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MarketingWeek

Mobile marketing: Turning real-time into right-time

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Kevin Slatter, managing director of G2 Data Dynamics, explains why marketers must wait for an 'invitation' when using mobile marketing.



The IDM recently announced that mobile phone connections worldwide had reached the 5 billion mark. If ever we needed convincing that the marketing environment has changed, then surely this is confirmation.

Mobile phones now outnumber PCs by three to one, and with smart phone technology and access to social networks via mobiles on the increase, consumers have more access to the internet than ever before. However, with this 24/7 access and diverse range of touch-points comes a new type of consumer power, with mobile

users more in control of the content they receive.

So for today's marketer, the challenge is how to deliver the right message at the right time through the right channel following this shift from push to pull marketing. And then, how to optimise this message so that users will actively choose to interact with that brand.

As always, relevance is the vital ingredient to success and it's essential that brands gain a thorough knowledge and understanding of their audience, by listening and then using this information to build an effective two-way relationship with them.

To be fully successful, you must ensure that you have the correct platform and infrastructure in place, capable of handling client interactions from multiple touch-points. The next challenge is defining the right message and content to respond with, and deciding which channel is most appropriate for each customer.

Of course, all of these decisions should be made in the full knowledge of the customer's history with your brand, both off- and online. Think you've got that sorted? Then what about listening to social network conversations: how could these then influence that message you were about to send out and how fast could you react?

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Technology is the enabler to these marketing decisions, but core CRM disciplines still lie at the heart of your choices. You have to do your homework, carrying out customer analysis and building insights that will drive the marketing decisions and ensure you are delivering the right messages at the right time.

This has always been the case, but now the results can be delivered in real-time and can be responsive to every user action and reaction.

If these insights are used correctly to build a relevant dialogue, this could lead to a long-term relationship which is beneficial to both brand and consumer.

If this is done incorrectly, your brand will alienate the consumer, with the possible knock-on effect of them snubbing the marketing channel being used.

This is a particular area of risk in mobile, with myriad applications and formats emerging across this media. If we flood these new touch-points with irrelevant sales messages, mobile could suffer from the same levels of negative feeling as email marketing did in its infancy, when practically all marketing messages were dismissed as spam.

It's worth bearing in mind that just because a mobile user is active in this channel, that doesn't mean they won't prefer to receive content via a range of channels. Applying a multichannel approach is always the best way to ensure you gain and hold on to a customer's attention.

Understanding that mobile phones are a uniquely personal tool, marketers must respect that we are aiming for an 'invitation' rather than an 'invasion' approach.

In essence, what we are moving towards as an industry is not real-time, but right-time interactions.

Every dialogue we start with consumers should be based on an understanding of what is appropriate for their needs and their lifestyle, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of when we contact them, through which channels, and even with regards to what language we use.

Only when all of these elements are right can we start to nurture those precious relationships with potential customers.