https://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/advisor/taobao-crowdsourcing-justice-online-shopping-disputes-035543727.html>>.

New Providers: Mediate2Go.com, SwiftCourt.se and Swiftjudgment.com

Mediate2go.com is an online case management system for mediators including client contact management, case management, session management, secure messaging, digital contacts and more. Mediate2go also has a self-resolution tool that is free for the general public. It can help people manage conflicts from any device, and even provide them with advice on neighbourhood conflicts, workplace conflict or divorce. The site also offers a mediator directory for parties to find mediators for civil, community, family, insurance, school and workplace disputes. The site was founded in December 2013 by Jonathan Elston, and its design is based on his research on alternative dispute resolution techniques.

SwiftCourt.se is a new arbitration service provider based in Sweden. Swift Court's objective is to become the leading choice for small claims resolution processes in Scandinavia. SwiftCourt also provides contractual language and clauses to specify the SwiftCourt resolution process as the default redress option should an issue arise, which makes getting agreement to participate easier. Under the SwiftCourt process, both parties must agree to participate. A case is filed on the SwiftCourt site, and direct negotiation is initiated. Discussions continue for one month, and users can upload evidence and documentation and confer with lawyers during that process. After one month, a panel of three arbitrators is appointed to begin a hearing. The arbitrators decide the case within two weeks and then publish their judgment on SwiftCourt's website. These verdicts are enforceable as arbitration awards.

Swiftjudgment.com is a new service providing online expedited arbitrations, with a panel of experienced arbitrators. From the Swiftjudgment.com site: "A former Department of Justice Technology Executive along with fellow Judges from across the country decided there needed to be a positive change in the way the justice system serves the public. When the concept was developed to apply the best technology resources with some of the greatest legal experts, it was Swift Judgment's time to come to the forefront of the public's eye. It's helping to shape, provoke and reform an important part of the judicial system. We are about influencing and engaging back with the litigants, logically during an emotionally sensitive process. For many citizens of our great nation, small claims court is usually the first and sometimes the only interaction that many people have with the courts, but that doesn't mean that it has to be an arduous, dragged out process. As a company, we have eliminated the bureaucracy and charge forward with progress for you, personally and throughout this great nation."