

COLUMNS

Capitalizing on the Cult of Immediacy

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By **Guy Borgford**

No one under the age of 25 knows what it is like to be stumped. With the rise of the Internet and, more recently, the mobile Web, they have never encountered a question they could not answer. They have always known where to get pizza at 1 a.m. or what movie looked good but was actually terrible.

These digital natives are the early adopters of an on-demand culture. As this mindset spreads to mid- and late-adopters, we as a society are constructing a Cult of Immediacy. Information and entertainment should be available whenever and wherever. Anything less is unacceptable.

This presents a challenge to marketers. If you cannot provide information or entertainment fast enough, your audience and customers will leave.

Here and now

The Cult of Immediacy also presents an opportunity.

As consumers seek the quickest path to information and entertainment, their loyalties lie not with the product, but with the provider. The key is to get them what they need when they need it.

Many marketers equate this proposition with direct sales. The Cult of Immediacy is not just about sales. It is about providing the information and entertainment that your audience wants. It is about them, not you.

Take a mobile Web site, for example.

Sales will probably want to throw everything they have into development. Maybe the landing page should be a form to capture user information for leads. Or maybe the Web site pre-loads with a three-minute overview video of your company's value proposition.

Neither of these will do anything to endear your brand to the Cult of Immediacy. In fact, the more you cram into your mobile Web sites, the less likely it provides the value that an on-demand public demands.

When planning a mobile Web site, get the committee out of the room. Focus on the half-dozen things the customer needs and needs fast. Build your site so that information can be found as quickly as possible.

The company that can make that information available the quickest and easiest will be the one most likely to convert.

Setting store by convenience

The Cult of Immediacy does not always crave information. Sometimes, to placate its ADHD, it needs something to do for the five minutes before the subway arrives. Here, companies can expand their brand reach by providing immediate entertainment.

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These quick branding hits, either through text messages or applications, are great ways to grab the divided attention of the Cult of Immediacy.

Do not delude yourself, though. That attention will quickly turn to something else. But if your offering is entertaining enough, people will return. You may have a chance to build loyalty one interaction at a time.

The last thing that the Cult of Immediacy wants is convenience.

These are people who have one device for everything: phone calls, texts, music, email, pictures, social media, and even bottle opener. Why would they waste time on two or three different apps when they could use one?

Any app you create should provide extra convenience for the user.

A gym's app could include a calorie counter or checklist to keep track of your workouts and weight loss.

Airline apps can not only include check-in capabilities, but make checking or redeeming miles easy and fun as well.

Who wants to spend half a lunch hour depositing a check at the ATM? My bank makes mobile deposit so easy. It is the number one reason why I bank with them.

SATISFYING THE Cult of Immediacy can be a scary proposition. It means providing real value and not simply the illusion of information. It means honing your messaging to be as short and precise as possible. It means relying on multiple, quick and scattered interactions to add up to a conversion.

However, the alternative is scarier: irrelevancy. Your competitor is but a quick Google or Siri search away. If you do not give the Cult of Immediacy what it needs, it will find someone else who can.

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