

SMART MARKETING:

The Customer's Voice

For effective mobile marketing, revisit square one

by Scott Hornstein

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management**

I am convinced the thing we understand least about mobile marketing is the individual actually holding the cell phone in his hand. I'm equally convinced we need this knowledge if we're going to make mobile work, just like the rest of the world has.

Mobile is the most personal medium ever invented, giving each of us the ability to instantly decide what we want (or don't want) on our device. So, what does it take to get on this network of me?

Seeing no other way, we decided that we were going to have to talk to some of those icky customers. We posed nine simple questions about mobile marketing to friends, family, acquaintances and referrals, compiling the answers based on age ranges. These results are directional and very basic, but they do raise several key issues:

- Corporations must behave with integrity. Be honest, speak clearly and live by what you say. Customers' current level of trust is not high.
- Customers want personalized value. They want corporations to deliver value that is specific.
- The customer is in complete control. We are on a very short leash.

The questions and answers:

Are you using your cell to get easily available information off the Web, like news, weather or scores? The most affirmative responses came from the 25–34 age group, with the 64–plus group on the opposite end of the spectrum.

Have you completed a transaction via mobile, like for a ringtone or subscription to an alert? The 18–34 and 45–54 groups scored highest.

If a brand or merchant you trust offered to send a message to your cell about a new product, a new offer or perhaps a sale, would you agree to receive the message (opt-in)? The 35–54 group was the most enthusiastic.

Would pictures or video help you to find the value? The average response indicated a cautious yes.

Do you trust most brands or merchants with your cell number? Customers up to age 44 straddled the fence, with some older respondents more receptive to the idea.

Could you name a brand or merchant you would trust to send you a mobile message? The top pick was Apple Computer, with honorable mentions going to banks, credit card issuers, doctors and pharmacies. Local retailers, individual brands and chain stores also garnered mentions.

Do you think that there should be some government regulations regarding how companies use your cell number? Most answered yes.

Would you like trusted brands or merchants to have your cell number in case of emergency—for instance, unauthorized use of your credit card? Most demonstrated better-than-average enthusiasm for the idea, with the over-64 group being the most receptive.

What brief advice do you have for companies who may wish to use the cell phone for commerce-related communications? Several important issues were raised here, such as:

Fear of rabid telemarketing: “Don't call me unless it's an emergency.”

Privacy boundaries: “Stick to the limitations that I note when I subscribe.” “Be militant about the protection of my information.”

Value: “There should be real benefit to me as the consumer and not only for you as the company. Save me a lot of money or a lot of time. Or get me access to something that others can't get access to.” “I am open to service-related communications.”

Overall, consumers caution:

“Unsolicited visits are an intrusion.”

“Err on the side of caution. People will have a quick trigger if you abuse their cell even once.”

And lastly, the most important of the bunch:

“Establish trust. Trust is the biggest issue.” ■



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