

Chicago Tribune

Meg Graham | October 1, 2015

Dolly, the Uber for moving stuff, loads up with \$8M in new funding



Dolly plans to expand its options for moving your heavy stuff

Dolly, the peer-to-peer app connecting owners of heavy stuff to movers, has raised \$8 million to strengthen its grip on the Chicago market and fuel expansion to other cities.

The Seattle-based company made Chicago its first market last year. The Series A funding, which follows a \$1.7 million seed round in Oct. 2014, was led by venture capital firm Maveron and included investments from Chicago-based KGC Capital's Dick Kiphart and Chris Capps and Amazon Senior Vice President of Consumer Business Jeff Wilke.

CEO Mike Howell started the company in 2013 with Jason Norris, Kelby Hawn and Chad Wittman. Dolly has 10 employees, one of whom is in Chicago.

Howell said the new batch of funding will help the company bulk up the number of employees, as well as scale marketing and operations in existing and new markets. The app launched quietly in Seattle this year, and the company plans to grow to 20 markets by the end of 2016.

Users create a “Dolly” by taking photos of items and answering a series of questions, including what they’d like to move, where they’d like to take it, when they’d like it to get there, whether there are stairs and if the customer is willing to help. The platform uses an algorithm to set a price, with jobs averaging \$50 to \$85 in Chicago.

Howell said the company has added new options in the last year, including an option to ride along with the “Dolly” if an individual doesn’t have a car — or wants a chauffeured visit to Ikea. The company also has partnered with companies such as Crate & Barrel to give customers the option to use Dolly to deliver their purchases.

Howell said the app has coordinated 30,000 item pickups, mostly in Chicago, since January.

“We think there’s an opportunity to do tens of thousands [of deliveries a month] just in Chicago alone,” Howell said. “We’re on a great path toward that.”

Dolly is focused on short-distance moves, but plans to offer longer, cross-state moves in the future as it scales. The company said those moves require adhering to federal regulations.

Though growing to new markets and luring new customers are priorities, Howell also envisions offering specialized moves like of pianos, or the hookup and disconnection of large household appliances. He said he also has eyes on tackling bigger residential or office moves. Though Dolly’s transactions today typically involve a “pickup truck-sized move” with a few items, he said he believes the model could be a fit for larger-scale moves.

“The moving industry — just like delivery and hauling — is hugely antiquated,” he said.

Copyright © 2015, [Chicago Tribune](#)