COLUMNS

How to court a mobile app user

February 12, 2016

Dale Carr is founder/CEO of Leadbolt

By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

By Dale Carr

Our worldwide love affair with mobile games is indisputable. According to eMarketer, more than half of smartphone users already play mobile games regularly and by 2019 that number will climb to 77 percent of the smartphone population.

It is a promising statistic for mobile game developers, but let us not take this love for granted.

Mobile users may discover some applications on their own, but in fact, app advertising is the driving force responsible for 57 percent of new app downloads. And for app advertising to continue to attract a steady stream of loyal users, app marketers must perfect their courting skills.

This Valentine's Day seems like the perfect time for a little crash-course in the Law of Attraction.

The maxim "like attracts like" is the notion that positive, constructive thoughts and planning beget positive actions resulting in positive results. Here is how to apply this philosophy to your mobile app user acquisition strategy:

Identify who you want
Start by spending time identifying the list of must-have qualities of a desired game player. There are several general demographic factors to consider that can inform your targeting strategy, such as geo-location specifics, age-appropriateness and device/platform compatibility.

As a general rule, it is important to start by casting a wide net and use broad targeting parameters and then refine from there once you see which filters have garnered strong results.

The broader your approach, the more users you are likely to reach, although quantity does not always equate to quality, which is why optimization becomes important.

Beyond demographics, there are other advanced ways to target users based on their interests and past downloads.

For example, try a re-targeting method to reach people who have clicked on an ad but not yet downloaded the app.

Another approach is to target users who have downloaded similar apps to yours. For example, if they enjoy math games, they are likely to enjoy other math games and brain teaser puzzles.

Additionally, you can improve the efficiency of your campaign and save unnecessary clicks by only showing ads to

those who have not yet installed your app.

Your ad platform partner is your ideal matchmaker, and can advise you on setting the most advantageous targeting parameters as well as track performance for each of the various methods.

Go where they are
Reach and attract the most promising conversion candidates by running campaigns in the channel environments where your best audience matches are spending time: using mobile apps, surfing the mobile Web, connecting on social media, online and, yes, for a branding-play, they are still watching television commercials.

While a cross-channel approach is most effective, it is worth noting some specific benefits to advertising in apps versus mobile Web:

More media time spent in-apps: In the United States, 11 percent of time spent on media happens via mobile Web versus 89 percent of our media time using apps.

Better attribution: For ads placed within apps, cookies can provide insight into where consumers are coming from.

Ability to track lifetime value: Purchases/downloads from mobile Web surfers are harder to track all the way through to conversion. A direct download from an install ad in the closed app environment gives the advertiser the ability to track post-install activity and measure the overall lifetime value of the user.

Make a great first impression
According to a recent Yahoo study, one-third of mobile users delete apps within the first week after download. Top reasons for app deletion are Stopped Using (55 percent), Found a Better App (53 percent) and Boredom (52 percent).

It is time to pull out all the stops to avoid app fatigue or worse boredom.

To start, please ensure an effortless download and trouble-free user experience. Do your part to keep new users engaged in your app or game.

A great way to enhance engagement is through rewarded video ads. By offering the user extra coins, level advancement or other desired in-app perks in exchange for their 15-second video ad view, you reward their time and keep them active in your app.

For the advertiser, this generosity pays off in stronger brand affinity and the user's undivided attention.

If you prefer a more subtle approach, native ads can be very effective, as they are elegantly placed within the app environment to blend more seamlessly into the design and usage flow for an extended and less intrusive stay.

Plan your future
It is one thing to get an install, but what happens after the install can make or break your long-term success. Stay focused on building a strategy to attract high-value users, and then scale this effort.

Rewarded video ads are a nice way to introduce users to in-app purchases. By letting the user experience the luxury of an in-app reward, they get a taste of what it is like when they tap into IAPs.

The rewarded video ads can be placed as notifications during the game, and delivered at precise moments of game play when a player might need the perk that is offered.

Follow-through is essential. You can invite players to return to the app periodically by using re-engagement ads that can alert them about an app update, new feature or new opportunities in your app.

User acquisition is one part art, one part science. Ask your ad network partner for help, since it is the closest to Cupid as you can get for targeting the best-fit users, and making them fall in love with your app.

Dale Carr is founder/CEO of Leadbolt, Los Angeles. Reach him at dale@leadbolt.com.