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Mobile money flowing, it's time to correct some mistakes

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Jeff Hasen

By Jeff Hasen

We can debate the exact definition of meaningful dollars, but we all have to agree that the projected $100 billion in mobile advertising spend in 2016 would fit into that category.

For perspective, an expenditure that large would account for more than 50 percent of all digital ads for the first time, according to eMarketer, which is offering up the figures. And it would pencil out to a 400 percent increase from 2013. Those dollars do not even include money devoted to mobile marketing for activities after the click or install.

I will call the $100 billion figure both a milestone and a reason to pause. Certainly much is going well in mobile's progression into the mainstream. But I can point to five mistakes that are keeping us from reaching greater heights.

First, we spend too much time seeking out the so-called "mobile user" when we know, in the United States, at least, the great majority of our customers and prospects bounce from device to laptop to tablet and back, many times a day.

Our programs need to account for that customer journey.

As Google's Jason Spero told me for my upcoming book, *The Art of Mobile Persuasion,* a meaningful group of our customers and prospects expect brands to take this interest into account and enable the resumption of a task like searching when one leaves one piece of hardware and heads to another.

Second, we mostly fail when it comes to including a mobile call to action in traditional media, especially television and big-time events such as the Super Bowl.

Regular readers may remember that I have repeatedly incorrectly forecast a mobile call to action in the multimillion-dollar TV spots on the NFL's big day. Again this year, we were left with ads that came right out of the 1970s.

But I actually have renewed hope for next year after seeing Coca-Cola spend TV time during the Final Four to pour Coke Zero and give mobile users an offer via Shazam.

Third, we are still seeing marketers make ill-advised mobile decisions because they fail to start with consumer insights.

Studies from Pew, comScore, Nielsen and the rest are fine, but it is all about what your customers and prospects and their wants and behavior.

In my *Mobilized Marketing* book, Steve Mura from MillerCoors told us of his early disinterest in marketing via iPhones. Why? Mr. Mura's customers are young males who demand choice and they did not take to the first wave of iPhones that were only available through one mobile carrier and with limited options on price and features. What do your customers want? Are you giving it to them?

Fourth, many marketers continue to be fascinated by shiny objects.

Live video streams through Meerkat or Periscope may eventually enable brands to drive awareness, consideration and sales, but at this point, the streaming experience is full of shaky, uninteresting user-generated views that leave us thinking that there are better places to spend our time.

Instead, prudent marketers are spending on proven products and tactics such as mobile loyalty clubs that are only going to become more valuable as we bring to market smarter, efficient ways to personalize.

Finally, for the most part, we remain in marketing silos.

The mobile discipline is increasingly part of many organizations, but only a few, including Google and Lowe's, are doing away with the channel distinctions in favor of a more holistic business unit.

As Sean Bartlett, director of digital experience, product and omnichannel integration at Lowe's, told me for *The Art of Mobile Persuasion,* "the folks at the forefront are going to collapse those mobile teams back into the base business so that you just have a digital organization, or a customer experience organization, and mobile is just how you do business and it no longer becomes this specific talking point. It's just the assumption of how business operates."

IN CASE YOU are thinking that I got out on the wrong side of the bed, I can easily point to five things that we are doing well with mobile.

Those will serve us well as we seek to prove that our $100 billion annual spend is justified and even lower than it should be.

Jeff Hasen is founder/president of mobile consultancy Gotta Mobilize, Seattle. Reach him at jhasen@gottamobilize.com.