

Mobile in the B2B space – don't get left behind...

How B2B marketers can best utilise mobile marketing as part of an integrated digital strategy.



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Section 1 – Why Mobile is important

Which device is used to make phone calls, check emails, research products, shorten boring commutes with entertainment, and even act as an alarm clock? The Mobile. These amazing devices which have seen spectacular technological advances in the past decade are largely accepted as the gadget one cannot “live” without. This ultimate smart device which users have such a strong affinity to was only recently taken up by marketers as a key marketing channel. Smart phone usage has also exploded with estimates by Gartner that mobile phones will overtake PCs as the most common web access device worldwide by 2013. The tablet, only launched last year, is predicted to ship 44.6 million devices by the end of this year (IDC 2011). The B2Cs have been diving into Mobile at a frenzied pace to take advantage of the great returns on investment achievable on Mobile. According to Ebay, the company makes one sale per second via Mobile, and other large retailers such as Amazon and John Lewis have developed their mobile websites and checkout systems to adapt to this trend. However, what about B2B?

B2B companies have been falling behind and are missing prime opportunities to reach and engage with their business audiences by not integrating Mobile into the marketing mix. There are a few key factors that have made B2B marketers reluctant to adapt their strategies:

1. Lack of understanding of the mobile environment
2. Sticking with the tried and tested forms of traditional media to lower risk and effort
3. Belief that Mobile is mainly applicable to B2C
4. The measurability of Mobile as an acquisition source.

Instead of being confined to the limitations stated above, it is important to take a holistic view of who the target audience is and how their behaviour is changing. According to research firm IDC, a predicted 1.2 billion workers will be using mobile enterprise tools this year which makes sense, since such a significant amount of time of the target audience is taken up by meetings and travel. B2B professionals are constantly on the move and as a result, increasingly dependent on their mobile phone to get their job done. According to a recent Forbes Insight study in association with Google, many executives surveyed utilize a full array of devices for business purposes. On average, respondents had 3.46 devices each; CEOs (4.21 devices) and CFOs (4.22 devices) had the most (Forbes 2010). Is your business potentially missing a significant opportunity?

If so, it is important to define your target audience; how do they use Mobile and what are their expectations from your service offering? Then, define your objectives. Are you going to focus on brand e.g. increasing relevance, listening & interacting or building momentum? Or, are you looking to provide service extension e.g. increasing your reach, improving accessibility or building reliance amongst your prospects & customers? Define the process by which you'll meet these objectives through a mobile strategy. Focus on how you can influence, change and strengthen relationships, rather than jumping onto specific mobile technologies. This is why it makes sense to evaluate technologies only after you've established your audience, objectives and the associated strategy.

Section 2 - What are the key points for good B2B mobile practice?

1. Mobile websites

Mobile sites, a slimmed down version of the corporate website, promoting key messages and communicating key offerings, but in a streamlined manner (see example below).

The key to a good mobile website is one that provides content that people actually need when they are on the move.

Prioritise your key offerings, make sure contact us is obvious (after all, they may be on their way to see you) and bring social elements to the fore e.g. allowing user interaction via "share with social network/ colleagues" on your mobile site.



<http://mobile.simplybusiness.co.uk/>



www.simplybusiness.co.uk

2. Snackability

People want small bites of content, served up quickly and easily. Keep it short and sweet. Mobile users have a shorter attention span.

Writing 100-word snapshots (content bursts) of 10,000 word top line pieces that executives can read when they are out in the field. Keep in mind these 'content snacks' can provide an incentive to read the full version for even more insights, when they are back in the office.

3. Video case studies

Creating 2 minute video case studies (in addition to the normal feature / top line on the website) that are easier for your executive audience to watch on their mobile devices on the go. Several surveys have shown that C-suite executives make more time for videos than others (Forbes). 20% of C-suite prefer video content (IAB survey) whilst 70% of European IT and Business Decision Makers watch videos on their tablet devices (IDG B2B Research 2011). Furthermore, 200 million YouTube videos are watched on the mobile phone every single day.

4. Audio podcasts

Recording short podcasts that capture the key points of a document, report or newsletter, as these can be listened to during the executive's daily commute.

5. SMS alerts

Offering 160-character SMS alerts of breaking development in the industry or overall profession. Keep your longer versions online but use shorter versions on SMS to keep your target audience informed wherever they may be at the time of the news breaking. According to reputable US sources, 97% of text messages are read immediately.

