LOCAL MARKETING: THEN and NOW

HOW MOBILE HAS CHANGED THE WAY CONSUMERS DO BUSINESS FOREVER

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Introduction

Mobile Has Changed Customer Acquisition and Retention Forever

Mobile usage is one of the most popular and fastest-growing forms of technology to ever hit the consumer market.

In fact:

- Mobile is growing 8 TIMES faster than the internet grew in the early 1990's
- Mobile search is expected to exceed desktop searches by 2015
- Mobile search has grown by 500% over the past two years
- 50% of all LOCAL searches are performed on mobile devices

As a small business owner, mobile internet usage has impacted your company's ability to generate new leads and retain existing customers *forever.*

You may be aware of this, but are not sure exactly WHY or HOW mobile is changing the dynamics of your business. Unfortunately, you are not alone as most businesses still do not understand. Many think that mobile marketing is all hype and no substance; but this is far from the truth.

In order to run a sustainable business these days, companies must focus on several key points:

- Getting NEW customers (Customer Acquisition)
- Keeping EXISTING customers coming back (Customer Retention)
- Developing EFFECTIVE acquisition and retention strategies
- Keeping a strong balance between COST and BENEFITS
- Using techniques and strategies that will work LONG-TERM

The first step is to understand and implement marketing methods that are effective TODAY vs. YESTERDAY.

If you've found that you are not getting results from traditional advertising methods such as paper coupons, yellow page ads, TV commercials, and newspaper ads, it's time for you to take a closer look at mobile marketing.

You must change the way you market your business if you want to stay in front of local consumers, who are avid mobile internet users. If not, you are taking a huge chance of letting your competitors gain a major advantage; as they embrace and implement mobile strategies to keep new and existing customers coming through their doors, your business will eventually feel the wrath.

But before we get into how mobile impacts today's marketing sphere, let's take a look at the explosive growth of mobile usage…

The Growth of Mobile Technology

Can you remember a time when we did not have access to mobile phones? We had to keep exact change or a phone card with us at all times just in case we needed to make a phone call while on the go. In fact, it wasn't very long ago.

While many people think cellular phones were invented within the past couple of decades, they have actually been with us in some form or another for quite some time.

The cell technology was initially used in big tractor trailers, taxis, and police cars; as well as other emergency vehicles. Back then, no one could ever imagine just how far this idea would advance and become accessible to a majority of the world's population.

The first mobile phones made available to the public were introduced by the Motorola Company; these phones used analog technology, which was much less reliable than that of the digital technology that we use today.

These first generation mobile phones were limited in use – mostly used as car phones, which were permanently encapsulated into the floorboards of an automobile.

Within a few years, they soon became a device that could be taken with consumers outside of their vehicles. However, they had a huge downside; they were the size of a large briefcase.

People still used them because of the convenience; to be able to call your wife at home to tell her you were stuck in traffic and would be home late was considered an advantage most people did not have.

While these new mobile phones were a welcome change, they were also quite expensive; costing consumers hundreds of dollars. For a majority of consumers, they were more of a status symbol during this era versus a means of modern convenience.

In the 1990s, there were some excellent improvements that were made in the mobile phone industry and overall technology; this era introduced the use of the "Second Generation" or 2G mobile phone.

These phones were created with the digital mobile technology we use today; not only were they smaller, but they were faster and clearer than the analog versions.

Because they were smaller and more energy-efficient, mobile phone companies were able to make them much more affordable. Therefore, the mobile phone industry took off; paving the way for greater features and added convenience.

The invention of digital mobile phone technology changed everything; in a very short span of time, billions of people all over the world owned mobile phones. To keep up with the demand, mobile companies took additional measures to make owning a mobile phone as easy as possible for all consumers; such as creating "pay-as-you-go" plans.

All of sudden, consumers were equipped with a powerful tool that allowed them to call whomever they wanted whenever they wanted; it was like a breath of fresh air.

Since then, mobile usage has continued to grow and expand at astonishing rates; including the invention of mobile smartphones and the mobile internet.

The Massive Boom of Smartphone Usage

Today's "mobile phone" has grown into something much more robust than a tool that we use to make and receive phone calls. You've probably heard the term "smartphone" being used these days, but wasn't sure exactly how it differs from a basic mobile phone.

In a nutshell, a smartphone is a mobile device that is equipped with numerous features that are similar to an actual computer. One of the most prominent and most-used smartphone features is the ability to access the internet.

Smartphones generally have larger screens than regular cell phones, as well as an operating system that is capable of running many different digital applications.

Not only that, but they contain a variety of different types of software that could only be utilized while sitting in front of a desktop computer just a few years ago.

