

COLUMNS

Getting more personal through the iBeacon Economy

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Until now, it has been up to consumers to locate the information they need or want on their mobile devices. In 2014, this will change.

This year, our mobile devices truly begin working for us. They are taking on a more proactive role, delivering important information to us when, and where we need it.

Talk to me

The arrival of predictive technologies such as Google Now is driving the shift. They work by mining our personal data from various channels, and strive to deliver timely, location-based information to us without prompting.

Google Now's algorithms pull data from Google calendars, email, search queries and other connected third-party products.

When we walk by our local grocery store, we will find our shopping list has conveniently popped up on our smartphone, reminding us to pick up bread.

When we arrive at the airport, our devices will automatically display our boarding pass and gate information.

It is not just predictive technologies moving mobile forward this year. Indeed, 2014 is also the year when the "iBeacon Economy" will explode.

For retailers, tremendous opportunities exist to drive location-based marketing efforts through iBeacon's ability to provide micro-location context.

Unlike GPS, which uses satellite signals to pinpoint device locations, iBeacon uses Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) technology to do so, and gives us the ability to create geofenced regions both inside and outside.

Retailers who invest in wireless beacon emitters, and place them in their stores will have a distinct leg-up over their competitors this year. They will have the ability to create customized shopping experiences for their customers, potentially influencing purchase decisions by sending photos, videos, product reviews, promotional materials and other relevant information to shoppers as they browse through stores in real-time.

Many are skeptical of how soon, and if this advanced technology will catch on.

Trafficking in numbers

Looking at shopping trends from Christmas Day, as seen from IBM's Digital Analytics Benchmark:

- Mobile traffic was the highest we have seen over this holiday season, accounting for 48 percent of all online traffic, up 28.3 percent compared to the same period last year.
- Mobile sales also remained strong, approaching 29 percent of all online sales, up 40 percent over 2012
- Smartphones drove 28.5 percent of all online traffic compared to tablets at 18.1 percent, making it the browsing device of choice
- When it comes to making the sale, tablets drove 19.4 percent of all online sales, more than twice that of smartphones, which accounted for 9.3 percent
- Tablet users also averaged \$95.61 per order, versus smartphone users, who averaged \$85.11 per order

WHEN WE CONSIDER these numbers, it is hard to deny that retailers would be wise to rethink their approach when it comes to reaching, engaging and landing sales for their massive, constantly connected consumer audience.

Businesses in every industry stand to benefit greatly by leveraging iBeacon and predictive technologies on mobile devices in 2014.

Coming out on top will require careful thought around just how they will do it, and hinge on selecting a mobile development partner with both in-depth knowledge of these new technologies and a strong track record for creating customized mobile solutions.

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