6. **Social**
According to Ruder Finn (2010), Americans spend more than 2.7 hours per day socialising on their mobile phones. That's twice the amount of time spent eating. And, a third of the time spent sleeping in a day. Over 30% of Facebook's 600 million users use Facebook Mobile and, 50% of Twitter's 165m users use Twitter Mobile. So, think about your mobile social strategy. After all, you need to build that relationship over the Mobile before you engage in m-commerce.

7. **Part of integrated effort**
Mobile is not a stand-alone effort, but should be an integrated part of the marketing mix. Don't expect purchases to happen, but make it easy to share the content (ie using a "send to self" link, or sharing via work email to colleagues). Link different media initiatives together and make full use of the new "dual screen media consumption". Mobile devices are used 24/7 - users are watching TV and chatting with friends, reading print and checking offers on the mobile internet. Why not run your print ad with a QR code that plays your product video directly on the mobile handset?

8. **Think small and local, show more, tell less...**
Less text is more. It is also easier to explain the complexity of a B2B product through visuals rather than text. Consider simplifying any forms to complete and/or display prominent call to actions (i.e phone numbers). Work with a two stage lead generation process on mobile devices, e.g. provide a list with whitepapers and short descriptions. Users are only required to fill in their email address to receive the link to the full whitepaper via email. A short mobile registration will help to engage with a larger audience. Think local. Knowing where you're prospects are located and having the platform to serve relevant content based on that information is vital.

Using some of these best practices, B2B companies can build and maintain strong relationships with their buyers despite the high priced offerings, long sales cycles, and complex contracts.

Section 3 – Basic CheckList and Advanced Strategies

Basic Checklist

1. Check if Mobile is part of the current marketing mix. If not why?
2. Educate your company and marketing teams about mobile opportunities
3. Identify the role of your website in the decision making process and how your target customers are using mobile devices. Upper funnel: where the Mobile is being used to explore your products and/or services. Lower funnel: where the user needs to act quickly and on the move. Being one click or phone call away from being able to purchase from you is crucial for the latter.
4. Adapt the website for mobile devices to enhance the user experience (either mobile website or App depending on how you want to engage with the audience). Make sure your site works on all devices, for example flash doesn't work on iPhones.
5. Make sure your audience can find you via their mobile devices (ie are you there when they search for your products and services)? On Google sponsored links for example, a maximum of only two ads will show at the top.
6. Tracking, reporting and testing – Use free tools such as Google analytics / Google conversion tracking to get vital stats such as unique visitors, time on site, pageviews, etc, to further optimise the mobile user experience and your advertising campaigns. Take the learnings from your reports and test new ideas. Just because the CEO likes the look of your mobile site doesn't mean it works. Use data not personal preferences. This becomes a continuous cycle.

The above checklist highlights the basics a B2B marketer needs to consider and implement. However, ideally there is a need to optimise other non-website related activities around mobile devices such as customer service, loyalty campaigns, newsletters, etc.

Advanced strategies

To take things one step further for the more advanced, B2B marketers need to review all their current and planned initiatives to identify how they can improve success rates by integrating mobile tools, components, and channels into the marketing mix. This also provides a form of measurement and trackability to above the line activities which notoriously have been hard to measure ROI on. For example:

- If you're running print advertisements, could you include a call to action for your audience to "text for more information"? The idea is to provide a stream of opt-in SMS alerts to your audience and institute a new channel of communication
- If you're exhibiting at a tradeshow, why not include mobile barcodes (QR codes) in your signage and brochures? Your audience can scan them with their mobile cameras to get more information on your company, or to save your contact information to their mobile devices. See below case study.
- Can you take the content that you're delivering in text form (such as case studies), and produce a set of short videos or audio podcasts that can be much more easily consumed by your audiences in the mobile environment?

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To conclude, B2B companies need to assess and determine strategies for how mobile can *enhance* their current set of offerings and/or *advance* their overall business. This is where B2Bs can wield mobile technologies to extend the core value proposition of their brands into the mobile environment. Make no mistake, these mobile strategies work to improve B2B ROI, but, equally important, they ensure B2B's relevance in an increasingly mobile world.

Resources:

CK's B2B Blog: http://www.ck-blog.com/cks_blog/2010/01/b2b-mobile-marketing-best-practices-more-show-less-tell.html

Google/Forbes Insight Study: http://www.forbes.com/forbesinsights/untethered_executive/index.html

IDG Mobile Research: <http://slidesha.re/kBLNGB>

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