

COLUMNS

Canadian anti-spam legislation and notification opt-in best practices

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By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

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On Dec. 4, 2013, the federal government announced that Canada's new federal anti-spam legislation would largely come into force on July 1, 2014. The legislation applies to Canadian developers, as well as for companies developing applications for Canadian users.

However, the law will also likely set a new bar for app notification opt-in moving forward, so now is the perfect time to consider applying these new rules regardless of country or operating system.

Pushing for it

Push notifications roll up under electronic communications just like SMS and email and as best practice, especially in light of Canada's new law, the default setting for push notifications should be "off" with a separate opt-in request at the app level.

Asking for opt-in is becoming the new standard, which has always been the case for iOS users. Android developers for the Canadian market will want to start thinking about how to incorporate a similar opt-in process.

The language used in the iOS dialog box is fixed. From the app user's perspective it can be a bit annoying and generic to see that same message pop-up the moment she opens an app for the first time. With that in mind, you may want to delay the prompt and explain the value of notifications prior to displaying the default iOS language.

One option is promoting notifications during the app onboarding process. Not only will this put the opt-in dialog box in context, but it will set users' expectations for the types of notifications they might receive.

For example, SnipSnap does a nice job using an interstitial screen at first open to clearly explain the value of notifications prior to showing the standard iOS opt-in dialog box. Showing specific examples of utility notifications the end user might receive by opting in is especially great.

In the can

You can also get creative and think about other places in the app where asking for push opt-in might be more contextually relevant than during the initial app open.

Alaska Airlines, for example, waits until the user has booked a flight and viewed the flight in the app to encourage notification opt-in. If the user previously opted out, it provides instructions to navigate to the phone settings and turn push notifications back on.

The best time for a notification opt-in is when the user is most likely to benefit from the notification.

The last step after receiving permission is to wrap up the new user onboarding experience with a welcome message.

If a user was incentivized to say yes to notifications, an automated notification can be triggered immediately following opt-in to deliver immediate value deep-linked to a specific app feature, landing page or rich message center in the app.

Setting up an automated welcome series that adapts to a user's response is a great way to make the user feel the love and provide the brand more opportunities to educate the user on the features and utilities of the app.

CANADA'S FEDERAL anti-spam legislation is another facet of an evolving conversation around push notification permission best practices and app user experience.

The smartest marketers will consider a variety of options to address the changing landscape as it relates to their mobile messaging programs.

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