There are currently more than 1 BILLION Smartphone users today and we're doing a LOT with them:

- Sending and Receiving Text Messages – 90%
- Viewing Maps – 72%
- Surfing the Web While Traveling – 70%
- Surfing the Web While in a Restaurant – 64%
- Surfing the Web While in a Store – 63%

Also, we're …

- Sending and Reading Emails
- Reading Customer Reviews
- Shopping and Making Purchases

- Watching, Creating and Storing Videos
- Banking
- Creating, Sending and Storing Documents
- Taking, Sending and Storing Photos

… and SO much more; all at our fingertips.

Do you recall what it was like the first time you were able to do so much with your smartphone? If you're like most people, you quickly realized that life was all of a sudden a lot more convenient.

We have seen mobiles evolve from being a simple way to make and receive calls to being "personal assistants" that help us manage our everyday lives. Most people can't imagine being without their most cherished device.

Mobile Has Changed Consumer Purchasing Habits

Due to the mobile revolution, there have been many changes to the way we as consumers do business. This includes the way we find local products, services, and companies. Not only that, but it has also changed the way we choose companies to do business with.

Years ago, consumers probably never imagined that they would be able to whip out their mobile device to find local products and services; not to mention to actually be able to make purchases using their mobile devices.

In a world where everyone is almost always on the move, mobile users have the ability to take action right on the spot without being hindered in any way.

As a result, consumers can make the decisions they need and go wherever they need to go at that exact moment. Some studies actually show that mobile searchers are 51% more likely to take action than desktop searchers

Mobile Technology has Changed the Consumer Purchase Process

Finding Local Products, Services and Businesses

THEN:

- When we wanted to find a company that provided a product or service we needed, we pulled out the yellow pages book, looked in the newspaper classifieds, or call up based on a TV commercial we saw. This was pretty much impossible while we were out and about.

NOW:

- When looking for a local product, service, or business while away from home, we can easily perform a quick search on our mobile devices. The mobile web has provided mobile users with a quick way to find local businesses that have the products and services they need.

Getting Details about Products and Services

THEN:

- When we wanted to learn more about the specific products and/or services a company had to offer, we had to call or visit the business personally – or ask other people we know.

NOW:

- We can pull up the company's website on our mobile devices to get details about their products and services. Of course, this is only possible if the company's website is optimized for mobile viewing. Otherwise, consumers are met with a slow-loading, hard-to-navigate website and end up leaving feeling frustrated.

  In addition, we can easily get other information about businesses, such as their phone number, address, and even directions. All of this allows us to make easy contact – whether we want to call them or stop by.

Checking into a Company's Reputation

THEN:

- When we wanted to check into a company's reputation, we had to get ask our family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers. Or… we simply used our "gut instinct" due to a lack of any other way to find out how reputable they were.

NOW:

- We can whip out our smartphones and easily find customer reviews and testimonials about products, services, and businesses. This way, we can get "instant" recommendations based on real customers who have dealt with the company in question.

Getting Directions & Contacting Businesses

THEN:

- When we wanted to find the actual location of a business while on-the-go, we had to stop at a payphone to call the business for directions – that's if we had their phone number with us. If not, we would stop to ask other people in the area or use up a lot of gas until we found them.

NOW:

- Now, we can instantly pull up a GPS system on our mobile devices and get step-by-step directions to the establishment. In addition, many businesses have maps accessible right from their websites to help consumers find them with ease.

  If we need to call the business for some reason, we can retrieve their phone number on our mobile devices and utilize the "click-to-call" feature to connect with them instantly with one tap.

Comparing Different Local Products and Services

THEN:

- When we wanted to do comparison shopping, we spent a lot of time going store to store to assess prices, features, and more.

NOW:

- We can compare prices, features, and even see pictures of merchandise right on our mobile devices. This makes shopping easy, fast, and hassle-free.

Receiving and Redeeming Coupons

THEN:

- When we wanted to take advantage of coupons, we would check our mailboxes for the latest coupons from local businesses. We would also cut them out of newspapers and other paper sources. Then, we had to remember to take them with us when we went out to shop.

NOW:

- We have the convenience of using electronic mobile coupons; these are usually accessible on a company's mobile website or sent to us from the business via text messaging or mobile apps. After joining a company's mobile list, we can receive their special offers, discounts, and announcements right on our mobile smartphones.

  Thanks to mobile technology, we no longer have to try to remember to take paper coupons with us because mobile coupons will always be with us in our pockets or purses. This drastically increases the redemption rate; in fact, mobile coupons are redeemed approximately 10 times more than paper coupons.

Instant Special Offers

THEN:

- There was nothing "instant" when it came to taking advantage of marketing offers years ago.

NOW:

- With the use of a mobile device, such as an iPhone, we can scan a company's QR code to access savings and free items that we may otherwise not have had access to. Not only that, but QR code technology can take us directly to company websites, online videos, and just about any digital destination possible.

Staying Connected with Businesses

THEN:

- Staying "connected" with a local business involved simply doing repeat business with them. In other words, we were never really connected with a business on an on-going basis.

