

COLUMNS

4 ways to drive mobile engagement

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By **Trey Courtney**

With new mobile technologies and platforms emerging every day, businesses are faced with the constant question: Are we using all possible mobile marketing capabilities effectively? Chances are, not as much as you could and should be.

Since 64 percent of adults and 89 percent of young adults currently are smartphone users, according to Pew Internet research, brands absolutely have to incorporate mobile into their marketing strategy to stay relevant.

However, it is important to integrate mobile in a thoughtful and deliberate fashion, not simply adopt technologies for the sake of the new or the trendy.

Channeling right

When it comes to choosing the right tactics for a business-to-consumer marketing strategy, the amount of options can make the space feel over-saturated and overwhelming.

Adopting a vast array of tactics can actually create disjointed messaging for brands, ultimately resulting in rising increasing costs that decrease ROI.

Customers become more confused as brands are diluted by extending themselves across multiple channels.

Businesses need to consider every aspect of the customer experience to build stronger connections with their customers and create a relevant, engaging and loyalty-building environment.

Mobile is just one of these aspects and, when done right, can be immensely effective in allowing brands to reach and generate loyal customers.

Advances in easy-to-use technology and the prevalence of mobile devices have made integrating mobile into a strategy easier than ever.

Below are four ways to get your customers to engage more with your brand on mobile.

1. Integrate with other media platforms

Before you start to think about content, think about how to connect.

Counting on customers to open your application or engage with your brand just because they walk through your doors is a crapshoot.

Proactively pushing content via beacons can certainly create some awareness, but pushy is not always the best surprise approach.

Inviting customers to engage by interacting with your background music through familiar applications such as

Shazam or promoting mobile value through interactive digital signage content creates an integrated and more immersive experience where mobile engagement becomes a natural part of the total customer experience.

And do not forget your employees. Staff should be well versed in your mobile experience and encourage customers to join in.

2. Offer more ways to purchase

Smartphones offer many different opportunities to engage customers. Think of phones as a one-stop shop. Sending marketing messages via phone is effective, but it does not always lead to a purchase.

Help boost mobile engagement and make your mobile messages more appealing by providing customers with an easy way to purchase items or save products to a wish list.

Online shopping, payment options integrated into social channels, or Apple Pay or Android Pay, allow customers to use their phone as currency. As these technologies mature, the phone will become a de-facto option for retail payment.

Customers demand a mobile experience. Devices are becoming the preferred way to interact with the world. Brands must adapt or adopt, or risk becoming irrelevant.

Your business objectives and customer target should dictate which mobile marketing tactic is the most strategic for you to deploy.

In any case, whether mobile engagement strategies are wide-scale or pilots, they must to be an extension of your existing marketing and branding strategy.

3. Engage socially

Offering free Wi-Fi to customers who are constantly streaming music and videos maxing out their data plans is another way to entice consumers to engage with your brand on their mobile device.

Nearly 10 percent of smartphone users rely on their data plan as their sole source of Internet, per Bronto.

Businesses can grant shoppers access to their high-speed Wi-Fi networks in exchange for a "Like" or "Follow" on social channels. This concept, which is called "Social Wi-Fi" is a strong way to expand a business's online community by incentivizing consumers with something of value to them Internet access.

As an inexpensive and great way for customers to learn more about your business, social channels can also direct them to loyalty program sign-up pages, collect email addresses, or even serve as survey platforms to gauge opinions.

Be sure to promote the free Wi-Fi option through digital and print signage throughout your location to make your customers aware of this opportunity.

4. Use mobile to provide exclusive offers

Lastly, there are two truths about consumers that should factor into any mobile marketing strategy: they love deals and they are glued to their phones, expecting constant communication.

A full 65 percent of consumers will use mobile devices to look for promotions and coupons when it comes to holiday shopping, according to Bronto. This is especially true while in-store, where 75 percent of shoppers use mobile devices while shopping, making bricks-and-mortar stores the prime location to target consumers via mobile marketing.

Location-based technologies create an opportunity to present mobile coupons and deals to consumers while they are in-store and able to make an on-the-spot purchase.

Through in-store technology that allows for targeted, timely and personalized content, retailers can improve marketing capabilities and expand their loyal customer base.

CONSUMERS WHO KNOW that they can get a great in-store deal especially through exclusive mobile-only coupons that offer discounts or access to product only available through mobile activation are more likely to turn into brand-loyal customers.

To fully use deal capabilities, it is important to select a platform suitable for your business to drive customer engagement.

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