

Mobile Marketing: 'Reach' For Success

By Eric Harber

Apple recently delivered its one billionth iPhone app download. History will surely look kindly at Steve Jobs and company for its major contribution to the consumer's adoption of mobile hardware, software and services, all of which have taken phones well beyond the "voice-only" status.

The question now is whether brand managers, who on average have slashed budgets more than 20% this year, participate in the iPhone revolution?

The answer is both yes and no.

It's indisputable that iPhone apps are "sexy" and, when done right, produce a terrific brand experience. Then there's the buzz factor -- "hey, my application is doing so well, it's destined to be in the next iPhone ad."

But "only" 17 million iPhones had been sold when an Apple executive shared the figure at an event last month. Given the fact that there were 270 million mobile subscribers in the U.S. at the end of 2008, can a brand rely solely on sex and buzz?

My company recently passed the 33,000 mark in the number of successful mobile campaigns. Most have had a strong SMS component primarily because of the reach of text messaging -- according to CTIA -- The Wireless Association, more than 227 million mobile phones in the U.S. can be reached using text-messaging. Just as interesting, 160 million are on a text plan and the average age of a texter is 38 years old.

Picture a pyramid. SMS sits at the bottom foundational layer -- it gives brands and agencies the greatest reach and taps into the behaviors and interests of hundreds of millions. As you move up the pyramid, you can add layers on mobile web/WAP, mobile advertising, richer custom applications, even an iPhone app. These provide less and less reach but often drive a viral component that adds to the overall program.

Consider the case of Wiley Publishing, the makers of the wildly-popular "For Dummies" series. They came to us with a goal of reaching the masses and delivering a rich brand experience via mobile.

Together, we devised and executed an integrated campaign that included the following:

- Text: A text-to-win sweepstakes gave consumers a chance to win high-end consumer electronics prizes via SMS, using the keyword "DUMMIES" to reinforce the brand. All who entered received a rebate for \$5 off any Wiley "For Dummies" title. Consumers even had the opportunity to opt-in for future offers and information.
- Mobile Banner Ads: Through optimization via our platform, we delivered more than 1.3 million impressions with a call to action and branding familiar to consumers. More importantly, click-through rates were four times as high as those produced by the companion online campaign.
- Mobile WAP Site: The "richest" brand execution delivered the "For Dummies" logo, look and feel and gave those interested an easy way to opt-in to receive offers and rebates. The site even featured a store locator to find the closest store, as well as a list of the most popular "For Dummies" titles.

How did the campaign do? It moved product as well as the loyalty scale -- there was a 34% conversion rate for consumers joining the TXT4Dummies Club.

It's also worth noting that it reached -- even exceeded -- the brand's goals and did so without the iPhone as a driver. History will say that the iPhone was behind many - but not all - mobile marketing successes during these times. Remember the power of reach, the pyramid analogy and integrated marketing.



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Harber, the president and chief operating officer at HipCricket, has 20 years of industry expertise spanning mobile, telecommunications, networking, e-commerce, media and entertainment. Over this time he has spent his career applying his business skills to products, services and companies at every stage of their strategic growth.