

COLUMNS

## How to build an effective SMS program

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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There are two ways to access memory: recognition and recall. Recognition happens when you come into contact with something and remember it because of a previous encounter. Recall is when you independently remember something without a prompt.

To operationalize this: If I asked you to name every piece of clothing hanging in your closet, you would be able to name quite a few (recall), but you would not remember quite a few as well. However, if I showed you each piece, you would definitely know it was yours (recognition).

One purpose of branding is to build recognition (of a brand, product, or service) until it becomes recall. Why? Because people are more likely to interact with things that are familiar.

Studies have shown that given a choice, most people in an unfamiliar location will make do at a chain restaurant they know rather than try a local restaurant that they have never seen before. That is the power of branding. This means that branding is essential for your SMS marketing program.

Here are proven ways to ensure your program will have long-lasting effect.

Establish an official program name and use it consistently in all promotions.

Make sure the program name appears in all SMS messages as well as cross-promote it to all of the marketing channels you are using: Web, email, social media, print, radio, television, everything.

Program saturation will increase the likelihood that consumers will see and begin to recognize program branding.

The goal is to ensure that someone who subscribes to your SMS program will have already seen the branding in a Facebook feed, Tweet or email message.

Leverage all of your social media channels. It goes without saying: a customer who elects to receive communication in multiple channels is a retailer's most engaged customer and will have better recognition and recall of your brand.

Make sure to post regularly about your SMS marketing program including highlighting the subscription benefits for example, a generous welcome offer for signing up to the program.

Reward customers, especially those who opt into your mobile marketing program.

In addition to regular updates, motivate potential subscribers by offering a welcome discount on their next purchase when they sign up.

You should also plan to deliver exclusive offers and promotions available only to subscribers of the SMS marketing program.

Just as importantly, make sure non-subscribers know about these benefits enticing them to join by advertising them in your other marketing channels.

Note: if sourcing exclusive offers is too difficult, announcing offers early ("Insider Alert: Members only sale this Friday only") can be a great way to deliver exclusive value.

For consumers opting into your SMS program through your Web site, the benefits of membership should be featured on your homepage before they click through to the sign-up page, increasing the probability that visitors will click on the link.

An attractive graphic that bullets the benefits in brief, text that appears upon mouse-over or any number of other options will deliver the message that your mobile marketing program is for them.

Boost your mobile marketing subscribers. Leverage your in-house email marketing list.

Research has shown that overtime, a large percentage of customers on an email list will sign up to receive SMS promotions, if invited. This is a huge win.

Customers who receive communications in multiple channels are high recognition, high recall and your most engaged customers.

These people are brand loyal as demonstrated by the fact that they want to see and hear from your brand from more than one channel.

Establish a promotion delivery cadence. Experience recurring lift by scheduling your SMS marketing promotions on a regular basis.

Regularity helps your brand become a part of your customers' routine. They will know when to check for messages and offers. This is excellent for brand familiarity.

One pizza chain lets people know the weekly specials every Sunday and blasts a "Two for Tuesday" special every Tuesday.

Another retailer with a relatively modest marketing list of 200,000 subscribers generates between \$2 million and \$3 million in monthly incremental revenue by delivering mobile offers to its SMS marketing list on a weekly basis.

Create a sense of urgency. Mobile coupons tend to be more effective if only valid for a short time, creating a sense of urgency that encourages customers to take action right away.

Another option is to deliver a reminder message a day or two before the promotion period ends.

In case the customer forgot about the promotion this is using memory in a different way reminder messages have been shown to inspire immediate action.

INCREASING RECOGNITION until it becomes recall is a strategy used to achieve the ultimate goal of increasing sales. These tips will help you win customer hearts and minds and stay there.

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