AMERICAN MARKETER

Business at its best

Mobile should drive more personalized Web communications

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By Darren Guarnaccia

With 75 percent of marketers planning to add mobile to their marketing mix in 2012, according to Forrester Research, it is imperative that the mobile Web evolve. Businesses need to focus on the user experience, embrace mobile as a key customer interaction channel, and take advantage of some very compelling advantages.

When we are mobile we multitask and multi-slice throughout the day. Mobile Web usage is part of our everyday routine and has raised our expectations to include immediate access to information wherever we go.

Standard Web pages that deliver slow user experiences on mobile devices are not tolerated well and typically lead to abandonment. Businesses need to think beyond simply resizing Web sites to mobile form factors and redefine how mobile engagement is executed.

When a prospective customer arrives on a Web site from an email campaign or social media link, she has an immediate need at that moment, and you have the ability to create that "moment of truth" with her. It is simple. If you present the right user experience, you win the customer.

However, the challenge remains how to deliver the right mobile experience to visitors to achieve your business goals while taking advantage of everything mobile devices can do.

There are three things to think about to be successful in creating the right user experience.

To app or not to app?

The prevailing wisdom of the day is that successful businesses do both.

While applications offer significant usability advantages and can be used offline, they do require more development overhead and need to be built separately for each device.

Alternatively, mobile Web solutions and Web content management tools can deliver a single unified set of mobile interactions across several devices. These services can also be integrated with other customer interaction channels including Web, email, call centers and social.

Rethink design
Unfortunately, many mobile design strategies take one of two directions: oversimplifying the design and focusing on text, or scaling down the Web site to fit a smaller screen.

Both of these strategies typically frustrate or disappoint mobile visitors who have powerful devices in hand.

Mobile visitors are not looking for a miniature replica of a Web site they are looking for an engaging and powerful yet convenient experience.

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A winning mobile strategy starts with rethinking why visitors want to access your site and rethinking the user experience in the context of what mobiles devices can offer.

Instead of simplifying the user experience to the lowest common denominator, optimize the groups of mobile devices with similar capabilities: Flash, JavaScript, local detection, GPS, video and text-only.

Aim to define four to five mobile device archetypes and design several user experiences based on these groups of capabilities.

Using device databases and detection engines found in Web content management systems allow us to know exactly which mobile devices can do what, so that we can dynamically group them.

For each of these groups, rethink the mobile experience within the framework of the immediate needs of the users and how they expect their devices to work.

Context is king
Consider the very nature of mobile it moves. There is a new context to consider and that is location awareness.

Using concepts such as device adaptive templates where the experience adapts to the user's location and device capabilities, today's mobile marketers can deliver rich engagements that maximize customer outcomes and increase customer loyalty.

As mobile technology drives a shift in how consumers and businesses interact with each other and the marketplace, organizations that embrace mobile engagement will realize tremendous business value. Now is the time to be known as a captivating mobile destination.

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