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Leveraging the Power of Smartphones and Smart IVRs

By Andy Begnoche

Smart IVR systems take the traditional phone call and flip it on its head, using mobile technology to make new offerings and to give smartphone users instant access to the mobile content they desire.

Your customers are changing the way they engage with your brand. Driven by advances in smartphone technology, accessibility and content, consumers have become hooked on the mobile experience. Nielson reports that in the past year, the U.S. smart phone audience has grown 53 percent to 78.5 million subscribers; half of all new phones activated in the United States are smartphones, up from 34 percent in the previous year.¹

In addition to the adoption of smartphone technology, mobile users continue to embrace text messaging, with 66 percent of mobile phone users sending and receiving text messages (SMS). The number of voice minutes used by mobile callers has remained stable, while texting has “exploded,”² with a projection that 8 trillion text messages will be generated by the end of 2011.³

Furthermore, consumers are growing more attached to their mobile phones. In a study conducted by Yahoo!, 42 percent of mobile users agreed that they would call their phone, “my co-pilot,” saying that without a mobile device, “I felt a sense of sadness. It made me feel disconnected and somewhat out of control,” and, “I just felt naked in a weird sort of way.” One subject went so far as to say, “It is like the cellphone/mobile Internet has become completely integrated into my life at this point.”⁴

Therein lies the truth: For many, their mobile device is a vital appendage. It is not a new technology just beginning to break the surface of consumer interest. Going mobile is a shift that has already occurred—and is rapidly growing. The number of cellphone-only homes in the United States has doubled since 2007 from 13 percent to 26.6 percent, according to the CDC.⁵

Mobile consumers are mobile, and they demand mobile offerings. They represent a new type of consumer, with positive and negative implications for customer engagement. In fact, companies realize there are pros and cons to many of the characteristics that define the mobile user. For example, they seek interactive content. They are highly engaged and engaging, often over multiple screens and mediums, but they interact only with brands able to deliver this content. Moreover, many mobile users are avid multitaskers, distracted and on the go, making them less available via traditional means of communication, like email or phone calls.

Uniting Real-World With Mobile

The hyperconnected mobile user is “plugged in” during all waking hours, increasing the ability of consumer affairs to reach consumers. Mobile users readily consume bite-sized pieces of information delivered via SMS, smartphone apps, social media and more. Customers who have gone mobile are receptive to many new points of contact. Brands, then, should view mobile as an opportunity to reach out to customers in new ways. By using services that unite real-world experiences with virtual, mobile technologies, businesses can develop and nurture an audience of mobile consumers. Popular ways to achieve this goal include:

QR codes: Although quick response codes are just now gathering steam in the United States, they have been popular overseas for some time. These variations on the common barcode are designed to be scanned by mobile phones. They can initiate a phone call, link to a

website, add contact information to a user’s phone and much more. Often seen on storefronts, business cards and print ads, the intrigue of a QR code will encourage scanning, and the scanner’s attention will shift from the real world to the mobile, virtual world.

