

COLUMNS

Reinventing SMS for the holidays

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It is that time again. The Christmas decorations and candy are already out in the chain pharmacy stores, and it will not be long before the traditional holiday music starts playing.

As if on cue, the advice pieces are also popping up here and there regarding best practices for SMS campaigns designed to drive holiday sales. However, much of it seems to be the same staid or obvious advice that we have all read about before, a kind of Ghost of Christmas Past, so to speak.

On message

In a time of economic uncertainty coupled with a lightning-fast pace where flux is clearly the new norm, might it be time to shake things up a bit when it comes to the SMS plan for holiday season 2013 to ensure compelling communication? If you are with me, then lean in and let us look at three ways to innovate your SMS campaign this year.

Now, assuming you have done all the 101 required reading that tells you to “coordinate” the code with all the other marketing efforts and to “plan” so that you have enough time to execute and to “stay in touch” once the consumer has opted-in, let us think current cultural trends and behavior so that the recipient actually engages with the message.

In this manner, your brand has the opportunity to become part of the end user’s lifestyle. And once that happens, a sale cannot be too far away.

Thus, it is important to keep in mind that your promotional text is competing for emotional hard drive containing such high-priority elements as in-coming from boyfriend as well as particularly slick communication from entertainment and media companies.

Three's the charm

So how do you get in the game and really make an impression on the consumer about holiday sales?

1) Be demo specific. This can take a bit of planning, but the rewards are huge.

In an era of deep fragmentation, the one-size-fits-all code is over.

If you are able to create a couple of different codes that correspond to larger chunks of demographics – i.e. the radio spot containing one code on said radio station with a younger, hipper demographic differs from that in print appearing on a Web banner ad on mom blogs – then you can create more organic messages that resonate more personally with a particular person.

The grouping might not be 100 percent, but it is exponentially more beneficial than the blanket approach as cutting-edge mobile gurus may note. It takes a bit of content management, but Lord Chesterfield was absolutely right when he said, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well."

2) Emoji evolution. If you are targeting the youth demographic this holiday season, and you send a text indicative of the new trend of communicating primarily with in emoji-speak, you will definitely strike a chord and become part of the tribe.

Easy-does-it here so that it is not seen as over the top and can be somewhat easily understood for those who might not yet be fluent in emoji, but it is definitely a great way to stand out.

3) Video play. Text becomes worth its weight in gold when a link to video is provided.

Mobile video is exploding, so now is the time to take full advantage of video, whether it might be of a particular product or some particular event within the store itself.

Go one better by soliciting video from consumers by suggesting they take some type of theme or statement contest-oriented video while in the store – thereby driving in-store traffic – and selecting a winner that would be included in a follow up SMS-video combo distribution.

The possibilities are endless. And remember, if you are targeting consumers of color, keep in mind that Nielsen Mobile statistics shows that this demographic out-indexes in mobile video viewing, so there is even more incentive to think mobile plus SMS.

THERE ARE ALSO a few other ways to get creative with SMS that will surely enhance your sales.

Interspersing with time-honored basic texts keeps it interesting.

A great campaign is really about a competitive, innovative approach that keeps in mind the digi-socio behavior and norms of the moment. It is all so cost-efficient that no matter which way you use it, the ROI is sure to be solid. Thus, wishing you a great season of sales via SMS.

The time to get started is yesterday.

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