

COLUMNS

Meeting mobile's challenges with gaming strategy

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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The need to create meaningful mobile experiences for customers has never been greater. And it is not getting any easier.

Despite the hype around and focus on increased strategy and spending in mobile by brands, there is still an air of frustration and disappointment with mobile initiatives.

Mostly, this is related to the struggle to break through when it comes to accomplishing key objectives related to consumer engagement, loyalty and a measurable return on investment.

It is a challenge made all the more difficult because mobile is a constantly moving target, fueled by the rapid evolution of handset hardware, operating systems and the applications that run on them.

To succeed, brands need a more accurate and malleable method for understanding an audience – what makes them tick, how they are likely to respond, and how to reinforce actions that lead to desired outcomes.

There may be a way forward that has been in our hands and pockets the entire time.

Archotyping mobile gaming's success

The mobile gaming community has spent an inordinate amount of time solving the very problems that marketers face when dealing with customer engagement.

The result is a booming mobile gaming marketplace, defined by intense and sustained user engagement.

There are more than 100 million gamers in the United States alone. Gaming is where 80 percent of all mobile consumers spend their money. And it is not just kids and men.

The split between male and female mobile gamers is nearly equal, and the average age is 28.

Mobile gaming's success really boils down to solving for interest, motivation and action. This should sound familiar to marketers, as there is common ground between gaming objectives and marketing objectives, including:

- Identifying potential consumers and converting them to engaged consumers
- Prioritizing engaged consumers based on behavioral traits
- Investing in converting high-target, engaged consumers into paying customers

Applying gaming personas to achieve engagement

Mobile games convert into engagement so effectively in part because of a unique concentration on gaming personas.

These personas identify players as a certain type of gamer with a set of motivators, behavioral tendencies and action triggers.

Gaming personas match up against potential game mechanics that are designed to encourage each user type to take desired actions, complete goals and interact with other players.

Here are three key benefits to marketers for applying gaming-inspired personas to mobile experiences:

1. Universal use

The techniques used for creating gaming personas have an interesting side effect: they all but eliminate the traditional use of demographics to create personas that rely heavily on age bands, gender and geography.

With gaming personas, an 18-year-old male in Hollywood, CA, can have the same persona as a 45-year-old female executive in Atlanta. This approach is especially valuable given the limited availability of real-time demographic data in the mobile space.

2. Focus on personal motivation

Traditionally, marketers identify specific target segments and then attempt to strategize the audience's needs and desires to design a campaign or message that has the greatest

chance of being effective.

Because gaming personas rely on an actual test of engagement, guessing is taken out of the equation.

Marketers are then free to concentrate on more powerful and more personal engagement mechanisms.

Mobile games are purposefully designed to allow an audience to engage in a way that empowers their individual style of interaction.

3. Insights-driven

Both game designers and marketers face the same challenge: the constantly diminishing attention span of consumers who have a plethora of options.

Game designers have combated this challenge by becoming skilled at rapidly evolving the game experience for their audience – which is an important takeaway for marketers.

This approach sets up for the quick identification of gaming mechanics that align with active personas and to strategically test for other potential personas within the customer base over time.

While this requires an aggressive product development and release strategy, the upside for marketers is a more accurate picture of the way their customers interact with the mobile experience. And an added ability to shape the mechanics around what will motivate them to engage, to act, and to remain loyal.

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