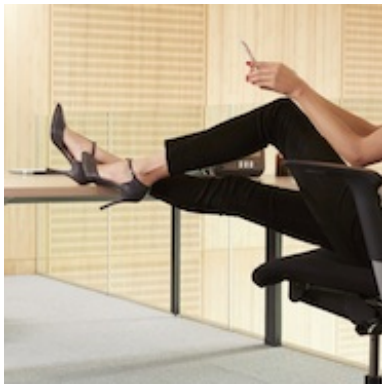


MOBILE

## Better push notifications needed as messaging becomes fundamental to connected devices: Forrester

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*Longchamp Autumn 2015 campaign*

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By CHANTAL TODE

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With push notifications and in-application messaging expected to be a core product function on any connected object going forward, Forrester Research pinpoints 10 emerging best practices marketers must adopt to ensure strong engagement rates.

While the number of marketers adopting push notifications and in-application messaging continues to grow, engagement rates are low and decreasing in some cases due to unclear value and a lack of personalization, according to the report, *Upgrade Your Marketing Plans with Push Notifications And In-App Messaging*. A key takeaway is that with consumers becoming increasingly selective about which messages they engage with, providing contextual relevance alone is not enough.

“Today, the term ‘push’ associated with notifications creates the illusion that marketers are only promoting their offerings,” said Thomas Husson, Paris-based vice president and principal analyst for marketing and strategy at [Forrester Research](#) and author of the report. “As consumers start valuing privacy, they will demand control.

“Consumers will use their app settings to decide which kind of interactions they want to receive from brands and when,” he said. “They will be able to select if they want to receive catalogs at their mail addresses, email newsletters, instant promotions when they enter their preferred mall, and notifications from their connected fridges, cars, and other connected objects.”

## **Expanding opportunities**

Marketers have flocked to push notifications and in-app messaging because they present new opportunities for engagement.

At the same time, the mobile messaging landscape continues to grow more complex as push notifications move to platform applications and the mobile Web.

However, if messages are not relevant and do not provide visible value, brands could be disappointing consumers.

In the United States, 62 percent of consumers opt-in to receive push notifications from a select few apps. Engagement rates are higher on Android than on iOS, which could be due to the easier access of the Android notification status bar and to more rich media formats.

□

*Rich push notifications enable a fuller brand experience*

## **Low engagement rates**

Push notification engagements rates are low and decreasing for media companies and travel because notifications are not personalized enough and do not provide the value the users are looking for. Too often the value of the message is derived from the notification itself, as in a breaking news or booking confirmation notification. Messages that miss the mark are also often in broadcast-only mode.

However, consumers who receive push notifications from shopping/coupon and health/fitness apps show higher engagement and spend more time within the app.

In-app message centers are gaining traction for store sales promotions, discounts, customer service messages or to let customers know that new content is waiting for them.

Retailers, in particular, should take a closer look at in-app messages as they can achieve five times more clicks than notifications on medium-performing iOS apps.

As push notifications and in-app messaging continue to mature, Forrester has landed upon 10 emerging best practices marketers should adopt for more successful programs.

□

*Emoticons can help differentiate in-app messages*

## **Data-centric approach**

The first best practice highlighted by Forrester is to take a data-centric approach so customers can be segmented and marketers can deliver relevant communications, such as reaching recent store visitors, re-engaging shoppers with abandoned carts and waking up dormant app users.

Forrester also urges marketers to identify mobile moments throughout the customer journey to help define the most appropriate content for each customer or segment of customers.

Mobile programs should be siloed, so marketers should integrate push and in-app messages into their cross-channel and CRM platforms to reduce the risk of customers receiving the same message across different channels.

The most advanced marketers are implementing more than 10 automated campaigns triggered at different steps of app usage. The next stage will be to automate rules to decide the most appropriate channel to engage customers.

To make messages more compelling, marketers should use rich media, in-app interstitials and emoticons.

### **Maximizing opt-in rates**

To maximize opt-in rates, marketers should consider using tutorials and in-app text messages before asking for permission to send push notifications. Using app deep links to the Preference Center or push notification iOS settings on the second or third visit can also help engage those who did not opt-in yet.

Marketers should also consider regularly conducting A/B real-time testing, sending different content, pricing and features to select groups of users and optimize their apps as a product.

Since only a small percentage of customers will download an app, marketers need to prepare to embed messages in other apps, such as messaging apps or mobile wallets.

Selecting a vendor with cross-channel campaign and real-time interaction capabilities is also important.

Marketers also need to be ready to extend their messaging strategies beyond smartphones, with opportunities on tablets during peak evening times, on wearable devices and, in the future, other connected devices.

“Brands that can harness the power of contextual data to consistently deliver customer value will deliver compelling brand experiences that will build brand preference and, ultimately, loyalty,” Mr. Husson said.

### **Final Take**

*Chantal Tode is senior editor on Mobile Marketer, New York*

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/OX7uUZQtpm0?rel=0>

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