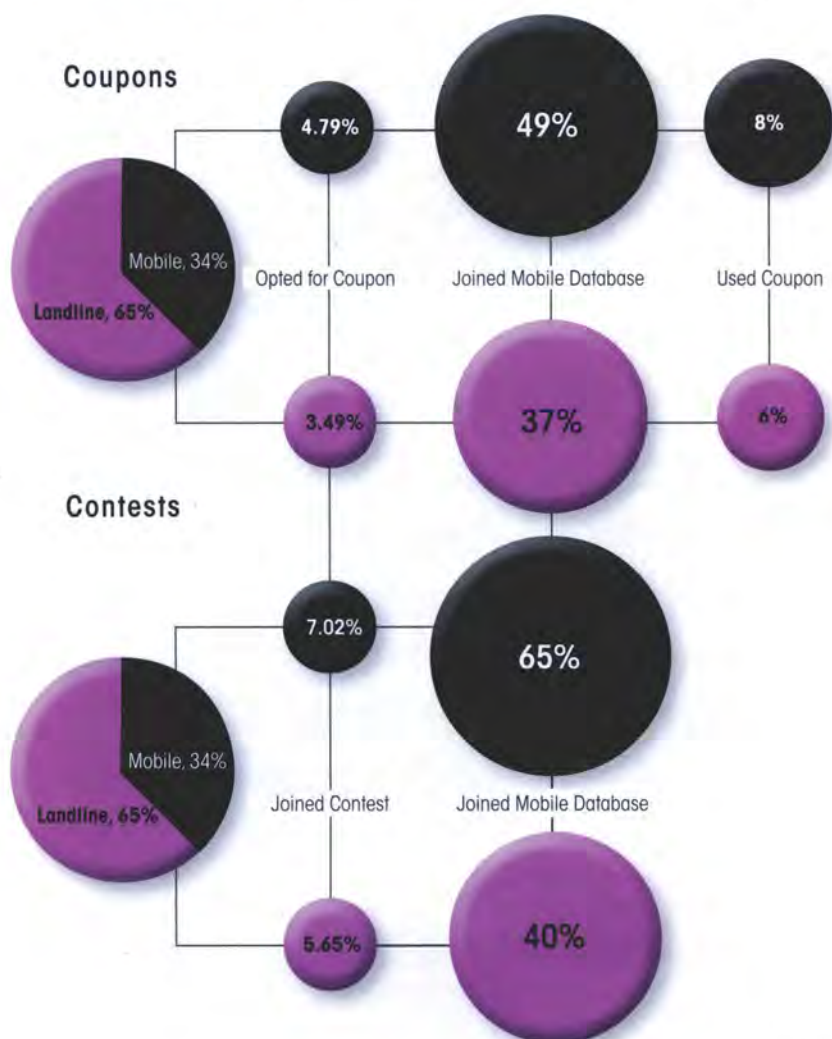
Daily deals: A number of daily deal couponing services have grown in popularity. These sites give new and existing customers something that many want in a down economy: a great price on a product or service they need or want. Forty-four percent of online consumers use or search daily deal websites. Of subscribers to these services, 60 percent receive and review emails from more than one local deal site daily.⁶ Daily deal services combine websites, email, text messages and smartphone apps to deliver coupons.

Growing mobile usage and technology allows the telephone, more specifically the IVR system, to function as a multimedia contact zone.

Geopositioning: A spin on a traditional social-media site, geopositioning services, like FourSquare and Facebook Places, rely on the idea that people will want to tell their virtual friends where they are in real life. Users are encouraged to “check in” at their favorite places to see who else is around and earn points that can get them anything from a coupon to a virtual mayorship. Getting real-life visitors to check in gives businesses exposure over many social-media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, and rewards consumers who participate in the game.

Twitter: What does Twitter have to do with real-life communications? For a brand: everything. Twitter users relay up-to-the-minute information about their real-life experiences. Deliver great service, and your customer might tweet about it. Keep someone on hold for too long or have an unresolved complaint and your customer will definitely let the twitterverse know. Twitter is a fast-paced, short message site for microcommunications that was initially designed to be used with text messages and is still frequently accessed from mobile phones. The

IMPACT OF MOBILE OFFER FOR 1-800-PREPARE



Growing this mobile database allows a brand to continue to provide mobile content to users.

good news is that many tools exist that enable brands to keep track of their buzz.

Create a Multimedia Contact Zone

Although customer use of Internet and mobile services continues to grow, the traditional telephone remains

the easiest and most effective way to address consumer concerns and encourage customers to express their voices. It also remains one of the most expensive means of communication for businesses. Fortunately, growing mobile usage and technology allows the telephone, more specifically, the interactive voice response (IVR) system, to function as a multimedia contact zone.

