

The Rules of Mobile Engagement

Mobile marketers must follow industry guidelines to prevent long-term problems for their brand and for the industry.

BY CHARLES AUSTIN



It wasn't that long ago that print, TV and radio were the dominant methods for marketers to reach their potential customers. These methods are, of course, still available, but the evolution of marketing that began with e-mail and the Internet is accelerating as smartphones and tablets increase their penetration.

Today, more and more people are using these mobile devices as their primary communication tool, accessing e-mail and the Internet and sending text messages as much or more than calling or e-mailing their peers. Savvy marketers are realizing the tremendous opportunities presented by mobile marketing, including text and multi-media message campaigns, QR codes and mobile Apps.

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Sadly, every change in the marketing mix produces some unfortunate side effects. The rise of direct mail brought "junk" mail; telephones brought telemarketers; e-mail brought spam; and the Internet brought viruses, Trojan horses and other plagues. These have been addressed to some extent by "no-call" and "no-mail" lists, CAN-SPAM laws and online protection software.

Similar efforts have been undertaken by the wireless industry to proactively protect consumers against misuse of mobile marketing and unsolicited text and multi-media messages, which can mean increased fees for mobile users in addition to the nuisance factors and security problems created

by unwanted code and data. If the industry doesn't take proactive precautionary steps, someone will step in to do it for us, and nobody really wants that to happen.

To this end, the Mobile Marketing Association and CTIA—The Wireless Association have created a set of standards, guidelines and best practices that mobile marketers should know and follow. MMA and CTIA have separate charters and memberships, but there is significant overlap in their interests, so they often work together.

Playing by the Rules

Guidelines for mobile marketers are published in a variety of reports and documents posted on www.mmaglobal.com and www.ctia.org. They cover everything related to privacy, advertising, alerts, banking, promotions, and couponing on mobile devices, utilizing every technique from SMS text messaging to rich mobile applications.

Franchisors could spend a tremendous number of hours reviewing and researching these sites. What follows is a top-line summary of what mobile marketers need to know to comply.

Provide adequate notice for mobile users to opt-in. This is the first step in any good mobile campaign. Notice is basically sufficient information to permit a prospective customer to make an informed decision as to whether he or she would like to receive any content. Proper notice includes a franchisor's identity, products and services offered, and the key terms and conditions that apply to future mobile interactions. In other words, are users signing up for a subscription to something, or a one-time campaign? Is there a cost associated with it? If so, how much is the cost?

Along these lines, several reserved words must be used carefully, if at all. For instance, be careful using the word "free." There are very strict regulations around the use of this term in mobile marketing campaigns, as it can be used

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The Mobile Marketing Association and CTIA—The Wireless Association have published numerous resources on their Web sites to help mobile marketers stay in compliance.

Here is a summary of the most helpful links:

MMA Global Code of Conduct

<http://mmaglobal.com/codeofconduct.pdf>

Provides a short summary of important regulations.

U.S. Consumer Best Practices

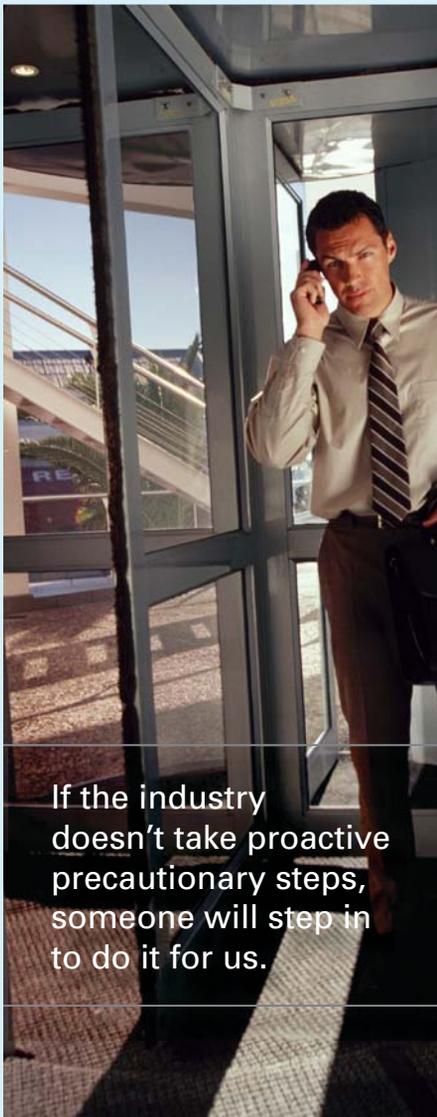
http://mmaglobal.com/Consumer_Best%20Practices_6.1%20Update-02May2011FINAL_MMA.pdf

Detailed recommendations, broken out by wireless carrier.

