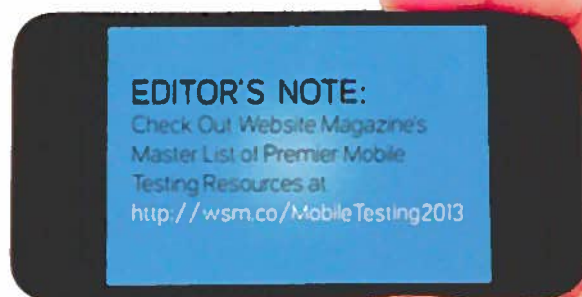




MOBILE UNAWARENESS: THE MISUSE OF MOBILE CAN HURT YOU

By Michelle M. Wicmandy, WM Contributor

Smartphones serve as a connective tissue, binding a person with the world around them through features such as ubiquitous Web access, email capability, geo-location and apps for every conceivable need. Mobile is changing the world.



This new dynamic creates challenges. For the individual, the challenge is setting personal boundaries without appearing disconnected. For the businessperson, however, the challenge resides in delivering valuable content and an immersive experience while abiding by the law and respecting the boundaries of both internal and external customers.

So, where do we draw the line on acceptable mobile conduct? The following are some general guidelines.

Get Permission

When using mobile, companies must comply with CAN-SPAM laws and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regulations to avoid penalties. Using a subscriber opt-in process ensures that the user accepts the firm's terms and conditions and agrees to receiving relevant messages. Meanwhile, the opt-out feature allows the user to unsubscribe at will.

Facilitate Transactions

By converging mobility, communication and geo-location with the consumer's behavioral, demographic and psychographic data, mobile offers unparalleled messaging capabilities. With a better understanding of the customer and his location, companies can deliver relevant, contextualized messages in real-time to facilitate the transaction at any stage along the buying continuum, explains Michael J. Becker, Managing Director, North America at Mobile Marketing Association. When used with traditional marketing, advertisers get a bigger bang for their marketing buck. For example, a company can send a shopper, within range of an advertised product in the print circular, a mobile ad to provide reassurance, drive the purchase and close the loop.

Ensure Privacy

Although beneficial, the influx of real-time information that mobile provides businesses raises consumer privacy concerns.

"There has been a steady drumbeat of attention to consumer privacy issues by the FTC, Congress and states," says Monica Desai, Partner at Patton Boggs, a Washington D.C.-based law firm. "Companies that collect and use consumer information need to be cautious. To lower risk, and particularly enforcement risk, we advise our clients to keep their privacy

policies current, make sure employees understand and follow those policies and conduct annual audits of privacy security policies."

Manage Expectations

Smartphone users are a perceptive audience and when it comes to using mobile, they expect coupons, QR codes and apps to work. President/CMO of Content Active Leisa Holland-Nelson recommends that companies test apps across multiple platforms and with various service providers.

"Just because an app works with one, never assume it will work in all environments," said Holland-Nelson. "Do your homework, check your plan and look for the holes."

Respect Boundaries

B2B is adopting the social expectation that people should respond immediately to text messages.

"Management's accessibility to employees 24/7 can be perceived as a form of abuse and result in human resource issues," said Holland-Nelson. "Furthermore, disregarding a person's boundaries, timing and privacy can hurt the company's reputation. Be respectful of your employees, partners and customers at all times."

Curb Texting & Driving

Lastly, an employer can be held liable for the negligence of employees, agents and contractors. To minimize liability, employers should create policies that prohibit mobile device usage while driving and ban employees from texting while driving on company time. Furthermore, employers who issue company cellphones or vehicles to employees should warn employees of the dangers of texting while driving and point them to the company policy and the applicable state laws for review.

Finally, with its ability to transmit a message instantly to multiple people across multiple platforms, mobile is powerful. Always think twice before hitting "send," and remember to exercise digital etiquette. ■

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