An intelligent IVR system can be a business's answer to smart, mobile technology. These systems take the traditional phone call and flip it on its head, using mobile technology to make offerings that were not previously available and giving smartphone users instant access to the mobile content they readily consume. The options provided by these systems are endless, but businesses often provide:

- Self-service menu (check order status)
- Customer service surveys (rate your rep and experience)
- Coupons (incentives to buy)
- Contests (enter to win a prize)
- App downloads (access links)
- Callback appointments (scheduling and confirmation)
- Maps and directions (enhanced customer service)

As with traditional IVR systems, callers indicate their interest by pressing a number. If, for example, a caller is looking for directions, the first prompt might say, "For nearest location, press 1." With a smart device, the caller might opt to have directions sent directly to their mobile phone including a link to a map. If the caller is using a mobile phone, they will not have to add any additional information to receive the content. If the caller is using a landline, they will be prompted to enter a mobile number. Following transmission of the map is another text message, asking the caller to opt in to a mobile database. Growing this mobile database allows a brand to continue to provide mobile content to users.

Intelligent IVR systems are good for consumers and companies; they provide convenience and brand awareness. They deliver requested mobile content that is useful and relevant to the end-user. They can reduce and even eliminate time spent on hold waiting for a representative. This technology suits an on-the-go lifestyle by instantly delivering information and allowing the consumer to schedule a call back from a representative. For representatives, this means better preparedness for calls, and allocating more time for discussion. Representatives can identify callers from their database before the call back, giving them information before initiating customer con-

tact. A business benefits by cutting down on the number of callers seeking representatives, reducing hold time and more efficiently answering calls.

These factors reduce costs and optimize return on investment. Furthermore, the business can develop a more effective customer service strategy tailored to a mobile database of customers ready for contact, whether it is for feedback via surveys or marketing initiatives like couponing.

According to Gregg Hamerschlag, chairman and CEO of Primary Wave Media, "Intelligent numbers are about customer relationship management, which is often overlooked by a lot of companies. As mobile technology continues to be adopted, it's becoming more important for businesses to use that same technology to engage with customers."

Mobile technology allows for the unification of the small-screened mobile device with the three dimensional world.

Case Study

The impact of this technology can be seen in the brand 1-800-PREPARE. This "etailer" of emergency preparedness kits and supplies uses its IVR system to offer coupons, encourage participation in contests and grow its mobile database. 1-800-PREPARE's data shows the impact of mobile offers. (See chart on opposite page)

Coupons: In this data, we see similar numbers for coupon usage for callers using mobile phones and landlines. The data for landline callers reflects their actions after entering a mobile number. About 4 percent of all callers asked for a coupon, while 7 percent of those callers followed through and used it. Regardless of coupon use, many users replied "yes" when they were asked to join a mobile database. Callers using mobile phones were 12 percent more likely to join the mobile database after asking for a coupon.

Contests: More users joined the company's contest than those who asked to receive coupons: 7.02 percent of mobile callers and 5.65 percent of landline callers (6.12 percent of all callers) joined. Of these, about half replied "yes" when asked to join a mobile database, with mobile users 25 per-

cent more likely to add their number to the list.

Database Growth: Overall, 1-800-PREPARE was able to convert 4.7 percent of callers into database members. Of all callers, those originally calling from a mobile phone were 12 to 15 percent more likely to opt into a mobile database, depending on the offer requested; 42 percent of users who requested a coupon code, whether they called from a mobile phone or landline, opted into the database, while 49.7 percent of callers who joined the contest also joined the mobile database.

Smart IVR systems offer an opportunity to more effectively engage a customer service representative and create a more interactive, efficient and overall productive experience for callers. Consumers frequently adopt services that use mobile phones to unite the so-called real world with virtual applications. From daily deals to QR codes, mobile technology allows for the unification of the small-screened mobile device with the three dimensional world. Customers receive content that ranges from apps to maps. The smart IVR system represents a marriage of technologies in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Those who embrace it will benefit from their ability to improve fulfillment of customer needs and expectations. **CRM**

notes

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