

Mobile Success in a Down Economy: 5 Strategies to Improve Campaigns

SUMMARY: Mobile marketing is uncharted territory for many marketers. At the same time, the down economy is forcing marketers to optimize their efforts in every channel. A few guiding strategies from one of the mobile industry's pioneers can be helpful when navigating your way.

We asked a mobile marketing expert to share five strategies for success, including:

- Why you should always start a mobile campaign with an SMS strategy
- How to segment your audience
- How to use mobile to measure the reach of offline ads

Jeff Hasen, CMO, HipCricket, and his team have run more than 40,000 mobile campaigns for brands all sizes across the globe. The experience has given them valuable insight into how to best approach this growing platform.

But the recession is adding new pressures, Hasen says, and forcing marketers to work harder at their mobile strategies.

"What we've experienced through the recession is that the need to prove ROI is greater than ever."

Fortunately, Hasen and his team have identified ways to improve the effectiveness of mobile marketing campaigns. Here are five strategies to make the most of mobile in this tough economic climate.

Strategy #1. Incorporate mobile with other channels

Mobile marketing should be included within a larger campaign strategy, and should not be done in a one-off fashion.

"We never advocate mobile sitting on an island," Hasen says.

Integration reduces the risk of a campaign's failure by having other channels to fall

back on if the mobile portion does not prove successful. Also, a multichannel campaign can have an impact that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The power of mobile marketing, and the role it should play in a campaign, is determined by two factors:

- First, mobile devices are extremely personal. People carry them everywhere and use them in almost every part of their lives.
- Second, this access makes mobile users available on a 24-hour basis.

"Having access [to consumers] when the computer is turned off is one of the most important elements in mobile," Hasen says.

Strategy #2. Use SMS to measure advertising reach

Hasen's team has found that an SMS strategy can help marketers measure the reach of other efforts, including offline campaigns.

For example, you can create ads that encourage viewers to send a text message to receive a free digital coupon. By making the required text message unique to each channel, you can track the source of incoming messages to get a sense of which ads are working best.

Let's say a campaign's outdoor ads encourage users to text the word "offer" to receive a coupon, while its newspaper ads can encourage users to text the word "discount." If you receive more "offer" messages, you'll know that the outdoor ads are getting a better response.

"If you were running a 30-second radio spot with the last six seconds as a call-to-action, it doesn't cost you any additional dollars, and you were able to track how many people texted in for an offer, or a coupon, or information."

Strategy #3. Understand the mobile pyramid

Mobile marketing campaigns can involve state-of-the-art technology, targeting consumers on the most advanced phones. However, most consumers do not have the latest and most expensive devices.

Hasen considers high-end mobile tactics to be the top of hypothetical pyramid. A marketer should not build a campaign aimed at the top of the pyramid without first building a foundation and some intermediate levels.

- SMS marketing sets a strong foundation, because about 96% of mobile users have text-enabled phones, he says.

- Middle levels include tactics such as mobile display advertising and WAP sites.

- The top of the pyramid is reserved for mobile apps for the iPhone and its peers.

"[Tactics at the top] provide less and less reach but often drive a viral component that adds to the overall program -- and may also hit a specific demographic in your target audience," Hasen said in a recent blog post (See Useful Links section, below).

Strategy #4. Segment audience by behavior, not by phone

When building campaigns, Hasen and his team focus more on an audience's mobile habits than the types of phones it is using.

"The reason why our campaigns have great results is because they're tapping into the activities and interests of the masses, as opposed to asking people to do something they've never done before."

Activities to monitor to determine campaign segments include:

- Texting habits
- Mobile Web browsing habits
- Use of mobile apps

Strategy #5. Use third-party research

To gain insights into an audience's habits, Hasen's team supplements their proprietary information with third-party research. He considers Nielsen and comScore to be industry leaders on US mobile behavior research, and also looks to the Mobile Marketing Association for reports.

"That's how we build campaigns-by talking about primarily independent studies that show what consumers do and don't do with their phones," he says.

- Need for standards

Hasen also is looking to third-parties like the MMA and the Interactive Advertising Bureau to provide standards for measuring a campaign's success.

"One of the biggest needs now in our industry is to have standardized measurement," Hasen says. "One of the biggest questions we face is 'What is a success?'"