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Where marketers 'fail' at mobile marketing

By Mike Laws

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Forbes magazine made a fairly amazing statement recently that was as low-key as it was food for thought. The respected business journal wrote, almost as an aside, that "most of the world accesses the internet for information". The implication was that mobile marketing is a must.



Silver surfers. Image by 123RF

Wow, how far we have come! Just two decades ago, we were getting to grips with voicemail and SMS. Today, no office proudly displays its volumes of Encyclopedia Brittanica, and Google (mostly accessed from a mobile handset) reigns supreme.

So, clearly we're all online, and while we're using mobile to be online, the problem is marketers are not fully taking optimum advantage of mobile as a medium. According to businessnewsdaily.com, there are two key areas where mobile marketers fall down.

The first relates to mobile email usage. While the majority of smartphone owners check emails on their phones every day, less than half of marketers are reportedly personalising them based on customers' locations and preferences.

The second problem area is underinvestment in mobile search. According to businessnewsdaily.com, more than half of Google search requests are made using mobile devices, yet only 37% of marketers are using paid searches on mobile devices and only 34% are using mobile search optimisation.

I would add to the above by saying that mobile marketers' fixation on the 18 to 35 year old segment has traditionally left several important groups out in the cold, and none more so than the over 65s. The implication of this neglect is significant and, in fact, represents a wonderful opportunity.

The over 65 segment, far from living on tins of baked beans, actually represents a group of people who have disposable income for the first time in their whole lives. Think about it - the kids are probably out the house and could, in fact, be adding to mom and dad's old age income, bonds are paid off and one would hope the desire to compete with the Jones's by blowing wads of cash has faded.

Add the above to the fact that people are living longer and heather into their old age, and are constantly being encouraged by their friends, children and even the media to try new things. Chief amongst these new things surely is the mobile phone and the whole new social media and online lifestyle that it enables. It's not unusual today for people aged 65 and older to have Twitter and Facebook profiles and to be very active on them, as most have kids, grandkids and long lost friends to keep up with.

When designing bespoke mobile marketing campaigns for seniors, it is worth keeping in mind that while the over 65s are one of the fastest-growing adopters of mobile, this segment tends to respond better to mobile ads that are simpler in terms of both text and visuals. Using text seniors can relate to is key - there's no need to speak like ‘Mr Burns’ in '*The Simpsons*', but there is a need to dispense with the slang and puffery so prevalent in attempts to reach the 18 to 35s.

Finally, mobile marketers would be wise not to include too many steps in the mobile app on-boarding process. That's really about it - keep it simple!

ABOUT MIKE LAWS

Michael is the CEO of Imaginatrix.mobi. He has over 23 years' experience in the ICT industry, has worked in multiple mobile network operators across Africa. These include Econet Wireless and Vodacom South Africa where he was instrumental in establishing the mobile advertising division. Michael was responsible for commercialising the successful Please Call Me service, as well as the tagged-on advertising messaging propositions.

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