

COLUMNS

Targeting a mobile consumer – and not a phone number

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By [Jay Highley](#)



Brands are increasingly moving mobile into their mainstream marketing and customer relationship management programs.

However, one challenge remains around mobile database management: How do marketers effectively understand who their mobile consumers really are?

Despite the explosive growth in smartphones and smartphone applications, standard text messaging is still the gold standard in mobile engagement due to the fact that it is the simplest way to communicate with mobile consumers.

Trillions served

According to ABI Research, more than 7 trillion text messages will be sent around the world in 2011.

Even more compelling for mobile marketers, in a recent Hipcricket survey of mobile users, 57 percent of respondents said they would be interested in opting in to a brand's loyalty club.

Yet, fully 80 percent of survey respondents said they have not been marketed to by their

favorite brands.

Additionally, fully 90 percent of those mobile users who had participated in a mobile loyalty club felt they had gained value from being a part of the club.

The reach and immediacy of text messaging as a marketing tool is unparalleled in comparison to any other mobile medium.

That is not to say that SMS should be viewed as the only method for mobile consumer engagement. But it remains the most effective way to acquire and carry on a two-way engagement via a mobile device with a mass audience.

When it comes to building permission-based mobile databases, the building of the member base is usually the easy part.

Yet trying to create value through the database for both marketers and consumers is the really hard part.

Demo ammo

Given that very limited information can be gathered at the time of opt-in or during the follow up interaction via text messaging, it is no wonder that it is hard to make this database fit into a targeted marketing campaign.

After all, all the marketer knows about a mobile user is her mobile number, wireless carrier and the keyword that was sent at the time of opt-in – not a whole lot to build a targeted marketing program around.

The only way to capitalize on the potential power of an SMS-based opt-in database is to somehow learn more about each consumer so that brands can effectively market to the person – and not a phone number.

With all the energy and effort spent in building SMS-based mobile databases, how do marketers gain valuable insight into traditional demographics to leverage the power of this database?

One solution is to interact with the mobile user via text messages to ask for additional demographic information.

If done correctly, additional demographic information can be gathered. But in most cases, this technique will likely lead to opt-outs from your mobile users and once you get an opt-out on mobile, getting them to opt back in is nearly impossible.

Fortunately, the world is changing fast.

Append amend

With the latest advances and techniques in database management and data mining, valuable demographic information can actually be appended for each mobile record – after the fact.

This additional information can shed an entirely new light on the makeup of mobile

databases and, even more important, allows mobile databases to be easily segmented by user profile and then integrated into other customer databases such as email, social and direct mail.

Appending the mobile records with this additional demographic information allows marketers to cross-reference across multiple mediums, creating a 360-degree view of each user in the database.

This makes it possible to market to a person rather than just a mobile phone number and gives valuable insight into how consumers want to be messaged.

Such additional insight, combined with other relevant data points such as location and behavioral habits, allows messaging to become laser focused and assures that the marketing spend will be right on the customer bull's eye – every time.

So no matter what the method used to build an opt-in mobile database — at the point of sale, through in-store signage or via other traditional media — it is critical to know thy mobile user to target your messaging to the consumer, and not just a mobile phone number.

Knowing your mobile user will help you maximize your marketing spend, create deeper customer engagement and loyalty and drive top-line revenue. After all, is that not what marketing is all about?

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