

MOBILE

Social media contests should focus on experiences not giveaways

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By **Brielle Jaekel**

While giveaways and contests are nothing new for marketers, the growth in mobile marketing has driven the strategy to social media, where programs increasingly lack creativity and provide little value.

A slew of brands often take to social media attempting to engage consumers with contests and activations for prizes and giveaways, which means it is vital to adopt a visual and creative strategy that will win out over the onslaught. Marketers should make entries with as little steps as possible, while also creating an experience that is unique and fun for consumers paired with a worthwhile prize.

"One of the biggest reasons brands initiate a contest is to get new leads, increase engagement and drive new revenue," said Carrie McIlveen, U.S. director of marketing at **Metia**. "So to achieve this goal marketers will want to add value and think visual.

"Meaning, you will want a very cool prize that you know your audience will love and include images that catch, and keep, their attention," she said. "One of the best practices is to keep it simple.

"It is important to have minimal steps to encourage contest engagement and increase contest and brand visibility. What you do not want to do for your contests is to overwhelm people with lots of confusing jargon or overcomplicating information."

Social standings

Social platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest have opened up significant possibilities of marketers connecting with brands and many are encouraging user-generated content through the creation of contests. For instance, a brand is very likely to give away products and prizes to followers in exchange for specific call-to-actions.

As consumers are more than distracted with so many outlets and overload of content, it is important to attract them with methods that are interesting to them and provide them with an experience in which they can get something out of. Using visual imagery is an effective way to stand out in the middle of social media users' overly crowded feeds.

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A poster contest for Comedy Central's roast of Justin Bieber

Providing clear and short step-by-step instructions in which the user has little to do is also a key method in ensuring maximum engagement. The simpler it is to participate, the more consumers the marketer will attract.

It is also smart to make sure the action and prizes are related to the specific marketer, which will keep the brand image conspicuous and attract its demographic. Users who are following a certain brand are already interested in its products or brand image, which means staying within that persona is ideal to best draw them in.

"The brands that stick out are the ones that focus on experiences, not giveaways," said Melina Ex, managing director of East Coast at **Fetch**. "These brands see it not only as a way to increase engagement with the brand but more importantly to increase brand perception and virality.

"Smart brands also ensure that rewards are related to the brand," she said. "The worst contests are those that are poorly executed in terms of creative and reward.

"These contests generally come off as spammy and decrease the perception of the brand the contest is associated with, when the reward is not related to the brand users are less likely to engage. Best practice is a contest (or experience, which is oftentimes the best approach) that not only rewards users but raises the brand value in the process, which encourages users to participate and share with friends."

Cross-promotion

It is important for marketers to not take a me-too' approach to contests on social media, but to have a purpose and a rewarding experience for consumers. Cross-promotion with other brands can lead to unique and creative pushes on social media.

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Reese's teams up with sports for a contest

"Brands can not simply give away products and expect to see as high engagement rates as they could," Ms. Ex said.

"They will need to continue to incentivize users with rewards that increase the perception of the brand.

"Contests through brand partnerships will see more and more use," she said. "We will see additional brands leverage each other through cross-promotion."