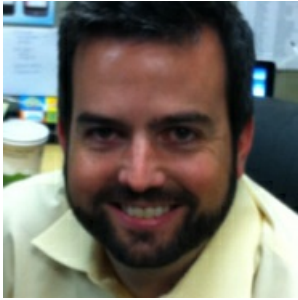


COLUMNS

Most apps fail to communicate after download

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By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

By **Doug Wick**

Shortly after I joined this company, I went through the top 100 retailers by revenue and downloaded every iPhone application I could get my hands on.

Incidentally, 54 of the 100 top retailers currently have brand apps, give or take a few who have more than one brand and therefore more than one app. That is a lot of apps from retailers on one phone. I have a multitude of others from branded manufacturers, airlines, hotel chains, banks and insurance companies.

I have played with them all. Some are better experiences than others, some more useful than others. All of them have permission to use my phone's location services and to push notifications to me.

The biggest surprise through this exercise? The silence is deafening.

Silence speaks low volumes

I thought that by downloading all of these apps and giving them all permission to talk to me that a deluge of push notifications would follow.

My apps would fall all over each other jockeying for my attention, each message trying to be more engaging and relevant than the last. I would be so embarrassed by the constant hum coming from the phone that I would have to disable pushes from some.

But around 95 percent of my hundreds of apps do not say a thing to me. My phone is like a junior high school dance, where everyone is there but everyone is afraid to be the first on the dance floor.

What makes it worse is that by downloading the app I have already told them that I like them. I want them to talk to me. I passed a note in class before the dance that said, "Will you go with me? Check a box Yes/No." And still, nothing.

The fact remains that despite all of the amazing things they can do to make content available, our mobile devices remain the center of our communication universe. They are a hub for voice calls, video calls, text messages, email, Facebook, Twitter and any other channel where we are networking for work or for play.

It is strange that app builders would spend all of this time creating great experiences once I open the app, but completely ignore the opportunity to communicate and give the app a voice, to be the brand that speaks with me through the amazing access I have given them to my most personal, always-on, always-present communication hub.

Of course, I understand that the stakes are higher on mobile.

Dunce card

Because it is such a personal channel, expectations for relevancy of message are higher and patience with clumsy approaches is low.

Of the 5 percent of apps that do notify me regularly, a couple of them blast me nearly daily with a message that is not targeted to my location, identity or app activity in any way.

If everyone else was not being so quiet I would probably disable pushes on those apps.

But the Fandango app sends me a note about the movie I booked through them, before to remind me about it and after to ask me how I liked it.

The Chase Bank app announces my balances in a helpful way every day.

The Facebook and Twitter apps chime in about social activity on my profiles.

But as it is, the music just cut to a slow dance and most of my apps are lined up against the wall, avoiding eye contact. When you are ready, I am ready, apps. But I cannot wait all night.

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