

COLUMNS

How to match brand apps with consumers

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By **Glenn Pingul**

Brands realize the unique value of the mobile medium. They can engage customers in highly personal and meaningful ways 24/7 no matter where someone is. But what is the key to true customer engagement that will lead to actions versus just reach? Relevance.

Every brand has relevance, but not for all people at the same time at the same place.

What is important to you on your Monday morning commute is not what is important to me on a Friday evening. And what is important to one young professional male is different from what is important to another young professional male.

Wants and needs

The mobile medium along with the rich customer and contextual intelligence that wireless carriers have allows brands to engage with individual customers at the right time, the right place and with the right message or offer.

Let us take mobile applications, for example.

We know that apps allow for advertising experiences that deliver relevant information and offers to consumers.

We also know that consumers have demonstrated tolerance to advertisements when they are delivered as part of a contextually relevant experience.

Yet, with any app, there is the challenge of reaching the consumer at the most relevant moment the moment that she is most likely to be receptive.

With tons of brands competing, how do brand marketers ensure that their apps stand out and their messages reach the right person in the right context?

As analyst Charles Golvin of Forrester Research put it, "In the world of hundreds of thousands of apps, how do you do a really good job of intuiting what people want and giving them a relatively focused selection?"

A recent survey conducted by EffectiveUI and Harris Interactive points out that almost four in 10 mobile users are dissatisfied with apps from their favorite brands, and 69 percent have a negative perception of a brand if they feel that the brand's app is not useful.

Brand recognition can hurt brands, as well.

According to that same study, just 18 percent of mobile app users pick an app based on its brand name, and 13 percent have purposefully avoided a brand's apps following a poor app experience with that brand.

So how do brands ensure the right audience is exposed to their app and gain insight on usage so they can enhance the experience?

the experience:

As carriers begin to open their networks to allow the brands to get in front of their customers, they must address the question of relevance.

Sprint has taken a first step with its recent Sprint ID initiative which presents pre-packaged apps to customers based on their preferences.

Indeed, Sprint is bundling the apps along with ringtones, wallpapers, widgets and other add-ons. The packages are put together either by brands such as MTV or by theme i.e. health and fitness.

Sprint has seen a huge response from brand marketers, having already attracted the likes of Oprah, Amazon, Disney and Electronic Arts.

The eagerness of the brands to get on board should be a testament to the industry that simply making apps available is not enough. They know that most consumers need help in figuring out: which apps are right for me?

Appy hour

Getting consumers to find the right apps is no easy task.

Hearing of a useful application from a friend is great, but remembering to stop your life to download and use it at the moment it becomes useful is hard to do.

How do brands get their apps into the hands of consumers when they need it?

By leveraging rich customer and contextual intelligence, carriers can break down the discoverability barriers and make content recommendations based on an understanding of a customer's interests and the context when they are most receptive.

Knowing that a specific customer is about to leave work, for example, provides the opportunity to promote "happy hour" when that person is in the neighborhood or provide a restaurant recommendation for dinner to the person who is away from home.

Why should carriers be interested? They have a real opportunity to enhance the customer experience by improving relevancy.

And brands? They increase the likelihood of targeting the right customers and connecting with them in ways that truly engage them connecting in ways that drive them to act and transact.

Most importantly, customers receive targeted and relevant advertising that they really care about.

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