COLUMNS

The 3 Rs of mobile marketing

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Relevance and recognition in real time. This is what customers expect from us on mobile devices. If your legacy systems cannot recognize your customers across channels and deliver relevant information and offers in real time, you are not positioned to succeed in mobile marketing.

On mobile phones and smaller tablets, context is severely limited, interaction is more difficult, and attention spans are more fragmented. Clarity and simplicity, welcome in any environment, are essential.

Addressing this new reality requires a shift in our approach to customer interaction and an assessment of our systems and tools.

Relevance

To deliver relevance we must move from segmentation to personalization.

Segmentation makes sense for broadcast advertising. But on my phone I am an audience of one and expect to be treated that way.

Segmentation makes sense for creating customer personae – look at your pinners – but segmentation, by definition, assumes a level of homogeneity that we know is inaccurate.

Advertisers think they know something about me based on my ZIP code or block group.

But how much do I, an empty nester, have in common with neighbors who are newlyweds, young families, retirees and elderly couples? Do we all have the same interests, needs and spending power?

Back in my direct mail fundraising days, we learned that the most important characteristic of a donor was whether they contributed to similar appeals via direct mail.

List owners tried to sell us segments that were similar to our donors' demographics, but we found that demographics did not really matter. It was irrelevant whether donors were young or old, male or female, living in this neighborhood or that. The most important characteristic was expressed interest in our cause and willingness to engage in our channel.

A few years ago, I worked for a large retailer whose analytics team built highly successful propensity-to-buy models. Employing these models to send customer-specific offers delivered giant leaps in revenue per email.

Despite these results, management dictated a segment-driven approach for the holiday season. It was an utter failure.

In email marketing we have seen that the biggest ROI is realized when products are chosen by recommendation engines.

These engines are armed with customer behavior across many channels and use the wisdom of the crowd to deliver those people who viewed X also viewed Y recommendations.

As it turns out, the ability to process volumes of behavioral data delivers relevance far more effectively than marketing managers' suppositions about what a customer segment wants.

Real time

Browse-based remarketing is astonishingly successful because it is not based on what I have bought in the past. It responds to what I am interested in now.

Marketing automation shows business-to-business marketers their hottest prospects now, based on the digital signals they leave: downloading a whitepaper, attending a webinar, visiting a site.

The systems that have been developed to support segmentation are often too slow to deliver recognition and relevance in real time.

Behemoth databases can take days or weeks to deliver a customer segment for outbound marketing.

If I have expressed an interest in your company or a product today, you want to follow up with me today.

While it is seldom practical to scrap legacy systems, it is often possible to pass data

extracts to the point of customer interaction, and use tools designed to work with that data in real time.

Recent moves away from CPM pricing by digital marketing vendors reflect this shift from a broadcast marketing mentality.

The real gold is mined when we can deliver offers targeted to individuals in real time. Vendors that can do that effectively should not be judged on whether they charge the lowest fraction of a cent per message.

Recognition

A million mobile years ago, in 2011, Forrester Research asked customers what they expect from a retailer or brand.

Even back then, their desires outpaced our ability to provide a seamless experience from store to application to mobile site. They want their loyalty points, purchase history and order status to be available and up-to-date. They want product information and inventory to be consistent. They want to be able to buy anywhere, fulfill anywhere, return anywhere.

Our ability to integrate data is far behind customer expectations.

When I have provided personal data to a company – email, user name, password, purchases, preferences – I expect that company to recognize me on any channel.

On the other hand, the mobile experience must be as frictionless as possible.

Long passwords, the inability to "remember me," inefficient credential re-sets and lack of social logins – login with Facebook, Twitter and Google – must be addressed.

WE MUST RESPOND to what the customer tells us with their actions and inputs without putting roadblocks in their way. The burden must be on our system and data integrations, not on our customers.

Relevance and recognition in real time. If you cannot deliver it today, it should be in your mobile marketing plans for 2014.

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