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How to Mobilize Your Social Media

Your Entire Social-Network Audience Is Not on a Computer

By Webster Lewin

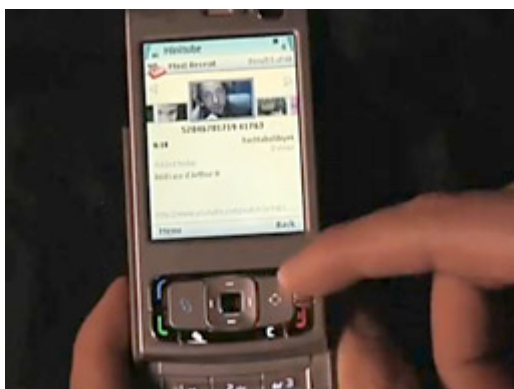
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Recently, Advertising Age reported on the [400% surge](#) in mobile video uploads to YouTube, attributed to the new iPhone 3GS. Beyond the implications of what that may mean for the value of ad inventory on YouTube, one thing is clear: There is an inseparable link between social media and mobile devices.

As the capabilities of these devices expand, we can expect that updating social-network sites via mobile will continue to increase and may eventually even surpass the wired web. Social networks like Twitter and Facebook are remarkably dependent on mobile access for the value they provide to their users. I would also argue that mobile status updates are, by their very nature, timelier, more relevant and potentially more interesting to their readers.



The mobile web version of YouTube is outstanding, and has well over 4.6 million users that log in many times a month.

Today, every major social network offers its users a range of mobile services, from mobile web access to downloadable mobile applications. Although consumers with high-end devices may be the primary users of these mobile services, some social networks also offer a number of SMS-driven features that allow consumers to stay engaged by text, even on low-end mobile phones. This represents a big opportunity for brands to maximize their efforts and move consumers easily between their mobile and social media experiences.

While social media campaigns are becoming more common, we often see that when agencies and brands begin their engagement with social networks, they act as if their entire audience is on a computer -- the mobile aspects of social media are frequently neglected. And the reverse can also be said about many brands' initial mobile marketing efforts: They often neglect to effectively integrate the power of mobile social-media elements (even when these elements already exist) to further engage consumers and fans of the brand.

Twitter

Twitter is a great example of the power of mobile and social media working together. According to Nielsen, more than 3 million Twitter users in the U.S. alone regularly access the service via the mobile web. Additionally, many consumers are frequently using Twitter through SMS and a range of downloadable mobile applications for iPhone, BlackBerry and other mobile devices. This makes Twitter an easy and seamless way to drive consumers to mobile content.

If you're already actively using Twitter for a brand, consider how mobile-friendly your tweets are. If you're including links to content on YouTube, Flickr and many other social-networking sites that automatically redirect users to their mobile versions of pages, you're doing great. But if you are sending Twitter users to a page on your all-Flash website or content that could potentially crash a phone's browser, you should consider posting both mobile-friendly and non-mobile links to important content that you want to share.



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Also, if your brand has a mobile site and a Twitter account, then why not invite your mobile users to click over and follow your tweets right then and there? I've only seen a handful of brands take advantage of this easy integration point.

Facebook

According to Nielsen, Facebook is the No. 7 mobile website in terms of reach. About 15% of Facebook users (11 million) in the U.S. regularly access the social network's mobile web version (not to mention various downloadable versions and the roughly three million users who use SMS). Users visit the mobile web version an average of over 18 times per month and each visit lasts about 10 minutes.

At the time of this writing, Facebook fan pages are just beginning to be supported on the mobile web, and hopefully soon on mobile applications as well. Once they are fully supported, that will open up mobile social-media integration opportunities. Already, the

Facebook Connect service is allowing brands to link their iPhone apps to users' profiles, and Facebook Connect has potential for mobile websites as well.

Facebook recently launched a new feature for fan pages that allows users to subscribe via SMS. This is a free service that essentially gives any brand with a Fan Page the ability to send targeted SMS updates to their fan's mobile phones if they have opted into the service. However, only a few brands have effectively used this new feature, and more work needs to be done to actively engage fans with it by including content that is relevant to mobile users.

YouTube

YouTube is a powerful social network and content site, and by far the most ubiquitous in terms of the number of platforms and devices that it can be accessed from. Even on mobile, there are a number of distinct ways that users can access the full range of mobile content. The native versions of YouTube that come pre-installed on iPhones, Android phones like the G1, and the Palm Pre offer the best mobile user experience. However, the mobile web version is also outstanding, and has well over 4.6 million users that log in many times a month.

Any brands that are on YouTube and are also doing mobile, but are not integrating the two, are missing an important opportunity. Your mobile site is just a click away from lots of video, and you can add links to video descriptions that can be used to drive users back to your brand's mobile site for more. Also, consider the power of video to influence consumers at the point of sale. Virtually everyone who walks down a store aisle these days has a device in their pocket that gives them the ability to get to your brand's video content. You just need to take a few simple steps to connect the dots.

Quality vs. Quantity

Both mobile and social media are more about reaching niche audiences and getting them actively engaged than they are about massive reach. They are about getting personal with the consumer, which makes both social media and mobile impressions more valuable. These consumers are fully engaged. They have raised their hands and want to know more. And once they've told you they're interested in more, they will be disappointed if they don't get it.

Some who look at social media and mobile through marketing goggles question reach and how these channels can be used to sell consumers more stuff. But in the era of Web 2.0, part of the selling process is increasingly becoming about the art of being there for the consumer in the always-on environment of mobility-charged social media. It's about offering something of value, creating movements that build over time, engaging with passionate fans and giving them the tools to influence others.

By using a multichannel approach to social media that fully leverages mobile communications, you will have a much greater likelihood of gaining critical mass for your social media initiatives. You'll gain even more valuable social media impressions, and most importantly a growing list of brand fans that you can continue to communicate with. It will allow consumers to digitally participate in this brand movement anywhere -- and anytime.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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