

How to monetize SMS alerts

September 16, 2009



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By [Eric Harber](#)

I do not know about you, but I subscribe to all sorts of mobile alerts – sports scores for my favorite teams such as Seattle Mariners , breaking news from one of my local radio affiliates, airline departure and arrival updates when I am traveling, even weather alerts so I know if the kids need a ride to soccer practice.

Mobile alerts reach me no matter where I am. They are free. They are sent in real time. Best of all, I can customize them exactly how I choose. Mobile alerts represent a great convenience for consumers, but what many do not realize is they also represent a great opportunity for marketers.

These days when so many brands are scrambling to create the hottest iPhone application, it is refreshing to know that simple, affordable, broad-reaching campaigns are still extremely effective methods of mobile marketing.

I include the oft-overlooked mobile alerts in this category. They represent mobile marketing in its most basic form – simple, permission-based, push text messages. Yet when used correctly, they can be an effective, measurable way to reach current and potential customers.

There are many kinds of mobile alerts – school closings, weather forecasts, breaking news and sports scores, to name a few.

If you can create a feed for it, you can turn it into a mobile alert. They are personal, customizable, broad-reaching and measurable – everything a marketer could ask for. They also represent an opportunity for your brand to reach consumers who you may not otherwise have been able to reach.

The opportunity in mobile alerts is twofold.

First, brand owners such as sports teams, airlines, broadcast stations and print media can use them to fully engage their fans, customers, listeners and readers.

If you have got breaking news, adding mobile alerts should be a no-brainer for you. They help you stay in touch with customers anytime, anywhere, even if they are not currently listening, reading, watching or engaging with your brand at that time.

However, the second and less obvious way to use mobile alerts is through sponsorships. Many news and information outlets sell sponsorships for their popular mobile alerts programs.

Pay station

A great example of a successful alerts campaign is radio station WSPK in Poughkeepsie, NY. The station has always announced school closings during inclement weather, but recently decided to add a text message system that would alert students and parents via mobile phone if their school was closed.

Gone are the days of kids waiting by the radio all morning with their fingers crossed hoping that they will hear their school's name announced. Students and parents can personalize their alerts for their school district and automatically receive notification as soon as school has been cancelled or delayed.

As you can imagine, in such a climate, the program has been very successful.

With a very large database of opt-ins, WSPK realized it they could begin selling sponsorships for these alerts. A local furniture store signed on for the entire winter season, netting the station revenue otherwise unavailable.

Obviously, prices vary based on the market and size of the opt-in database, but the message is clear – mobile alerts represent a large opportunity.

Sponsoring mobile alerts can represent a great opening for local businesses, as they often cater toward a specific geographic area and a specific demographic as well.

School cancelled in Poughkeepsie due to heavy snow? How about an ad from a local hardware store having a sale on snow blowers? Or an automotive store which sells snow tires?

Mobile alerts can generate real-time leads and better yet, measure results. Why not add a note saying, "Show this text message at the checkout to receive 15 percent off"?

In an age when marketers live and die by ROI, it is nice to know what works. As the old adage goes – we know that half of our marketing is effective, we just do not know which half.

Mobile alerts allow you to measure opt-ins, total alerts sent, unique recipients and even track conversions/click-through rates.

With mobile alerts, you know exactly what is working and even have the ability to change or update campaigns in real time to improve conversions. So the next time you are planning a campaign, do not forget that sometimes simplicity is the best method.

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