

COLUMNS

## 5 app marketing tips for the holidays

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Here we go again the countdown to the holidays is on. As most marketers probably know, this season is a prime time for mobile applications marketing. Millions of new devices are given as gifts, making it a massive opportunity for brands to capture new loyal app users.

The winter months represent the highest level of app store activity, as all those new devices are loaded up with apps. They also tend to be the months when acquiring loyal users cost the most.

To take advantage of the additional activity without spending a fortune, visibility in the app stores matters. And as the volume of apps fighting for eyeballs continues to grow, it is even more vital that you are advertising in the right places to the right audiences.

Given the hectic holidays and the reality that mobile now accounts for more than half of all digital spend you are likely already in the midst of some important campaign planning.

With the right tactics in place, including targeting specific audiences built using mobile data, you can make sure you get the most out of this key period.

### #1: Know your goals first

What matters most to your brand?

Last year, a brief poll of our holiday webinar audience revealed 69 percent of app publishers/brands felt the holidays would be a great opportunity to get more users, while 9 percent did not think the holidays meant much for their app.

On the other end of the spectrum, 11 percent didn't know what to expect at all.

Set your expectations by identifying your goals first.

Does raw download volume matter the most? How about downloads at a specific CPI, or the type of users who purchase your app, or the amount of social shares you generate or even something outside your app?

The more closely aligned your campaign is to your goals, the better off your results will match expectations.

### #2: Identify audiences

There are three types of data you should be using to build audiences: your own (first-party) data, provider data and third-party data.

Do you know what type you have available to you? Your company data could include things such as Web site visitors, app data, CRM/DMP data or data from mobile tracking partners.

Leverage your data by creating lookalikes: new users who are similar to your existing ones, with a strong likelihood to engage in high-value events inside your app.

Provider data is another important component, and can include valuable targeting data such as mobile personas built on recorded user behaviors.

### #3: Volume versus value

What matters most to your business goals: the raw numbers in terms of users and visibility, or return on investment?

If you are at the stage where focusing on ROI is imperative, you need every user to be profitable. Other advertisers might be more focused on building as large a user base as possible to climb the ranks in the app stores.

Something that is worth considering this holiday is a balanced approach, which represents a blend of the two app marketing strategies mentioned above.

In this approach, app store rank is a component, but not the primary goal. This also usually means campaigns designed to increase rank are done at specific times when it makes the most sense from a long-term value perspective.

### #4: Think past December

While the traditional retail-focused holiday period ends at Christmas, the opportunity for app marketers does not.

Smartphones and tablets opened during the holidays are still "new" for weeks to come and in our data, download activity in January has been even higher than December.

While being at the top of the charts on Christmas morning is enticing, it is worth considering a push in early first quarter to take advantage of increased usage without the focused competition.

### #5: Retarget users as they change devices

A new phone can mean cleaning out unused apps or rediscovering them.

Reaching out to your existing or lapsed user base during an upgrade time can generate repeat exposure, increase engagement and sales, drive app user acquisition through cross-device promotion, and boost loyalty and long-term customer relationships.

Re-engaging users before their upgrade means making your app top of mind again or lose them forever.

### New this year: iOS 9 changes

Lastly, as you prepare for the holidays, changes in iOS 9 have become an important element of your strategy. Here are three things to keep in mind:

1. **Multitasking:** This new feature on iOS 9 causes a potential distraction to users. For advertisers, consider more visible formats: interstitials, video and native.
2. **Spotlight search integration:** To increase overall app engagement, consider the impact and opportunity that deep linking provides in the operating system.
3. **Ad blocking:** The recent hype around ad blocking on iOS devices does not mean app marketers need to panic. Web ad blocking introduced in iOS 9 should not be much of a concern for advertisers because it is solely applicable to mobile Web traffic.

OVERALL, DEVICE sales will continue to astound as forecasted in Apple's latest earnings report and costs will continue to rise.

The holiday season is the most critical quarter for building app users, reaching your goals and staying smart about mobile spend. It is not too late! Take hold of the holiday opportunity for your brand.

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