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3 strategies for brands to create SMS campaigns

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All signs in the market and among consumers say that mobile has finally arrived. Until now, marketers have remained cautious, limiting investment and experimenting with smaller campaigns to test the waters.

With more mobile devices in the hands of consumers around the world, major brands are ready to make mobile a definitive part of their marketing strategy.

The sheer size of mobile users makes a compelling argument that marketers cannot ignore.

For example, there are now more than 2 billion mobile subscribers worldwide and 230 million in the United States alone.

What is more, an astounding 99 percent of devices are SMS compatible, per Nielsen Online – and this is where one of the biggest opportunities resides for brands that want to build a meaningful, long-term relationship with their customers.

SMS or text messages remain popular because they are fast and easy to use, saving time and allowing for both privacy and personalization.

Some people read text messages before email, choosing the speed and responsiveness of text messages.

Before marketers can use text messages to reach consumers, they need to build a personal connection first.

Marketers need to earn the trust and permission of consumers and offer something of value that makes them want to receive text messages about their service or items such as specially discounted products or promotions.

There are three strategies that marketers need to consider when creating an SMS campaign in the marketing mix:

1. Do not wait to build your target mobile list

Building a detailed list of current and potential customers is the first critical step to an effective SMS campaign.

Consider acquiring mobile numbers through signage at stores, events, billboards and other traditional advertising vehicles.

Look for the opportunity to gain email and mobile opt-ins together from customers to maximize engagement across channels.

For future campaigns, it is also important to capture event, demographic and location details of the customer when you received permission.

Southwest Airlines had great success connecting with customers where they were most engaged with the brand – at the airport.

Using mobile opt-in, Southwest promoted campaigns across the Web, television and print ads and at Southwest gates.

The airline far exceeded the breakeven number for customer acquisitions in a short, tightly executed three-week campaign.

2. Engage customers

The ultimate goal for marketers is to build long-term relationships with customers, and it starts with earning trust by delivering value.

Get started with transactional text messages that can quickly open doors to deliver more value.

For example, Southwest confirms important flight information via text messages and then, with further opt-in from the customer, provides additional promotions.

Marketers can engage their customers through highly targeted campaigns that use profile and behavioral data to personalize messages with relevant information for that particular customer.

In-store SMS campaigns are another way to provide value to customers with on-demand

access to store information and savings.

Retailers might consider providing an instant coupon for use in-store or allow customers to receive more information about a product.

Online grocery store and food delivery service Schwan's takes this approach by letting customers choose to receive delivery notifications at checkout time.

Schwan's provides value by sending customers a text message when the delivery is 30 minutes away so that customers have time to prepare. This also becomes an opportunity for its customers to get ready for to place their next order and in turn boosts Schwan's business.

3. Monetize SMS messages

Marketers can easily track campaign performance by including promotion codes or short URLs for specific promotions.

One of the clear advantages of today's mobile technology is the sophistication and experience of the mobile Web. This provides marketers the possibilities of adding multiple strategies to the marketing campaign.

For example, a text message can lead consumers to an engaging mobile Web site or application. The mobile Web can act as the glue between online and offline experiences, and text messages deliver the right message at the right time to motivate customers with a specific action.

Mobile technology is opening many new doors for marketers, but the beauty of SMS campaigns is it does not take the most advanced smartphone to implement them.

A well-crafted SMS campaign will take advantage of location and time to deliver a simple message that engages customers.

Once a meaningful relationship is built with customers, mobile campaigns will deliver significant ROI and continue to demonstrate why they are a critical investment in the marketing strategy.

THE WORLD OF mobile marketing is here to stay, and marketers can start with SMS and then gradually open up to additional avenues like mobile Web, mobile applications and mobile advertising.

Providing a cohesive customer experience across all avenues of mobile is what marketers need to start thinking about and is key to marketing success in the mobile medium.

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