COLUMNS

# Making the case for a mobile audit in a consumer-led economy

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Rapid advancements in mobile technology have changed the way people experience your business. For most of us, more customer engagement is occurring from a mobile device than from any other single communication touch point.

We have entered the "Age of the Consumer" and those who master the customer experience will become the masters of their industry.

Brands must recognize and react to the role that mobile devices play in the customer's experience while in the living room, while out of the home and especially in-store.

Customer is right now

Today, expectations are that the customer experience will be adapted to match the customer's environment such as time of day, geographic location and weather.

The customer's device is the center point for discovering and reacting to the customer's environment. Marketers that develop the customer experience around the mobile device can obtain more information about the customer's environment.

Increased customer expectations have made it necessary for brands to deliver adaptive

content when responding to end-user requests.

Delivering adaptive content improves internal and external communications, and increases returns on advertising investments.

Companies that improve the customer experience can realize higher marketing conversions, earn more commerce revenue and achieve higher user engagement on publisher sites.

An evaluation of your customer experience starts with an internal evaluation of mobile readiness, a mobile audit.

The mobile audit takes a comprehensive look at your business and sees where mobile technology can improve the customer experience. The customer experience is comprehensive and the mobile audit goes beyond direct customer interactions.

The questions that the mobile audit should answer are:

Technical: Both internal and external communications must render properly in form and functionality across all mobile devices.

Connected devices have different requirements that must be met to create an optimized user experience.

Tailoring the presentation and functionality to meet the phones' capabilities can be difficult and expensive or easy and cost-effective.

With so many different options to go mobile – responsive design, choosing a mobile enterprise application platform (MEAP), mobile Web, native application or hybrid – your approach is critical to success.

Monetization: Taking a mobile-first approach to the customer experience is most important when developing your business' monetization.

No matter what the business model is, mobile plays an important factor in realizing your goals.

Today, every potential consumer is no more than an arm's length away from a device that is connected to additional information about your product and services.

Traditional business models such as retail sales and print advertising have been most affected by mobile.

Marketers that have not included mobile as a critical part of their revenue plan are finding consumers creating their own brand interaction via mobile devices.

Companies that are not monetizing their mobile communications are not leveraging all the tools that mobile have to offer.

For advertising-based business models, focus must be placed on what happens after the click, or post-click engagement.

Optimization of the customer's post-click experience involves using a mobile-first approach to landing pages for both form and functionality.

Users will view advertisements as helpful, additive content if they are targeted based on the users' environment.

Dynamic adaptation of display ads to match the consumer environment is possible through information gathered from the mobile device.

Communications: Effective internal and external communications provide bi-directional engagement between end-users and company management.

Customers and employees have the ability to access company information and submit impromptu questions at any time.

Company management and customer service representatives have the ability to respond to these inquiries in real time.

Creating this type of communication system is not possible if it is based on 800 numbers or traditional desktop intranet sites.

Only through a mobile-enabled communication infrastructure can real-time marketing and bi-directional communications take place.

The planning and investment necessary to create mobile communications will lead to increase employee engagement, customer loyalty and, ultimately, improve the bottom line.

It is currently more common for employees to work from home and if effective internal communications are not established, a lack of company culture can develop.

By enabling internal communications through mobile devices, submission of expense reports, company policy inquires and posts to intranet forums will occur more frequently and management's response can happen in real time.

Effective internal communications is an important part of establishing an engaged employee.

To have effective customer communications, touch points such as Web sites, email transmissions, invoicing and payment processing should be mobile-enabled.

Communications that are mobile-enabled will increase the level of customer service and foster customer loyalty.

In the Age of the Consumer, these touch points will determine the consumer's experience with your brand.

Legal and privacy: Communication to the mobile device and leveraging the power of the information it produces requires the establishment and adherence to privacy policies.

Recent guidelines from the Federal Trade Commission provide guidance as to what you

can do when communicating to a mobile device. The overriding privacy principle to follow when communicating on mobile devices is to build trust with the end-user through transparency.

Each development party has a part in providing just-in-time disclosure to customers.

Obtaining affirmative express consent before allowing apps to access sensitive information such as geo-location, contacts, photos, calendar entries or the recording of audio or video content is important to building trust.

Making privacy policies easily accessible facilitates transparency.

Bring Your Own Device to Work (BYOD): BYOD programs are employer-sponsored initiatives that allow employees to bring and use their personal computing devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones for work.

Some examples of legal issues associated with BYOD programs include:

· Employee privacy rights/employer monitoring rights

· Employment/human resource issues

· Regulatory issues

· Data protection issues

· Discovery/litigation issues

Marketing: The same consumer protection laws that apply to commercial activities in other media apply online, including activities in the mobile marketplace.

The increased use of social networks to conduct market activities and the increased consumption of social on mobile adds to the complexity of adhering to consumer protection law.

The recent FTC staff guidance document that was issued details the considerations businesses should take as they develop marketing that will be viewed from connected devices with multiple screen sizes and capabilities.

Bottom line, if device or platform limitations prohibit adherence to the consumer protection regulations, the marketing message should be abandoned.

BASED ON THE results of a mobile audit, businesses need to develop a mobile playbook detailing the changes that will improve internal and external communications, increase returns on advertising investments, realize higher marketing conversions, earn more commerce revenue and achieve higher user engagement on publisher sites.

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