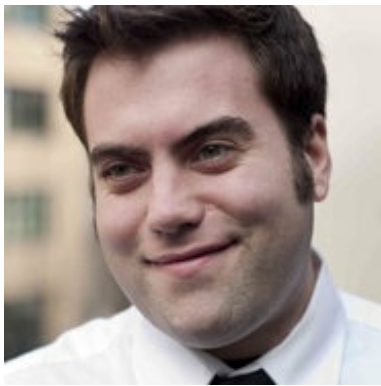


COLUMNS

What iOS 8 means for marketers and mobile engagement

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By **Michael Richardson**

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Mobile devices are the remote controls for our lives. They allow us to interact with services at any time and any place. They also allow services to let us know about relevant information when it is important for us to know about it. And, increasingly, those services are not just applications but connected cars, home automation and the Internet of Things where smartphones are the controller and hub to everything around us.

Good notification strategies that give consumers control over what they receive and provide the option to immediately take action are key to meeting mobile users' extremely high expectations.

Now, with iOS 8 unveiled at WWDC this week, Apple is giving us a glimpse at a key enhancement that will reduce friction for bidirectional communication between users and the services they trust with space on their phones and in their lives.

Take note

Interactive notifications are something that brands can, and should, quickly adopt. More details emerged in WWDC sessions yesterday, which we are watching closely.

By enabling immediate actions and feedback within interactive notifications, brands can give their users more immediate and direct control over what is being sent.

For instance, a breaking news application can send out the headline and give an option for users to hear more about the story as it develops.

Another app might offer options to quickly rate whether the notification is relevant, or if the app should be sending fewer of that type of message.

For apps that send messages to an inbox, interactive capabilities could enable immediately marking a message as read, or to make a request for a reminder message to be sent a little while later.

The key idea here is that brands are giving their end-users more control over notifications, which is always a good thing. The bar for good notifications just keeps getting higher.

The more any of these users interact, whether that is downloading a wallet pass or clicking within the initial interactive notification or subsequent pushes and in-app messages, the more precise your profile of him or her becomes and the more tailored your app experience and messaging can be.

Instead of one app experience to rule them all – and the same message for everyone – users essentially choose-their-own-adventure, optimizing their engagement and your business results.

Screen savior

Another important WWDC announcement was the addition of widgets in Apple's Notification Center and lock screen, which, similar to widgets on Android home screens, offer users immediate, non-intrusive information.

For example, a retailer can send an interactive notification to inform a consumer that his or her package has shipped with a button to install the brand's widget for single-glance access to shipment status, all the way from the warehouse to the doorway.

Extremely relevant and dynamic information delivered directly to device home screens can give users exactly what they want without having to open apps, while brands gain traction within mobile's most visible and easily accessible real estate.

THE BEST WIDGET strategies, like the best notification strategies, come down to serving rather than selling.

Both interactive notifications and the option to add widgets are going to quickly become a standard practice for companies that rely on push messaging today.

Mobile is moving fast, and brands need to quickly adapt to meet the fast-moving expectations of consumers.

Delivering the delightful experiences that they crave requires a deep understanding of their behavior and context, and multiple ways to most appropriately and relevantly engage them.

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