

Twitter vs. mobile: A marketer's scorecard

By **Jeff Hasen**

With time and budget being so precious, marketers considering using Twitter and/or mobile marketing must ask important questions: Are they interchangeable, complementary, or even necessary?

In the case of Twitter, with a strategic and concerted effort, a brand can reach large numbers of customers and prospects. Many have found Twitter to be a means to create buzz. But there are thousands of applications that enhance the Twitter experience. It's not enough to just understand Twitter -- a marketer must also know which application to use and when.

In the world of mobile marketing, text messaging is an impressive phenomenon. According to Nielsen, in 2008, the average mobile subscriber sent or received an average of 357 text messages a month while making or receiving 204 calls. The average age of texters has moved from 19 to 38 in the last five years.

But how does a brand create a dialogue via text that is permission-based and of value?

Back to twitter, the successes are impressive.

Just look at Dell, which has shown Twitter to be a revenue driver. In a case study posted on Twitter's website, the computer manufacturer says it has booked more than \$3 million in revenue through 80 Dell-branded Twitter accounts.

On the same site, JetBlue says its Twitter initiatives are breaking down "artificial walls" between consumers and the airline.

Still, many other brands have yet to be converted. Their hesitations range from concerns around the lack of standardized measurement (is it the number of followers, the quality of followers, or what is being said and by whom?) to questions about how to make noise in such a noisy environment, as well as how to have a one-to-one relationship in such a public forum.

These same concerns don't apply on the mobile marketing side of things, where successful campaigns often employ programs to give marketers the one-to-one relationship they seek. Through permission-based programs, brands are then able to seize on the opportunity created when a consumer responds first to an offer, then says

yes to the follow-up asking whether he or she wants to opt in to a mobile club for additional offers and information.

In a campaign lauded by the Mobile Marketing Association, Wiley Publishing saw a 34 percent opt-in during a program featuring \$5 offers for "For Dummies" books. In another program, Jameson had a 71 percent opt-in rate around a St. Patrick's Day on-premise push. Likewise, MTV had nearly 30,000 people join a club for the N Queen Bees program.

Other advantages of opt-in mobile programs over Twitter include the following:

- Guarantee of reaching consumers on their mobile phones. While some Twitter users receive updates on their mobile phones, there is no way to know exactly how many actually do.
- Greater audience size. Would a business advertise on only one radio station? One TV station? One billboard? Twitter sees more than 22 million unique visitors per month, whereas approximately 150 million Americans text message on a regular basis.
- Legitimate text-based contests, polls, and mobile coupon campaigns. There is no seamless way to do this on Twitter.
- Established guidelines as developed by the carriers and Mobile Marketing Association; with Twitter, there are "rules of thumb."
- Multiple-step campaigns that allow a business to generate warm, opted-in leads.
- Ease of integration with traditional advertising to effectively measure and compute ROI. Twitter cannot be combined with traditional advertising in a meaningful, effective manner, nor can it provide reports and charts.

Of course, Twitter has made a difference for hundreds if not thousands of brand marketers and subsequently is a medium that all practitioners must keep their eyes on. In fact, if you visit Twitter.com you will see that Twitter lists the following best practices for marketers looking to leverage the service. Key points include:

- Keep a tally of questions answered, customer problems resolved, and positive exchanges held on Twitter. Do the percentages change over time?
- When you offer deals via Twitter, use a unique coupon code so that you can tell how many people take you up on that Twitter-based promotion. If you have an online presence, you can also set up a landing page for a promotion to track not only click-throughs but further behavior and conversations.
- Use third-party tools to figure out how much traffic your websites are receiving from Twitter.
- Track click-throughs on any link you post in a tweet.

Companies like Alaska Airlines are using Twitter, mobile marketing, and traditional advertising in effective integrated marketing campaigns. The airline recently used Twitter and Facebook to seed a campaign to give away tickets to Hawaii, then saw a spike in the mobile program when the call to action was mentioned on television.

Twitter co-founder Biz Stone says Twitter is "one percent" into its journey. Media reports say he envisions Twitter growing from 55 to 5,200 employees by 2013. Over the same span, the company projects reaching 1 billion users.

Obviously, today's marketers will need to stay current to tap into ever-changing consumer behaviors and interests. The opportunities are great, but so are potential pitfalls.

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