

COLUMNS

Email, push and SMS: Integrated or independent?

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The new salesforce Einstein

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Our recent research study, the 2016 State of the Connected Customer, found that 75 percent of consumers expect a consistent experience across channels and 73 percent said they are somewhat or extremely likely to switch when they do not get it.

A study by the PR Council found that integrating communications is the No. 1 priority for senior marketers by a wide margin.

On message

After a couple of clients asked whether marketers were sending unique or consistent messages across channels, I did a little unscientific research of my own. I followed eight retailers for five weeks, then reviewed their push, SMS and email messages to see whether they were aligned or independent of each other.

I found that 20 percent of the messages sent were repetitions or amplifications, as I think of them messages that were the same in one or more channels.

Sometimes the messages were sent on the same day and sometimes they were staggered by a day, for example the email on Friday and the SMS on Saturday.

These messages show not only how short-form messaging is converging, but also how a quick glance can drive home the message, particularly when viewed in multiple channels.

I have heard marketers talk about wanting to avoid repetition, but I think they over-estimate their customers' attention and focus.

With attention spans shrinking and mobile devices dominating, you can see how mastering short-form messaging will be a key skill for marketers of the future.

I also saw that certain companies are aligning messages on a consistent basis and others never do. It may be a product of company policy or organizational silos. Certainly it is worth testing.

One of my clients found a big jump in response for exclusive offers that is, a richer offer on one channel over others.

When we first looked at the results from one month's SMS campaigns, I could not figure out what caused the huge difference in conversion and orders. It turned out that some messages contained an exclusive offer, one that was better than the offer in email or even on the Web site.

So while I believe that repetition bears fruit, the occasional channel exclusive offer keeps subscribers engaged. It contributes to FOMO fear of missing out.

Pushing it out

If you are concerned about overwhelming your customers with digital messages, take a cue from Discover and other financial institutions that have great preference centers that put the customer in control. Customers choose how they want to receive different types of information via email or SMS.

Another consideration of your channel strategy is competition for your customers' attention.

In the first three weeks of my review, I received 328 promotional email messages, compared to 24 SMS and 62 push.

In the battle for customers' attention, email is competing in a very packed arena.

On the other hand, push and text messages appear mixed with critical and very personal messages you have a meeting in 10 minutes, your friend wants to have coffee, your kid forgot his lunch money. So we must respect the mobile message channel and deliver content worthy of a customer's home screen.

Looking at messages by day of the week Friday was the biggest day for push and Thursday was the biggest day for SMS. This does not necessarily mean those are the best days, just the days with the highest volume.

What is interesting to me is that retailers are not sending messages on peak shopping days they are more aligned with that end-of-week shopping prep mentality that has characterized retail promotion forever.

The big opportunity is to deliver a great offer when the customer is shopping and that of course is most likely to be Saturday and Sunday.

INTEGRATED MESSAGING is a customer expectation and top priority of senior marketers.

Let us test the boundaries of repetition versus channel exclusive, along with day-of-week, personalization, offer and copy.

Mobile messaging is growing and changing, along with your career.



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