

COLUMNS

## How small to midsize businesses can benefit from mobile marketing

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*Craig Hagopian is CEO of Chalk Digital*

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

By **Craig Hagopian**

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Who knows the most about a local market's opportunities, trends, needs and other nuances? The franchisees, agents, dealers and business owners who spend all of their time there? Or the people hundreds of miles away at their company's national headquarters or its ad agency?

Nearly everyone would agree that it is the first group. So why are they the ones least equipped to develop and execute mobile marketing campaigns that take advantage of their local expertise? There are at least two reasons:

The traditional mobile advertising ecosystem misunderstands the needs of small and medium businesses (SMBs). Although there is no shortage of mobile advertising networks, their pricing and client-facing interfaces make them unviable options for SMBs, including franchisees, agents, dealers and business owners.

For example, SMBs often do not have staff who know mobile marketing fundamentals such as ad unit sizes and design principles.

The major mobile ad networks assume that their clients have this expertise or can afford to hire an agency to provide it.

Agency creative fees can range from 8 percent to 10 percent of media spend, adding hundreds or thousands to the total cost. All of these factors effectively put mobile marketing out of reach for most SMBs.

Franchisors worry about losing control over their branding. Real estate companies, quick-service restaurants and other franchises are concerned that their local franchisees will ignore their branding guidelines once they are empowered to create marketing collateral.

An example is a real estate agent who disregards branding rules by shrinking the size of his franchise's logo in a mobile banner ad so his headshot can be bigger.

Both reasons are overshadowed by the size of the SMB opportunity: more than 5.7 million companies in the United States alone, according to the Census Bureau. That is 300 times more than the number of large enterprises to which the traditional mobile advertising ecosystem caters.

The fact that such an enormous addressable market is so underserved highlights why it is time to democratize mobile marketing. Here is how to do that:

Provide a branding framework that balances the needs of franchisors and franchisees. For example, a real estate company would provide the ad platform with its branding guidelines. The platform then would use those to provide local real estate agents with a template that ensures their ads meet those guidelines.

This framework also benefits agents by freeing them to customize their ads without worrying that they will inadvertently violate brand rules.

Eliminating these concerns benefits the ad platform because it means franchisees are more likely to use it and because franchisors are more likely to encourage them to do so.

Provide highly granular tools that reflect the highly local nature of these campaigns. The ad platform should give SMBs the ability to publish ads based on locations such as town, neighborhood, ZIP code or proximity to something.

An example of the latter is pushing ads to mobile users when they are a couple of blocks away from a house that is for sale. This granularity is key because a national headquarters or its ad agency might waste money by casting too large a net. But the local business will know exactly which area to target.

For example, suppose there is a neighborhood filled with adorable starter homes that young couples covet but quickly outgrow once they start having kids. A real estate agent could target that neighborhood with ads for homes across town that are larger but still affordable and in the same school district.

Provide analytics to quantify a mobile campaign's reach and effectiveness. For example, data such as views and clicks would help real estate agents show clients exactly how they are working to sell their property.

Provide a way for SMBs to leverage their existing assets to save time and money. For example, the ad platform can interface with a car dealer's VIN database. Then when a dealership wants to generate foot traffic to its location, it can create an ad to promote a specific vehicle and the platform automatically populates the ad using the VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) to detail all the car features from the basic model and color to the size of the engine to each installed feature or option for an accurate and complete VDP (Vehicle Display Page) experience.

In the case of real estate, an example is having the platform pull MLS (Multiple Listing Service) data to speed ad creation and landing pages. This automation saves time and money, and it eliminates errors due to manual entry.

"Being able to target mobile consumers at specific events provides our clients with the ability to engage their target audience that drive post event store visit and purchases," said Mark Salcido, senior vice president for digital sales at Target Media Partners Interactive.

MOBILE MARKETING is highly effective for increasing sales and brand loyalty.

An ad platform that democratizes mobile marketing in a way that is brand approved and locally controlled ensures that small to midsized businesses can take enjoy those benefits as much as their larger counterparts already do.

*Craig Hagopian is CEO of [Chalk Digital](#), San Diego. Reach him at [craig@chalkdigital.com](mailto:craig@chalkdigital.com).*