

COLUMNS

## Collecting mobile numbers: It's all about brand engagement

August 14, 2012



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**Luxury Daily**

For many people, their mobile phone may be the last fortress of privacy—the one place no one can get to them. The last thing they want is to be spammed by unwanted text messages.

It is very important to keep in mind that it is all about trust. You should never collect your clients or customers' mobile numbers unless you know for sure they want to receive text messages from you.

Dialed in

Here are some guiding principles to consider when you are collecting mobile numbers.

How will you build your mobile community?

Text messaging is the most direct way to stay in touch with your customers. Text messaging is a very personal method of communication because you can reach your customers no matter where they are or what they are doing.

People are often reluctant to give out their personal phone numbers. The question is, how will you get these numbers from your clients and customers?

To build the most successful mobile marketing campaign possible, you must focus on collecting mobile numbers in a way that focuses on your clients' consent and trust.

Collecting mobile numbers is really about building your own mobile community. Who is interested in learning the latest news, specials, deals, discounts, solutions, and events being offered by your business?

Take it one step further. Ask a targeted question. Who stands to benefit by getting messages from you that are fast, timely and relevant? Anyone who can benefit from your business should be part of your mobile community.

Be creative about how you collect mobile numbers. Design a campaign that is in the best interest of your target audience.

Think of exciting ways to provide value for your loyal clients and be certain about what benefits you are offering. Create an incentive referral program. When current clients refer a new client's mobile number to you, provide a reward, fabulous savings or a giveaway.

One CPA firm I know always offers their loyal clients, who provide referrals, free tickets to a show or a trip to a day spa in the city.

#### Redeeming features

Be creative and clever about your incentive programs. You can create many types of mobile coupon programs. Be sure to offer incentives that resonate with your clients. Give them a choice of rewards from which to choose.

Everyone loves a discount, a bargain or a giveaway, and mobile coupon programs are easy to set up.

Select a discounted product or service or make these items available for free in a digital coupon. To be eligible, people have to sign up to be part of your mobile community.

For example, if you are a new restaurant, customers that sign up to be on your text message contact list can receive a free entrée or deeply discounted drinks during happy hour.

Special events? The first 10 people to give their mobile numbers get to attend one game for free. By offering special incentives through mobile coupons, you get to grow your mobile community. Your customer gets a real benefit, and everyone wins.

The golden rule of collecting mobile numbers is you should only add a mobile number to your mobile community when there is complete consent.

Your clients must willingly opt-in to be a member of your community.

The reason why your clients are willing to share their mobile numbers is because they know they will get something good in return. They trust that you will only share exciting news, discounts and super deals that are really valuable to them.

Quite often, mobile engagement is not about selling to your customers and clients. It is all

about brand engagement.

## Brand stand

The main goal may be to increase awareness to your customers that text messaging is a new way to stay up-to-date with your business and your brand.

Your customers may enjoy paying attention to your text messages because they are responding and engaging in dialogue with you. You might think in terms of not getting an exact financial return, and instead you are just creating another avenue for communication.

One more reason why you must be very careful of how collect your mobile numbers.

One of the ways you will be able to measure brand engagement is that you should have a very low opt-out rate. You want to make your clients and customers feel like they can be heard with greater immediacy than any other form of customer engagement.

When mobile numbers are collected correctly, mobile marketing will prove to be the most economic and effective way to increase relationship building and total brand engagement.

Ultimately, in the long term, you will drive traffic and increase sales.

The effective collection of mobile numbers can bring tremendous value to your customers.

Your customers will derive satisfaction in being the first to know about any promotions or specials that you are offering. They will thank you for your text messages and look forward to good things to come.

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