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SMS Marketing - finding customers through mobile marketing

By Stefanos Cuning

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The mobile phone has revolutionised everyday life as well as the way we do business. A less well-known fact is that it also opens up fantastic opportunities for interaction between companies and their customers.

The following statistics clearly demonstrate the fantastic take-up of Text Messaging, or SMS (Short Messaging Service), in the consumer market:

- Over 20 billion text messages were sent in the UK in 2003 (Mobile Data Association)
- Over 25 billion text messages were sent in the UK in 2004 (Mobile Data Association)
- Expected growth for 2005 to reach 30 billion text messages (Mobile Data Association)
- 56% of direct marketers are planning regular SMS use this year (Forrester)

Over the past few years, text messaging has become by far the most popular mobile data service, and mobile marketing has established itself as an attractive medium in terms of entry cost, response rates and interactivity. We will see it become an increasingly important element in the communications mix in the future.

SMS as a Marketing Tool

For marketers SMS opens up completely new opportunities. Provided recipients have actively opted-in to a service or promotion, an SMS campaign is very well received. The results speak for themselves: recall rates of 60-90% and response rates of 5-20% are often achieved. This is why SMS is becoming incredibly popular to use as one of the many components in an integrated marketing campaign. Still, this medium is very much in its infancy, and the sky is the limit. The following factors will drive the future growth of mobile marketing:

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- Further adoption of text messaging among older age segments
- Introduction of further content and services available only on mobile phones (ring tones, alerts, logos, pictures etc)
- Introduction of new standards and formats that offer a richer user experience and further interactivity (MMS with colour and sound, polyphonic ring tones etc)

The bottom line is, mobile phones are becoming an integral part of the social fabric. As such we strongly believe in the power of mobile marketing!

Case Studies

An East-end Pub using SMS to market theme nights

A small east-end pub wanted to increase the turnout to their pub during week. So they decided to create theme nights for both Tuesday and Wednesday. During the weekend they had membership sign-ups to the SMS TXTing service.

Using a web-based interface, the pub owner would prepare a text message the night before the event and send it to his database of members, usually offering a 50% off discount if the member would show up with that text message. It proved a great success with 27% of those who received the text message showing up at the pub.

A London-based security company - Off-site SMS timesheets

A London-based security company, wanted to centralise and automate their timesheet system for all of their off-site security officers. At each site a supervisor was provided with a mobile phone with an allocated monthly amount of SMS text credits.

Using SMS technology, the supervisor would text a keyword and a badge number for each security officer as they arrived on site. This SMS text message was sent to a central database which updated the individual security officer's timesheet. As each officer left the site at the end of the day, the supervisor would again text a keyword with the badge number to the provided number. This cut the entire process of timesheet collection (sometimes taking 48 hours) to 0 hours as the database provided the administration with a live feed. This process also ensured that records were accurate and never lost.

A London nightclub news website - provide daily what's on tonight SMS Textback Service

A London nightclub news website wanted to provide their members with the ability to find out what bars and nightclubs were open on any given day, without having to browse the website as well as convince bars and nightclubs to advertise on the website

Using reverse billing and textback, the website provided its users with the ability to find out this information. Users would text a particular keyword in their mobile handset and then send this message to a defined short code (i.e. 83999). A set amount was then immediately deducted from the users

phone either pay-as-you-go or from their monthly contract. The user would then receive an instant SMS message with all of the particular nightclubs that were open that evening.

By using this type of advertising the website was able to increase its sales for advertisers on its site by 40% in first quarter alone.

2cast4 - SMS artist textback service for casting/booking application

2cast4, an application service software provider for agents in the media and advertising industries working in film, television and photography, wanted to provide casting agents a fast and efficient way to communicate with their artists in order to find out if they were available for castings.

By using a combination of Web and SMS technology, 2cast4 leads the industry in casting solutions. Casting agents enter all of the casting job details into a database and then query the database for artist matches based on set criteria. Then those short-listed can be sent an instant SMS message. The

casting agent only enters the message once, but it is personalised and sent to all of the relevant artists. Upon receipt of the SMS text message, the artist simply replies to the text with either yes or no. The message is then routed back to the database and updates the records immediately. This solution provided the casting agents with time/cost-saving efficiency while ensuring accurate records.

A digital media company - Multimedia via SMS and WAP

A London-based digital media company wanted to provide their users with the ability to choose from several different media and by sending a text message to a given short code (i.e. 83999), an automatic WAP service message was sent back to the user for them to download the file (i.e. MID, MP3, 3GP).

Using a web interface, the digital media company was able to upload their media files straight to a web server, while also storing the file information in a database. All SMS requests, WAP service messages and downloads were tracked by the database, as were user information like mobile number, mobile network, mobile handset, WAP IP address, file requested, file downloaded, and date. Through use of this tracking system the digital media company was able to compile important user marketing information.

Conclusion

Mobile marketing is a new addition to the media mix, with great opportunities for direct interaction with customers and cost-effective data collection. Leading brands have adopted this medium and the number of companies actively using mobile marketing in their marketing strategies is growing rapidly.

Selecting a supplier that understands the medium as well your requirements is key to success – we hope that this overview will help you to make the most out of this exciting media channel. For further information and case studies from your industry, please see www.unilabplus.com, www.i-multimarket.co.uk or contact Stefanos Cunning at Unilabplus Ltd London office.

SMS service: Gaining Popularity

By Jennie

Short Message Service (SMS) is on the edge of becoming a big-time player in the wireless technology. SMS has grown in popularity far beyond anyone's initial expectations. SMS is a smart and trouble-free method to interact with our friends living even in farthest corner of the world. In the age when science is dominating the world, SMS via our mobile phones is a boon of technology.

Every phone has a fixed limit of number of characters that can be written. Some have it at 160, while others allow you to type 190 characters on a single page. As soon as the message is delivered, we get the delivery report. The instant delivery of message depends on the network of the company whose mobile connection we have. SMS is similar to paging but SMS messages doesn't require the mobile phone to be active and within range. SMS's are sent via an SMS center.

Merits of SMS:

1. Cost effective: The wonderful feature of text messaging is that it is inexpensive. While an international call can cost you several dollars, an SMS will do the same job in a significantly smaller amount.
2. Comfort– SMS is perhaps the most convenient way to communicate. It allows you to chat with your friends and relatives anywhere anytime.
3. Express your opinion– SMS is an excellent way to state your choice in matters of public concern. You can also get a chance to win numerous contests happening on TV.
4. Spontaneity– Another significant feature of text messaging is the speed with which it connects us to people. It reaches its target in a few seconds. Messages can be written and sent while you going to the office, sitting idle in a bus or even watching television.

There are a few drawbacks of SMS:

- Some people become addictive to text messaging specially children. It may contribute to your mobile phone's monthly bill.
- SMS's are prone to failure due to network problems.

Webmaster



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