Mobile Advertising Guidelines

<http://mmaglobal.com/mobileadvertising.pdf>

Includes recommended cross-carrier technical specifications.



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MMA Case Studies

<http://mmaglobal.com/resources/case-studies>

These can be helpful for those just starting mobile campaigns.

CTIA Multimedia Library

<http://www.ctia.org/media/multimedia/>
Contains short videos on mobile advertising, policy, safety and more.

CTIA Common Short Code Administration (CSCA)

<http://www.usshortcodes.com/index.html>
Contains easy-to-understand best practices in creating mobile campaigns, as well as Common Short Codes, which enable all kinds of mobile campaigns.

CTIA Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Playbook

http://www.wmcglobal.com/images/CTIA_playbook.pdf
Details the compliance monitoring of mobile campaigns utilizing SMS, audits and requirements for resolution.

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by unscrupulous marketers to mislead consumers. For example, a basic level of service may be free, but if a user will need to pay premium fees to a wireless service provider to participate in the service, it cannot be promoted as free.

Respect user consent. Related to providing adequate notice is respecting the opt-in/opt-out choices of mobile users, similar to e-mail marketing. Before sending mobile content to customers and prospects, franchisors must ask for and obtain permission, which can be done via a text or multi-media message response, voice call response, Web site registration or other similar transactions.

Typical opt-in permission applies to a single mobile campaign, unless the opt-in process specifies repeat communications or an ongoing program, such as regular sale alerts, coupons or newsletters. Franchisors must also provide customers with appropriate and ample opportunities to opt-out with every mobile campaign deployed.

When first starting out, it may be tempting to purchase a list of mobile numbers, as marketers have done in the past with phone numbers or addresses, but the experts recommend against this. Having users opt-in to receive a mobile campaign is critical. First, it can save money, as there may be a price tag associated with every mobile message sent. Second, as with any other form of marketing, sending unsolicited text or multi-media messages creates a negative impression and can damage a brand over the long-run, not to mention the trouble it can create with wireless service providers and other vendors.

Customize communications where possible, and maintain appropriate security. As with any other marketing program, mobile content that is tailored to the specific needs and wants of customers is most effective. Customization helps keep your presentation fresh and is very important to keeping the eyeballs you paid to get. Franchisors should ensure that any information they gather for the purpose of tailoring offers and content to mobile users is handled responsibly and in compliance with federal (or international) laws, and franchisors should also respect the wishes of mobile users with regard to content and

frequency. Along those lines, franchisors need to have procedures in place to protect mobile user information from unauthorized use or distribution.

Follow the recommended production specifications. The MMA has compiled recommended creative and technical specifications that will allow a mobile campaign to be used via multiple wireless service providers and platforms. Following these specifications means that any mobile ad or message will work with all users, regardless of whether they use Verizon, AT&T, Sprint or other wireless service providers, and regardless of which brand of smartphone or tablet they are using. This will reduce the amount of work in producing creative material, and it will help ensure that mobile content displays correctly on the vast majority of smartphones and tablets.

Policing the Rules

The purpose of these guidelines is to improve results for mobile marketers and to enhance the experiences of mobile users. No one likes to receive unsolicited messages, particularly if they end up increasing the cost of a wireless plan. And no one wants to respond to interesting offers, only to find that the mobile content cannot be displayed correctly or is unusable.

Currently, there is no government agency that oversees the use and abuse of mobile marketing campaigns beyond a very high level of overview by the FCC. With the hopes of keeping it that way, MMA and CTIA developed their best practices and codes of conduct so that the industry could “self-police.”

To further help the industry, and to address a number of issues related to an increasing level of abuse by some vendors, CTIA issued *The CTIA Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Playbook* in July 2011. The playbook provides details regarding these audits, with instructions for resolving any issues that arise, and consequences for extended noncompliance.

In addition to CTIA, various wireless service providers are also conducting random audits of their customers. Any discrepancies found must be addressed in a

timely manner or marketers risk campaign termination on that wireless service provider’s network.

Marketing to consumers through mobile smartphones and tablets will continue to grow. As consumers come to expect instant access to information and instant communication, savvy marketers and franchisors will continue to find new ways to deliver useful content to mobile devices and integrate these campaigns with their overall marketing programs. Keeping the marketplace open and avoiding

expensive regulation will be possible as long as the majority of marketers remain in compliance with the established rules of engagement. ■

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