

COLUMNS

Connect with consumers 160 characters at a time

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By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

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We have all been there. It is that moment while you are out to dinner and you realize that you forgot your phone at home. How many calls will I miss? Text messages? Emails? How am I going to check-in on foursquare? The thought alone is enough to make you consider getting up and leaving the restaurant immediately.

As hyper-connected consumers, we rely heavily on the use of our mobile phones. Mobile messaging is the most-used means of consumer communication ever created, according to the Mobile Marketing Association. It officially surpassed email traffic by five times and postal traffic by 300 times in 2011.

So, as marketers, we should ask ourselves: what are we doing to connect with consumers 160 characters at a time?

Know your audience

First things first. Get to know your consumers. After the initial opt in, find out their preferences. What types of messages do they want to receive? Would they like to receive alerts on upcoming offers?

If you are just getting started in mobile, a mobile-terminated SMS program is a great place to start.

SMS delivers targeted, timely and relevant marketing communications and is a quick and easy way to facilitate long-term campaign growth.

We have found that nearly 70 percent of United States online consumers use text messaging weekly and, of those, 16 percent have made a purchase after receiving a text (SMS) marketing message.

If you are not already, it is time to find out what your customers want so you can provide timely and targeted messages.

Personalize

Subscribers are not interested in recycled content or batch and blast messages. Use the information collected to send personalized, relevant messages.

While 5 percent of consumers prefer to receive permission-based promotions via text, seven times that prefer to receive personal communications via text.

It is important that marketers respect the customer's preferences and make the most of out their messages. You have the data to segment and deliver personalized communication, so why not apply to your SMS campaigns?

Connect mobile with email, social

You have got their attention. Now use it.

When consumers opt in to receive mobile messages and provide their email address for future communications, marketers must capitalize on the opportunity by continuing to build the relationship across email, Facebook and Twitter.

Start by using triggered email sends to consumers who have opted to receive emails.

Triggered emails build on the initial engagement by delivering fast, timely messaging delivered instantly to their email inboxes. This type of program is perfect for sending product information, event registration forms and transactional emails.

Looking to build your fans and followers? It is as simple as adding a Facebook and Twitter icon to your emails to encourage subscribers to become a fan or follower of your brand. It is also a great opportunity to get the preferences of each consumer to ensure that you are delivering the correct messages across the channels they prefer.

To remain top-of-mind and drive overall campaign success, it is essential that we engage consumers across multiple channels. Channel consistency is essential for success, but content within each channel must be relevant and provide value to the consumer.

Consumers are not relying on one channel to receive information. They are constantly on-the-go, sending and receiving communications of all types, and they have come to expect that information be literally in-hand at all times.

IN 2011, MOBILE device sales outnumbered PCs for the first time in history, according to BI Intelligence.

Consumers expect information to be available all around them. The shift in expectations makes it vital for brands of all sizes to start meeting their consumers where they are.

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