

COLUMNS

Mobile commerce: Is your strategy a recipe for risk?

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Mobile holds the promise of fundamentally changing the relationship that brands have with buyers. Unfortunately, many companies still are not optimizing their mobile strategy.

There is nothing worse than a brand getting mobile wrong.

Unlike other marketing channels, our phones are personal. This changes the marketing relationship and increases expectations. That is why we feel so put-off when a company gets their mobile approach wrong and connects in a low-value way.

Wake up call

Time is running out for brands to wake up and get their mobile strategy right.

Mobile is infusing every aspect of our lives. With smartphones consumers have moved beyond talking, to playing, researching and buying.

Twenty-four percent of U.S. adult iPhone users and 21 percent of Android users have used a shopping application in the past three months.

Forty-one percent of smartphone owners have made a purchase from their mobile phone.

By 2015 it is predicted that mobile shopping will account for \$163 billion in sales worldwide, or 12 percent of global ecommerce revenue.

As mobile usage expands, expectations blossom.

Forty-seven percent of consumers who have made a mobile transaction in the past year expect the experience on their mobile devices to be better than the experience in-store.

Eighty percent expect the experience to be better or equal to in-store, and 85 percent expect the experience to be better or equal to online using a laptop or desktop computer⁴.

Simply replicating a Web site in a mobile environment is not a mobile strategy it is a recipe for risk. It is not only lazy, it is inconsiderate of your prospects and opens the door for a smart competitor to take market share by engaging in a way that leverages the value that mobile offers.

Customer needs define strategy

What a company sells dictates how customers and prospects will want to engage via mobile.

Commonsense mandates that there is no one size fits all approach.

However, a core fundamental of any mobile marketing strategy boils down to making life easier for your customers. This requires marrying your business strategy with the needs of your customers.

For example, if you are selling automobiles, your customers will not be using their mobile phone to make the purchase, but odds are they will research the car and your competitors.

Ford Motor understands this dynamic and is meeting customer needs by using mobile as a consistent connector to the brand.

For example, a shopper may prefer to configure her dream car using a PC and opt to use a mobile application to upload the preferred choice in a showroom.

Likewise, Ford has broken new ground by using mobile to expand connections after purchases with distinct apps for each vehicle, including a navigation app for the Explorer and fuel economy app for the Ford Focus.

Conversely, businesses that sell products that customers want to buy via a mobile device should develop a mobile strategy that enhances the sales process.

AmazonFresh is a great example.

The AmazonFresh mobile app was designed to achieve a clear strategy: to put the largest convenience store in the pocket of shoppers so they could make purchases anywhere.

This required that the experience be faster, more simple and fun than driving to the grocery store.

For example, the mobile app adds value by creating an instantaneous connection between thinking and doing.

Customers always have a phone with them and can use the app to immediately add grocery items to their list as they remember them and schedule a delivery when they need the items.

Developing smart experiences

Creating a smart mobile experience requires knowing how your customers want to engage with your brand via their phone.

This starts with asking the right questions. The answers will help in developing detailed personas of your target customers.

For example, single working mom Molly will respond to a different mobile experience than night owl college student Stu.

As you set out to understand the nuisances of your mobile audience, we advise being wary of these common traps:

Do not confuse business stakeholders with users. Business stakeholders may want to add features that they like that users may not need or want. Rely on research.

Never stop collecting user knowledge. User needs change and your mobile experience should, too.

Avoid using just one approach to understand your users. Take time to listen, observe and research. Broad knowledge helps to establish overarching goals and in creatively offering solutions to achieve business goals.

Take time to become a user. It will help in understanding the user experience far better.

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