

COLUMNS

A cautionary in-app mobile advertising tale for Thanksgiving

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Food for thought

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To keep holiday gatherings peaceful and happy, there is a rule in my house: we do not discuss politics.

With the recent United States presidential elections still fresh, this rule is especially well timed and relevant. Instead, as friends and family gather around the table for the ritual of the Thanksgiving feast, conversations will undoubtedly turn to popular and safe topics such as what is on our mobile devices.

Game on

There is no shortage of fresh applications, new mobile games and wearables to try, which got me thinking about what I always think about: keeping apps lean, profitable, and not overstuffed with ads.

In fact, the very same concerns are on the minds of free-to-play mobile game makers.

Game analytics company deltaDNA recently published results from its survey of mobile game professionals where respondents expressed various concerns about in-app mobile advertising frequency.

The show of concern is in many ways a positive indicator that mobile app developers and publishers care about their players, and are trying to strike the right balance between earning revenue from their free-to-play game and keeping their valuable players happy.

According to the study, 36 percent of those surveyed fear that a high frequency of in-app ads could result in less player engagement, while more than a quarter of respondents cited lower levels of player enjoyment as a concern.

Players leaving the app aka churn and potential loss of in-app purchase revenue made the list, at 14 percent and 6 percent, respectively. The survey focused on ad frequency, an important parameter to consider when allowing ads inside the app experience.

Yet being responsible with ad frequency and setting appropriate caps is not the only factor in creating a balanced user experience.

For app developers, taking a deeper look into ad format options and integrating the best match for their app will also go a long way toward keeping users engaged, happy, loyal and alleviating many of these concerns.

Extending engagement

The best of both worlds is to allow an ad format that is discreet enough to blend in, but powerful enough to earn attention from your high-quality players and perform their job.

Native ads come in a variety of ad formats, from video ads to rewarded video ads, and even static display.

Native simply refers to the elegant placement of the ad within an app, so that it complements the app environment by matching its look and feel, fits the game flow, and does not cover important screen space, block or prevent an action, or further disrupt a player by popping-up unexpectedly.

Since native ads are designed to be a bit more passive in nature, genuinely interested players will engage with the ad on their terms and, therefore, yield higher conversions and fewer accidental clicks. This kind of quality is great for your advertiser partners and your bottom line.



Laying on the spread

Boosting enjoyment

Rewarded video ads are especially praised for their ability to improve players' overall game experience and boost enjoyment.

By receiving in-game rewards such as coins, an extra life or game-level advancement, to name a few, in exchange for watching a video ad, the user is allowed to experience even more game features.

In fact, research from Unity Technologies found that "nearly half of U.S. mobile gamers who play at least monthly prefer viewing rewarded video ads in free-to-play games."

Minimizing churn

Fresh experiences keep players coming back.

By allowing players to sample an in-game perk or privilege at no cost via rewarded video ads, you are providing a risk-free way for players to try out more features and take their game playing to the next level.

Introducing players to a new attainable goal, not only drives them to stay engaged longer, but it also plants the desire for future in-app purchases.

Once players know what it is like to have these new experiences, it sparks a renewed desire and interest in the game.

Driving revenue

Over-stuffing your app or game with ads is not the answer to driving revenue.

Rather, integrating with two to three carefully placed ads within specific areas of the app and in an ad format that complements the user experience rather than interrupt it will deliver the revenue performance you desire.

YOUR MOBILE AD platform partner should work with you to examine your game flow and identify the best ad placements to achieve maximum revenue potential as efficiently as possible.

Keeping players engaged, ensuring enjoyment, driving revenue and reducing churn within your games are a shared responsibility between mobile game makers and ad network partners.



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