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5 best-practice tips for mobile proximity messaging

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The success of any mobile proximity campaign is highly dependent on user engagement. Messaging that does not motivate a user to take action is a wasted impression and will affect your results negatively.

Having a baseline and a few years of experience can dramatically reduce wasted inventory and time when running mobile proximity campaigns.

Getting your messaging right is essential, given the fact that success is based on compelling users to engage when they are within a very small geographic region.

Below are the top five best practices we have learned.

1. Tell them the store location
You have very limited space in a push notification.

On the Apple iOS operating system for iPhones, iPads and iPods, for example, you have about 107 characters to work with before your message gets truncated with an ellipsis. This means that your message must be short and to the point, but it also must be compelling.

One strategy that works well for drive-to-store messaging is to compel the user with proximity. This means that when a user reads the message, she should immediately recognize that the notification is related to something close to her current location.

Examples:

"There's a great offer for you at Levi's on 34th Street."

"Check out Vince Camuto's new fall collection at our Grand Central Station store."

"Barnes & Noble has some great deals for you at the Short Hills Mall."

2. Use hyper-local references
Another drive-to-store strategy that has worked really well is to use references to neighborhoods, districts or other commonly known landmarks to help users realize their proximity to the store.

Examples:

"It's your lucky day! A great deal is waiting in SoHo for you from Elle and Guess."

"Stop by the Sprint store in the South Loop and get 50% off your bill from Sprint."

"You just walked by a great Levi's deal in Herald Square."

3. Mention specific preferably targeted categories and brands
Mentioning specific categories or brands in messaging helps increase user interaction and open rates.

This type of messaging has proven effective in both drive-to-store and in-store campaigns.

The key to this strategy is effective and accurate user segmentation.

Understanding a user's category and brand affinities allows the messaging system to tailor each notification so that it appeals to both their current interests as well as their underlying shopping behavior.

Examples:

"Nine West has got some great shoes for you! Head over to Faneuil Hall and check them out!"

"Welcome to Macy's. Visit the L'Oral counter and get your free gift!"

"Great deals on Nike, Under Armour, Adidas, and more at Foot Locker near the food court."

4. Reference compelling offers
Mobile couponing saw a significant rise in popularity several years ago, but demand has since waned due to mass messaging tactics and generic offer overload.

However, a relevant, compelling offer, delivered at the right time, can still create significant uplift in click-through rates (CTRs) and store visit rates (SVRs).

You should strive to make your offers unique and exclusive, otherwise the user may feel as though you are simply recycling generic messaging and taking advantage of the special permissions she has given you.

Examples:

"Elle's fall favorites are at Vince Camuto! Stop by for $25 off NOW!"

"20% off your next purchase at Levi's."

"Two pair are better than one. #BOGO at the DSW in Webster Square."

5. Leverage third-party endorsements
Finally, third-party endorsements that resonate with your audience are a great way to craft effective and compelling mobile messaging.

Referencing these endorsements in your notifications can heighten brand recognition and significantly increase message interaction.

Examples:

"Elle's fall favorites are at Vince Camuto! Stop by for $25 off NOW!"

"Check out StyleWatch's Sizzling Summer Picks, exclusively at Gap."

"Este Lauder and Cosmopolitan have a great offer for you at the Herald Square Macy's"

Test, test and test again
While I have outlined a number of best practices for mobile proximity messaging in this article, it is necessary to call out the most important best practice separately. That is simply to test, test and test again.

Mobile users who have given you permission to message them have entrusted you with a huge responsibility.

Mobile audiences are fickle, and rightly so.

Abusing that trust is a guaranteed way to lose the ability to message that user and rack up some bad reviews in the process.

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