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COLUMNS

# 3 big mistakes brands make on mobile

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United States retail sales in the months of November and December are forecasted to increase 5.7 percent year over year, reaching $885.7 billion. That is an increase from the 3.2 percent growth rate predicted earlier this year, and the highest since the 6.3 percent rise in 2011.

According to another study, 43 percent of consumers reported that they will shop via their mobile device or smartphone this year, with another 54 percent of people saying they plan to research products while holiday shopping on their mobile phone or tablet.

With that in mind, brands' mobile presence is more important than ever this holiday season. Still, there are a few mistakes that many of them are making when thinking about mobile:

Equating "mobile loyalty" to "points program"
The term "loyalty" has gotten a bad rap thanks to the points program and coupon craze of 2011.

Establishing loyalty today is about establishing a two-way relationship with a customer.

While points programs may be one part of that, there are many different ways to engage consumers through special offers and content that they will actually find valuable.

Think of your local butcher shop.

The people there are friendly, informative and get to know who you are, and what types of cuts you like. They may offer you something unique based on your preferences, and talk to you about your favorite sports team, or things they know you care about. It is not just a punch card for visiting frequently. It is a personal relationship that keeps you coming back.

This is the type of loyalty brands need to establish today.

The challenge for brands looking to do this on mobile is being able to scale that type of personalization.

Speaking with the consumer instead of at them is a challenge, but if done right, the resulting consumer loyalty is much more powerful than that of its predecessors.

Treating mobile as an extension of their existing digital strategy
There are different rules of engagement on every digital platform, and mobile is no exception.

Being mobile does not just mean offering your existing content on mobile devices. Mobile is its own entity, and should be treated as such.

Consider brands' email marketing initiatives. They might send an email to their subscribers every day, or even multiple times a day and that is okay. But what if you were to do the same on mobile?

Sending a push notification to your customers every day would be invasive and annoying. It is vital to understand how the protocol for mobile differs, and map your strategy accordingly.

Doing mobile because they "should," not because it makes sense for their business
There is no one-size-fits-all solution for being successful on mobile.

Just because one type of mobile strategy works for a company does not mean it will work for you.

Rather than copying brands that are successful on mobile, businesses need to develop strategies that are tailored to their goals, and their customers.

Take this example into consideration: a while back, The Weather Channel found that people were visiting its application every day to check the forecast but that was all they were doing.

To create a richer experience and increase app usage, The Weather Channel identified key features and implemented a loyalty program to drive deeper engagement. The result? A 25 percent increase in in-app engagement.

A brand such as Toyota, however, which does not have a high-frequency interactions with customers, would need a completely different strategy.

For Toyota, it is all about improving service and maximizing the value that customers get from each touch point, however few and far between, to grow their relationships.

WINNING ON MOBILE can be a huge challenge for brands. While there are common pitfalls, there is no single avenue to success.

Still, mobile is a powerful avenue for connecting with customers.

Understanding mobile's potential pitfalls and unique qualities is an excellent first step towards improving the reputation of mobile marketing and achieving incredible results.

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