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How can your business create a successful mobile marketing plan?

Mobile marketing is as much about convenient access to good content as it is about anything else. Buying ad-space in Apple's iAd doesn't mean it's money well spent. So what is?

SMS

Text-message advertising allows you to reach a large demographic, while building your list of contacts. It's a great way to build a database of customers that you can continually reach with marketing messages



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Geolocation

Google believes that 40 percent of all searches "have local intent." Bing argues it to be higher — 53 percent. Those statistics have wide implications for local businesses. A primary function of smartphones is search. Be sure you have a mobile-optimized website so users can get the information they're looking for when they land on your site.

Banner Ads

Many applications offer ad space in the form of a banner ad at the top or the bottom of the screen. These help support free applications or websites, much the same way traditional premium content is subsidized

QR Codes

While this technology has been around

since the mid-1990s, QR codes have exploded onto the mobile scene lately. A QR code is a square bar code with the ability to be scanned by a smartphone. Depending on the complexity of the QR code, the information contained can range from downloadable contact data to phone numbers to website links. The last is the most important

NFC

Near field communication (NFC) is RFID — radio tags talking to a receiver. NFC accomplishes the same thing a QR code can. They will soon replace or augment QR codes within the smartphone market. It's an emerging technology and something to keep in mind over the next 1 to 2 years. At the moment there are only two or three models of smartphones that incorporate an NFC receiver. The current iPhone isn't one of those.

Native Applications

These are the apps consumers download. They are becoming so commonplace that brands are evaluated by consumers based on whether they have an app. Users expect a brand's mobile app to be easier to use than its website. Many apps use location and push notifications to deliver relevant coupons, news, and content. Apps are a powerful tool to gain or retain customers

Mobile Websites and Splash Pages

According to research firm Ipsos OTX, nearly 80 percent of all mobile advertisers don't have a mobile-optimized website. Spending money on the ad is only half the battle. A user encounters

your brand on a mobile device, probably an app, clicks your ad, and is redirected to a non-mobile website. The disruption is more than enough to dissuade users from becoming customers.

Building a mobile website or splash page is the easiest way to keep a user's attention and pass along your message. Mobile websites are significantly cheaper than native applications. Templated sites can cost as little as \$30 a month.

Best Practices

- Avoiding Blackberry is becoming an industry norm. RIM doesn't currently have enough smartphone market share to make it worth buying mobile ad space. The trend that doesn't seem to be changing. Put your business' money into Android and iPhone. It will be better spent.

- Be choosy about what content appears near your ad. Avoid pay-per-click advertising on banner ads. It's easy for consumers to inadvertently click on your ad due to the smaller screen. Stick to cost-per-impression advertising on banner ads.

The mobile market is exploding and the options above are just a handful of ways to engage this fascinating new market. □

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Editor's note: Appfury developed *The Central New York Business Journal's* mobile website.