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How retail apps can improve user engagement and retention

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Push for retail apps

By Joyce Solano

Application user acquisition is a sizable investment for mobile marketing teams, and that makes retention all the more important.

Retail apps that implement a successful user retention strategy will enjoy the benefits of long-term customer value. But those that do not will struggle to reach a positive return on their acquisition investments.

With the holiday season in progress, it is more important than ever that retail apps optimize their conversion rate.

Engaging first-time users the right way during this high-traffic season could grant you more loyal, returning customers in the months and years to come.

There are a few tactics that retailers can use to increase their mobile marketing ROI. Many of these tactics revolve around push notifications, which have been shown to increase retention by up to 7x.

Here are some actionable tips designed to guide retail apps to improved user engagement and retention.

Preventing one-time users with push notifications
One-time users are the bane of every acquisition campaign's existence. It might feel like you have won the battle once a user discovers your app and installs it, but almost 80 percent of users do not use newly downloaded apps after the first day.

Even though these people have fallen dormant, that does not necessarily mean that they were unhappy with your app.

User attention is a scarce resource, and with an average of 26 apps to choose from, your app could easily fall by the wayside.

The best remedy to dormant users is to contact them outside of the app. Email and push notifications are the two best ways to do this.

If the person opted into push before falling dormant, you can schedule a push notification that will be triggered after

several days of dormancy.

These messages will remind users of the value of your app while hopefully bringing them back in. Data shows that push notifications can increase app retention by 20 percent.

For users who have not opted into push notifications, email is a powerful alternative.

Email might be dated technology, but it is a powerful tool in the mobile world. In fact, the majority of emails are opened on mobile.

Much like push notifications, email has the unique ability to reach users outside of the app. That makes them ideal for re-engaging dormant users.

Increase conversion rates with abandoned shopping cart reminders
Bringing users back into the app is important. But for a retail app to survive, shoppers need to convert.

Luckily, messaging as a whole offers ways for mobile teams to lift their conversion rates.

One vital push notification for retailers is the abandoned shopping cart reminder.

The problem of abandoned shopping carts has plagued retailers since the early ecommerce days, and the issue is even worse on mobile.

Shopping cart abandonment rates are an appalling 81 percent on mobile, compared to an already high 69 percent on desktop.

Messaging provides one solution to this problem. Apps can send push notifications to remind users of incomplete purchases.

These messages are even more effective when they include personalized information: instead of simply saying "complete your purchase today!" the message can specify the item's name and its current stock.

Leverage personalization for greater engagement
Personalized messaging is at the heart of mobile app engagement.

Retail apps that use all of the data at their disposal will enjoy higher conversion rates from messages that deliver real value. Let us review two examples:

Retail apps can collect information on each user's purchase and browsing history, so there is plenty of data at their disposal.

The most straightforward way to use this data is to offer personalized product recommendations based on previous purchases.

But you can go even further by incorporating real-time location into your messages.

For a retail app with bricks-and-mortar locations, this is a powerful technique.

Retailers can create push notification triggers based on the user's geolocation and send them when shoppers come within a preset range of a bricks-and-mortar store.

Although foot traffic is plentiful at this time of year, so is the competition.

In busy shopping districts, competing retailers are likely situated beside one another. How can a store guarantee more walk-ins than its neighbor, aside from brand recognition?

Push notifications offer a solution to this problem, too.

If a person has three retail brand apps on her phone and your app is the only one that sends a geolocation-triggered push notification, you could be the first store the consumer visits.

WHILE NONE of these tips is a silver bullet, they are more than the sum of their parts.

Together, these techniques fit into a wider mobile marketing strategy that will increase your retail app's conversions.

With average app retention as low as it is, the key for retailers is to keep users engaged. This means crafting a stellar in-app experience with products that users love, but it also means reaching users out of the app through push notifications.

If you can keep your app top-of-mind, conversions will follow.

Joyce Solano is vice president of marketing at Leanplum

Joyce Solano is vice president of marketing at Leanplum, San Francisco. Reach her at joyce@leanplum.com.