NOW:

- Today, we stay connected to our favorite local businesses by downloading their apps. Mobile apps provide convenience and perks that weren't even imaginable just a few years ago. Not only can we stay in the loop about the latest offers and news related to those companies, but we can receive information from them on a regular basis at the push of a button.

Building Relationships with Businesses

THEN:

- Establishing a "relationship" with a company simply involved being on their direct mail list and receiving promotional offers in the mail from time to time.

NOW:

35/17 Text message marketing allows us to receive consistent, relevant messages from our favorite local businesses. This permission-based activity helps us receive and take advantage of great offers from companies, as well as receive valuable information within seconds of them sending it.

In addition, social media usage is one of the most popular mobile activities. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other networks are increasingly gaining attention from mobile internet users.

As you can see, mobile smartphone usage has totally changed the way we do business; and it's expected to grow even more in the coming years and months.

How Local Businesses Can Adapt to the Shift

Mobile technology has paved a new path for local companies to get more customers through their doors. Therefore, your business must do everything you can to move in accordance with this major shift.

If not, you risk losing sales to your competitors who are taking measures to keep their business in-line with consumer internet interaction.

Savvy business owners understand that mobile devices can drive a large amount of foot traffic to any local business. Therefore, they are grabbing this powerful tool by the horns and making it work to increase their sales and profits.

If you are still operating based on marketing methods you've always used, it's definitely time for a change; especially if you are spending a lot of money on them and not getting results. While some of them may still generate minimal results, you still cannot ignore the power of the mobile and consumer connection.

However, some companies are still funneling a bulk of their marketing budgets into these older methods, which fail to provide an adequate return on investment.

Therefore, it is critical that your business – no matter how large or small – gives some serious thought to what you "should" be doing based on current consumer buying behavior.

Consumers today expect businesses to keep up with technological advances that make their lives easier and more convenient. In fact, many studies show that companies that do not cater to mobile users are losing a fair share of their target audience.

Here are some ways businesses can utilize the power of mobile to get more customers, as well as increase overall revenue:

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17 Get a Mobile-Optimized Website

One of the easiest ways for mobile users to get more information about a company is by visiting their website, such as their phone numbers, addresses, product or service information, and more.

However, if your website loads slowly and is hard to navigate on mobile devices, users leave almost instantly. Traditional websites were not meant to be viewed on mobile devices. Therefore, you should take measures to ensure that mobile users can effortlessly access your website.

In today's fast-paced world, mobile users like that fact that they can find what they need, right at the time they need it just by pulling up a company's website.

A clean, fast-loading mobile website that contains the information on-the-go mobile users are looking for could be one of the smartest business investments you could make.

Implement Text Message Marketing

Does your company thrive off of "repeat" business? You can keep customers coming back to your establishment via text message marketing. Once consumers sign up to your mobile list, you have permission to send them additional information and offers – instantly building a customer loyalty relationship.

Whether it's helpful tips related to your industry, or a discount on your products, mobile consumers enjoy receiving this information right on their mobile devices.

Text message marketing is perfect for driving traffic into your establishment during sales and other events. Furthermore, it allows you to build a relationship with your customers, which will keep your company in the forefront of their minds.

Does your business operate based on appointments?
Text messaging is also a great way to utilize appointment reminders and cut down on no-shows. Instead of having your staff make appointment reminder phone calls, you can setup a text message system that will automatically handle it for you.

Use QR Codes

Everyone loves free items and gaining instant access to information and great discounts. QR codes allow consumers to have easy access to your offers or other digital platforms with the use of a smartphone, such as an iPhone, Android, or BlackBerry.
In addition, QR codes are easy and affordable to create, implement and manage.

Get a Mobile App

Mobile apps are the perfect way to stay engaged with your target audience. They can help your phone ring by giving your customers and prospects a quick way to access your business.

They also promote "repeat buyers" and customer loyalty via coupons, discounts, and special offers with simple PUSH notifications that go directly to your app users.

With a mobile app, you can stay in front of your customers by keeping your brand right in the palm of their hands.

Conclusion

With all of the capabilities of smartphones and other mobile devices, you can no longer afford to put mobile marketing on the backburner.

These small, yet smart and robust gadgets play an important role in our everyday lives. Mobile devices allow consumers to do what they need to in a reasonable amount of time and with the greatest of ease.

In a time when many of us are so busy, we are in a constant state of "saving time" and getting things done quickly. Mobile phones are the glue that helps us manage daily activities and stay connected to the world.

Technology surrounding mobile devices is constantly changing and advancing. As a business owner, now is the time to mobilize if you want to upgrade your marketing with methods that are both affordable and effective.

Otherwise, your mobile-friendly competitors will continue to tap into the massive mobile audience and get most of the attention from local consumers.

I help local businesses in the area get new leads, boost sales, and increase review with mobile marketing. Contact me for a free, no obligation consultation to find out how I can help you.

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