

COLUMNS

With mobile, brands should reengineer thinking around customer experiences

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According to Pew Research, 88 percent of U.S. adults have a mobile phone and 18 percent have a tablet computer. This has a significant impact on how marketers interact with their audiences.

Mobile is very personal – users expect immediate value and gratification for the interruption to their day, and get frustrated by irrelevant content they perceive as spam. As a result, marketers need to ask themselves if their mobile efforts stand up to this type of challenge.

As the bar quickly rises, organizations must be prepared to provide contextually relevant content consistently across various mobile channels to deliver the best customer experience, from the initial investigation of a product, to the point-of-sale, and beyond to ongoing product support.

This requires an understanding of customers' likes, dislikes, location, brand preferences and other elements that make each customer unique, and then tailoring the content accordingly.

Smartphones

Ever since the smartphone became an extension of our being, it is the anywhere, anytime device.

Marketers must recognize smartphone usage is integrated into the daily activities of their customers and, as a result, is very task-centric.

Consumers go to their phones to make phone calls, check email and quickly find information.

As such, delivering relevant content within the proper device context and task becomes critical to the overall experience and mobile channel optimization becomes a must.

An example of a successful application is the [American Red Cross First Aid App](#), which delivers a wealth of medical information that can be used as a learning and reference tool, but in an emergency offers a wizard-style experience that helps guide the user through a medical crisis.

Marketers need to think of their content in the same way and ask themselves what their customers will do at any given time.

For example, will they quickly look-up product information and reviews before making a purchase? Or will they go straight to the purchase having visited the site and looked at the product before? What information and capabilities are valuable to them while they are on their different mobile devices?

Another example of a well-designed app is the [GoHow app](#), created for the Denver Airport.

The app is centered on travelers who need airport information at their fingertips. It delivers a valuable mix of timely location specific information, including restaurants and shops in the travelers' terminal, as well as individualized opt-in offers from airport vendors.

It is this geo-targeting strategy that leveraged multiple contextual facets to deliver useful information to the traveler which makes this a successful app for the airport and a useful app to the traveler.

Tablets

Marketers are being presented with an exciting new opportunity that shortens the distance between content and purchase.

Tablets are beginning to rival PCs as the online buyer's platform of choice.

Whereas smartphones are task-centric, tablets are used primarily for online buying and interactive content consumption centered on reading, writing emails, watching videos and sharing photos.

Consumer Intelligence Research Partners reports that tablet owners spend nearly 40 percent of their time on internet browsers and only five percent of their time on apps.

While site traffic from tablets has not yet eclipsed smartphones, visitor page views and

conversion percentages are already almost equal to PCs.

Tablets make it easier than ever for consumers to switch directly from consuming content to making a purchase. The large screen enables users to easily navigate from spotting a product in a magazine, to opening a tab in their browser and searching and purchasing the product.

The challenge is that to make a connection with the tablet user, marketers must understand the relationship between this rapidly growing ecommerce trend and the interactive experience that centers on content consumption.

As a start, marketers can leverage much of the content and customer experiences that have driven their success in the PC arena in the past and apply it to tablet.

However, to make the connection with the tablet user, the content, Web site and experience need to be optimized to a touch screen tablet environment - and not just to the generic mobile experience.

To think about this another way and take a new approach, marketers need to start their interactive efforts with key mobile platforms and then expand from there.

SMS

As an ending note, SMS and text messages deserve a mention.

While smartphone adoption continues to grow, marketers should not ignore the billions of individuals worldwide who still have feature phones.

Both users of smartphones and feature phones can benefit from an opt-in text or SMS type effort but need to keep in mind that with this particular communication method, less is usually more.

Marketers and their brands are at great peril if they do not understand the psychology of SMS and text messaging.

In a heartbeat, marketers can either delight their customers with news of a new product or a sale, or leave them feeling irritated that their privacy and personal space has been invaded with irrelevant offers.

Bottom line: To be truly successful at mobile marketing, brands must reengineer their thinking around customer experiences.

WHILE THIS ARTICLE focused solely on the mobile medium, marketers should continue to think holistically.

Customer experiences should be thought of as a collection of touches that span multiple channels – including mobile – over the lifetime of a customer.

The right message delivered to the right person at the correct time and place can generate solid long-term engagement – as long as it always provides relevant value to the recipient.

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