

COLUMNS

What is still wrong with mobile advertising

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By **Dirk R. Rients**

Having lead mobile at two of the world's largest traditional creative agencies, I have seen it all. Despite all the hype and continued shift of more ad dollars into mobile, most advertisers still view the channel as an afterthought or are sitting around playing the waiting game.

A few months ago, I gave my perspective on what is still wrong with mobile advertising. In this column, I will focus on some of the primary issues caused by the lack of creative innovation in mobile, as well as highlight a few key opportunities brands have moving forward.

Tell a story

Using mobile as a branding platform has long been questioned due to limited creative and ad delivery opportunities.

Now, rich media experiences and the integration of video and social provide the creative canvas required to tell a brand's story if the right tools are in place.

Unfortunately, only a small percentage of the inventory is rich media-enabled. Software development kits (SDKs), stacked pixels and unreliable ad delivery has made rich media distribution a nightmare.

Marketers continue to invest money and resources creating innovative rich media experiences. Yet they find out after the fact, that there are significant limitations on where the ad can run.

Brands and agencies need to ask more questions and demand transparency to avoid these issues.

To date a majority of mobile campaigns have been focused on targeting, which is an important component to be sure. But to move the needle, brands need to deliver an engaging interactive and creative experience on mobile first, and then worry about narrowing their audience.

Without a solid foundation to build on, no level of targeting will help a campaign.

Think outside the container

Brand and agency creatives need also to think about pushing the boundaries of what is possible on mobile.

The mobile phone now represents the most personalized content delivery platform that the world has ever seen, and somehow advertisers are content with syndicating what are essentially digital versions of their print advertisements.

The continued growth of mobile means the need to produce and deliver high-quality creative is even more critical.

Even through smaller screen sizes, mobile presents a truly unique opportunity to connect the on-screen experience to the environment of the person holding the phone.

Marketers need to anticipate the mindset of consumers at the point in which they will be receiving the ad and leverage this in their creative.

The mobile ad industry has been very conservative. There is still a lot of potential that has not yet been realized, such as simply customizing the creative based on the user's location.

Social integration

Mobile is inherently social. In fact, it is why the entire reason these devices were invented in the first place: to communicate and connect with other individuals.

Not surprisingly, most of the social media activity currently takes place from a mobile device.

Companies such as Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter were born as true mobile platforms. Because of this, mobile ad experiences can and often should include options for the user to share the ad experience or continue the conversation via social media.

Rather than simply shrinking desktop creative to fit mobile screen sizes, consider device capabilities such as geo-location, camera and push notifications or integrate with social platforms and APIs to make your ads more than a branding exercise.

Consumers are more likely to share content from their mobile device than their desktops. Doing this not only increases brand visibility, it can also lead to more conversions by turning those that share into implied brand advocates.

Evolve

One of the most important aspects of mobile advertising should be the creative process.

Mobile ads need to service a number of goals all at once. They need to be inviting, bold, powerful, engaging and draw the user into the content before they navigate away to other opportunities such as Web sites, messages and applications on the same device.

To constantly stay on the cutting edge of mobile, brands need to be willing to push the envelope of what an advertisement or mobile experience means.

As a result, the creative process needs to continually change and expand.

Consumers do not want to see the same creative from your television spot. They want and expect new content that serves as an extension of the messaging that they have already heard from you.

Often, consumers want to interact with a piece of content in a new way that lends itself to the capabilities of the device on which they are viewing.

Consider using A/B split testing to test creative messaging and copy. Constantly measure and compare your results, then iterate.

With the right bidding solution and demand-side platform, your creative team can monitor and make these modifications in real-time to refine messaging and maximize outcomes.

I AM EXCITED to be a part of the rapid growth, simply because marketers and agencies have an opportunity to determine what can be done creatively, while utilizing technology to push the limits.

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