

COLUMN

Tips for business-to-business mobile marketing

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Business marketers, who tend to target specific niche audiences or job titles the "business decision maker," for instance may be intimidated by the fact that most popular mobile applications equip users with cool features such as music, games, augmented reality, location-based deals, social media, mobile versions of media including newspapers, television shows and magazines and a whole lot more.

These pop culture-relevant features may have clear benefits to consumer-facing marketers that are tasked with appealing to mass audiences. Business-to-business marketers, on the other hand, tend to target specific niche audiences.

To be or not B2B

The B2B app market has been slow to take off, but there is no reason why one, or several, popular apps should not emerge across different vertical markets.

In fact, the opportunity is too great not to make this dynamic channel a marketing priority.

A recent survey of marketers' mobile marketing plans revealed that that mobile's greatest value is its ability to create, grow and strengthen a brand and company's relationships with customers, according to the Mobile Marketing: Plans, Trends and Measurability report from May.

B2B marketers should be thinking about mobile apps as customer relationship marketing tools that literally follow the customer throughout their day.

If the overarching goal of a B2B mobile strategy is to enhance relationships with customers, the question becomes, "What tactics will help build these bonds?" and "In what ways can B2B marketers use mobile marketing?"

Whereas consumer apps tend to offer value and utility in terms of access to different entertainment, lifestyle or day-to-day living features, business apps should offer value and utility in regards to solving work-related problems and doing their jobs more efficiently.

Here are some best practices business marketers should consider as they design their mobile strategies:

Content distribution and aggregation

Mobile apps are able to bridge the gap between content and delivery, enabling B2B marketers to reach their customers and prospects on their terms, while still managing to take advantage of permission-based marketing.

Content marketing allows companies to become trusted resources for their customers by offering valuable and informative content.

...more content...

A smart business mobile strategy might include access to a business' blogs, social media feeds, white papers/ebook, videos, podcasts and webcasts.

Instead of hoping the customer comes to their site for this content, businesses can use mobile to push it out to them as it is available.

Automate processes or offer key services with platform support

Another way to bring value to customers is to create apps that automate specific solutions or business processes.

A number of industrial suppliers, for instance, have created apps that allow customers to browse their entire stock of inventory, place orders and check order statuses.

A business can help customers make buying decisions by offering relevant calculators to determine net or gross profit, or other implications of purchase, as well as currency conversion and more.

These types of solutions can be paired with other interactive tools and reference material that is specific to your industry or company.

Look at some of the business processes that you ask your customers to engage in and think about ways you can help them do it faster and better on a mobile app.

Increase gravity of event, meeting, product launch or other landmark

Creating an app around an upcoming landmark, such a future event, launch or news announcement increases the perceived value users will gain from attending or otherwise looking out for it.

An app for an annual conference, for instance, might help attendees plan which sessions they want to attend, provide social media options that will allow them to easily spread the word among their online audiences and network with other attendees, offer alerts when presentations are available and keep them informed of future registration opportunities.

Sales enablement

While we have been discussing customer-facing mobile tactics, it is important to remember that apps can also be used to improve sales enablement and, therefore, customer relationships.

Many B2B companies have built Web sales tool kits to give salespeople access to pricing, data sheets/specs, competitive information and customer contact information.

These valuable tools can be distributed via a mobile app, which will empower your sales team when they are where they are supposed to be on the road meeting with customers and prospects.

The tools can provide better service and be more responsive if they do not have to get back to their office or fire up their laptop to get an answer to a customer.

B2B marketers should be developing their mobile app strategy, but it will take some smart thinking about the nature of their customer relationships.

If companies can strengthen customer relationships by providing real value, then they may have their killer app.

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