

Mobile Marketing and You

Understanding and improving your marketing on mobile devices



MOBILE MARKETING. **WHETHER** you believe it's relevant for your business now, there is no question it's going to be critical for success within the next five years. From QR codes and SMS marketing to mobile websites and custom-designed apps, there's a lot out there in the digital world that you need to understand for your business's future.

QR Codes

What they are: Short for "Quick Response codes," QR codes have a fast readability and large storage capacity compared to traditional UPC barcodes. Scannable by most phone cameras (provided the user has downloaded a reading application), the codes have become a popular marketing tool.

How to use them: Think of QR codes as a website hyperlink that you can place in the real world. Like a link online, what matters isn't that it exists, but that it delivers clear, useful content that also is interesting. Optimizing a mobile microsite landing page (see page 36) can help ensure readability, but also know that you don't have to link to a standard webpage. Video, phone calls, downloads, coupons and even highlights on a map can all be triggered through QR codes.

Christina "CK" Kerley, B2B marketing specialist and mobile marketing expert for New York-based CKB2B, shared an example of attention-grabbing QR code use. "Racecar driver Danica Patrick features a QR code on her racecar and her racing apparel," she said. "It links her fans to her schedule and her social network presence. ... I see her QR code as her new logo that, instead of a flat text treatment, actually transports users to deeper information and increases the bond between brand and user."

A bit of advice: Size and complexity matter. A code that is too small or contains too much information may have impaired or zero readability. Be sure to test all your codes first to make sure they are functioning properly.

SMS Marketing

What it is: SMS, or "Short Message Service," marketing is marketing through text messages. Users will see a prompt somewhere, such as "text 'Printers' to 55555 to hear about our new equipment," that when entered into a phone will send an automated return message back. SMS messages can be one-offs, such as the example above, or they can function like

More Money in Mobile?

Mobile marketing can be more than just a tool to promote your own business. There are digital marketing companies such as Gotcha! Mobile Solutions (www.gotchamobi.com) that have walled themselves off from the general public just as a print or promotional products supplier would, hiding their pricing and full business offerings from those not registered as distributors. This privacy allows you to purchase mobile marketing solutions from such companies and re-sell them to your clients, much as you would with printed products, promotional pens or drinkware.

e-mail newsletter lists, users opting in to get repeat messages about things like sales, new products or other company news. The use of SMS marketing requires a company to purchase a “short code,” or shortened phone number set aside by phone companies for marketing purposes.

How to use it: “SMS is a very personal channel—a business is literally asking permission to send text alerts to a user’s mobile device,” said Kerley. “There are really two critical pieces here: Whatever communications a business is promoting via SMS must be of high value (be that value an incentive or a new product), and the business must not overload the SMS channel—otherwise, users will quickly opt-out of all SMS alerts, and they’ll never subscribe again.”

She added, “In essence it’s all about quality, not quantity.”

A bit of advice: Know that you can build multiple lists. You can divide a client base by salespeople, users texting in the specific name of their salesperson to opt-in, placing them on a list controlled by said salesperson. Subject divisions also are possible, a client texting in “jumbo roll” or “tax forms” per their interests.

Mobile sites, Microsites and Apps

What they are: Somewhat unfair to lump together into one category, mobile sites, microsites and apps are similar enough in the sense that they’re all platforms for users to interact with a brand in the mobile space. A mobile site is simply a version of a larger site shrunk down and optimized for reading on mobile phones. A microsite is similar to a mobile site, except it’s not necessarily a copy of something found on the normal-sized webpage. Small, free-standing webpages, microsites can be anything from a simple online business card to a mobile-only QR code-triggered contest webpage. Apps are more abstract than mobile and micropages, best understood as a programmed game or tool that fills a specific mobile need for your customers. They provide utility beyond what is possible in a website.

How to use them: Mobile and microsites are great for cutting down on site clutter and making your information readable in a portable setting. Apps are useful in highlighting or enhancing services or facets of your business practical in a mobile setting (see sidebar), and can even become a profit center should you choose to charge for downloads.

A bit of advice: Know if you actually need them or not. Depending on your website’s complexity and design, it may be perfectly readable as-is on mobile devices. Similarly, be sure that your app delivers sufficient usability that couldn’t be recreated easier as a webpage, such as maps, trade show directories or product catalogs. ●

TRADE SHOW APP:

A Case Study

Designing your own app may seem complicated or costly, but a well-designed program can provide real practical benefits to your business. Adrienne Barker, MAS, corporate vice president for promotional product distributorship Barker Specialty Company, Cheshire, Conn., shared an example of an application designed for the company that turned out particularly well.

Looking for ways to improve and streamline its end-user tradeshows, Barker Specialty Company built an app to serve as both a mobile tradeshow directory and end-user friendly web catalog. The goals for the application were three-fold: Provide a clear and easy-to-use map of the tradeshow space, reduce catalog cost and hassle for all parties involved in the show, and make end-user and supplier interaction easier and more accurate. It also included a welcome message, Barker Specialty Company’s contact information and alert-messaging capabilities should the company want to send out any breaking messages during the show.

Barker explained that the catalog portion of the app was built from hand-selected exhibitor catalogs, screened for end-user appropriateness in terms of price and supplier contact information. The catalogs were then transferred into the app, each item inside them made individually selectable. Show attendees could go to a booth, match an item they liked to one inside the app, select it and fill out a digital lead sheet right there. The form would be e-mailed directly to Barker Specialty Company. This digital format reduced the kinds of paper transcription errors common from both clients and suppliers in the old system of filing.

Barker said the app was successful for the show and even after the event. The permanence and convenience of the application (compared to a paper guide), meant clients kept and used the application longer, allowing them to easily reference and use it after the show had ended. Orders and leads continued to come in weeks after the show ended.

Barker Specialty Company partnered with a mobile design company E-proDirect to create the app. “If we did create an app like this alone from the beginning, it would have been so expensive, and actually not necessary because E-proDirect knew what they were doing,” Barker commented. “We went with their events suite and we were able to pull it off that way, which was just perfect.”

For companies planning their own apps, Barker had some advice:

“It’s an investment. It probably was an investment of a week, about 40 hours of time,” she said. “You definitely want to have something like this if you’re going to have an event that’s going to bring at least 350 good attendees. Other than that, keep your creative hat on during the whole process and always stay one step ahead of what you’re thinking.”