

COLUMNS

How to optimize SMS campaigns

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We all know by now that the easiest, quickest and most effective mobile marketing tool is text messaging.

SMS also has the widest reach because every one of the more than 5 billion mobile phones on this planet has the capacity to send and receive them.

But SMS-keyword-to-short-code campaigns are limiting because they often result in the mere collection of mobile phone numbers.

When you spend hundreds, thousands or even millions of dollars in above-the-line campaigns to, say, drive your target market to SMS a keyword to a short code to enter a competition and you end up with a great response, you still do not know anything about the people who entered.

In terms of best practice and in some countries the law, you are not even allowed to follow up by sending bulk SMS messages with other offerings to the people who participated in your campaign, i.e. your leads.

You could spend your dollars much more effectively if you add a hyperlink to your response SMS that lands users on a mobile site where you can ask them to double-opt in to receive further updates from you about your products, services and special offers via SMS.

So it all ends up with SMS again, right?

Character sketch

Yes, because:

1. Ninety-eight percent of SMS are opened and responded to within 60 minutes versus only 5 percent of emails that are opened
2. Only 10 percent of SMS are unsolicited versus over 90 percent of emails
3. In the United States alone, roughly 300 billion text messages were sent in 2007; in 2008 it was 1 trillion you do the math

If you set up your system correctly, you can continue to legally engage your prospective customers via SMS after they entered your competition.

You are also able to tailor your offerings much better because you have collected valuable information about what your target market wants to hear from you.

This lowers your advertising costs because you not only speak exclusively to people who asked to hear from you but you also can give them the specific information that they are interested in.

To do this in an easy and cost-effective manner you simply send out bulk SMS messages to your database.

If you have more to say than the 160 characters SMS allows you, you can always include a hyperlink to the relevant page on your mobile site.

There are a large number of service providers in the market that do this for you or let you do it yourself, which is not only cheaper but also very easy and does not require you to have any special skills.

Tool road

However, these services are only a bulk SMS tool and this poses two challenges:

1. You still have to know how to use the tool. Just as with a screw driver, which you can use as a screwdriver or as a chisel, but it is much more effective as a screw driver
2. You still have to know how to integrate the tool into an overall marketing strategy, most probably together with other tools, to get the full effect

Most of the providers of this bulk SMS tool do not supply this additional support. They simply argue that you can use bulk SMS to reach your database cost effectively. This is, of course, true.

But how do you build your database? How do you design compelling, dynamic campaigns? How do you integrate this tool into your overall marketing strategy?

You can have the best marketing tools in the world, but to get the most out of your marketing investment you need to have a comprehensive strategy.

You can easily ship around this challenge by either speaking to a marketing strategist when you plan your campaign more expensive or by looking for an off-the-shelf solution that includes both bulk SMS credits and a comprehensive strategy on how to use them in an integrated way with a mobile site and your other existing marketing tools, which is more affordable.

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