

COLUMNS

How mobile changes marketing

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By **Steve Gershik**

In 1498 Aldus Manutius of Venice produced a book catalog and used it to promote his recent publications. In itself that may not sound particularly interesting, but at the time this was a major advance in commerce: for the first time the prospective buyer did not need to be face to face with the merchant to browse, select and purchase goods. It was the first example of direct marketing.

Things moved on. With the advent of newspapers, not only were advertisers able to reach people in their homes and piggyback on somebody else's content, they were also able to decide, to a certain extent, what type of person they would like to get in front of.

Broadcasting took that ability further, reaching a greater number of people, and supporting an ever-greater granularity in terms of the target audience that marketers could reach a granularity precisely as fine as the range of television programs on offer.

But now, marketers have the potential to interact with consumers in more powerful ways than ever.

Touch and go

Inside every purse, pocket and backpack is a magical two-way conversation: a way to get instant feedback on consumer's preferences, needs and desires. That is the smartphone. Wherever and whenever, we can always learn about our customers and talk to them informed by that knowledge.

So much for the good news.

Here is the bad: on that small screen you are not just competing against your traditional competitors in your industry.

You are competing with literally the best, most engaging brands.

And as if it could not get worse you are competing for attention with the customer's closest friends and family members, who they can reach instantly via phone, chat or social applications.

Talk about a tough environment.

It has never been easier to ignore organizations or people who provide a sub-optimal experience. And the consequences of irritating the consumer are greater than ever before.

The smartphone screen is a competitive environment. The rewards for getting and staying on there are great, but if your communications are not doing the job, the result is not a moment's inattention it is permanent exclusion via the delete button.

As we mentioned above, we marketers can now learn more about the people interacting with us than ever not only

the browser technology that they are using, but their location, what they visit within the mobile app, and how often they use certain features. We need to use that knowledge and deliver the most relevant experiences possible.

Elementary

In that context, and aware of these challenges, I propose the following elements of a mobile marketing solution:

Open. It has got to be able to interact with the software that we know and love already today. Why? Because in a multichannel universe you need to be informed by multichannel user insight. Anything else will not cut it for long.

Powerful. It has to deliver capabilities we cannot easily code or program into our existing mobile apps. It has to extend the app service beyond the initial download and support ongoing interaction.

Easy. It has to be easy to use, a marketer's tool that works the way we think. Otherwise, we just will not use it and when we do, we will not use its full capabilities. And when that happens, it is the customer who suffers.

Nimble. Responding to changing environments is the essence of marketing. Any solution needs to enable us to change, in real-time if necessary, the users experience, to allow us to test campaigns and deploy winners, and enable us to react to changing consumer preferences. Otherwise today's solution is tomorrow's white elephant.

IS THIS LIST comprehensive? Probably not.

But in the competitive mobile landscape, you will need to be checking these boxes at the very least if you want your marketing efforts to succeed.

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