Chapter 10

Mobile Marketing and Social Media

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▶ Creating banner ads for your mobile site
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The only phone advertising you used to have to think about was the pesky telemarketers calling you right when you sat down to dinner. These days, advertising can be beamed to that device in your pocket wherever you go, whenever advertisers want to reach you. But before you chuck your phone into the nearest landfill, remember that you’re probably reading this book because you’re interested in having a mobile Web site of your own and that you want people to come and see what you’ve poured so much time and energy into.

Getting page traffic is a complex subject, one that has fueled innumerable books, Web sites, seminars, and blog posts. One of the most basic ways is to use advertising to make people aware that your site exists and to give them a reason to come there.

Of course, another reason to know about mobile advertising is that you’re a content publisher and you want your stories, photos, videos, or songs to earn some money. Sure, you can do this by selling subscriptions (see Chapter 11, which is all about e-commerce), but adding advertising to your mobile site is a growing revenue stream.
Finally, if your mobile site is part of your overall business, and the whole point of all this is to get people to come to your restaurant, book a vacation, or buy your custom-painted T-shirts, you will most certainly want to start using mobile advertising.

In this chapter, we look at some early mobile marketing success stories and demonstrate how you can launch your own custom campaign using free or low-cost tools.

**Understanding Mobile’s Advertising Advantage**

At first glance, advertising on mobile devices seems to be a losing game. The screens are tiny fractions of a proper flat screen TV, the connection to the Internet is far more tenuous than a cable modem or DSL line, and typing on the itty-bitty keyboards is comfortable only for leprechauns. However, the reality is that the mobile Web offers important advantages:

- **People take their mobile phones with them wherever they go.** Studies show that when you leave your phone behind in a restaurant, you probably realize it within an hour or two; however, most people take about a day to realize they’ve left their wallet with their ID, cash, and credit cards behind. This is how integral mobile phones are in people’s lives.

- **Mobile phones offer one of the few times in modern life when you have the audience’s undivided attention.** Think of the environment that most advertising gets tossed into, to sink or swim. The average teenager’s room has a TV that she flips through channels on, a radio blaring, a laptop open to Facebook while instant messaging, glossy magazines open on the bed, and a video game console blasting aliens. Good luck breaking through that chaos.

  In contrast, when that same teenager is on the bus to school, what does she do? She *cocoon* with her media — that is, she sits down, pulls out her mobile phone or media player, puts headphones in her ears, and plays music or a video. Even in busy and crowded environments, where visitors to your site may be distracted, researchers say that having the media player in her hand creates a special state of connection and concentration.

- **People trust content delivered via their mobile devices.** According to mobile marketing experts, that trust is built up from hearing your mom’s voice come out of the device or relying on it to reach 911 when you witness a car accident.
That trust translates into a much better chance that your marketing message actually gets through. But don’t just take that at face value; early research shows that, when done properly and integrated with other media, mobile advertising yields a return on investment that’s surprising even seasoned advertising executives — a point we illustrate in the section, “Assessing the Impact of Mobile Advertising.”

✔ Mobile devices increasingly come with GPS built in. With GPS, your mobile phone knows where you are (and can tell you where to go when you get lost). This also means that advertising can take advantage of that data to put in ads that are even more effective because of relevance — the advertising message reaches potential customers wherever they are. For example, a woman walks down a busy street when her phone suddenly lights up with a coupon for 20 percent off at the Starbucks up the block.

Similarly, restaurants can send mobile alerts at 11 a.m. on workdays to their most loyal customers (that is, those who have signed up to receive alerts and offers), inviting them to try the business lunch specials. The Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team started using mobile ads to alert rabid fans within a 10-mile radius of the rink that last-minute tickets had just become available, if fans could make it to through traffic in time to claim them.

Targeting your ads to appear where and when your customers need them transforms them from intrusive spam that everyone grumbles about into a useful service that solves a need. For instance, you might be glad to know

• Where the nearest tire repair shop is when your car blows a tire on the way to work
• Who can help you get a red wine stain out of a cashmere sweater before the stain sets in
• Where the nearest place is to get a refill on your allergy medication before you wind up in the hospital

Of course, this kind of targeting raises all kinds of privacy concerns, which is why so many mobile advertising practitioners talk about opt-in marketing campaigns. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the major cellphone carriers (AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint) constantly work on establishing the rules and regulations for mobile advertising. Violations of the FCC rules can get you banned by the carriers, fined, or worse by the FCC. You can find an example of the codes of conduct at http://mmaglobal.com/codeofconduct.pdf.

In the upcoming sections, we take a look at what kinds of ads you need to check with your audience before you send them.
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Checking Out the Types of Mobile Ads

Because the mobile Web has unique attributes and advantages, as we explain in the preceding section, mobile advertising sometimes works differently than traditional ads you see in print, on TV, or online. Here’s a brief introduction to the most common types of ads, which you can explore in more detail later in this chapter:

✓ **Banner ads:** These ads are much like the banner ads you see all over the desktop Web. As a designer, the differences you need to understand are the ad’s size, download speed, and placement. See “Creating Banner Ads for Mobile Sites” for details.

✓ **SMS messages:** Short Message Service (SMS), or text messages, are limited to 160 characters in length, so your advertising message has to be short and sweet. The messages can contain links to Web sites or click-to-call messages — you click the SMS so that your phone places a call. The section, “Launching a free SMS advertising campaign” explains the basics of setting up this type of ad.

✓ **CSC messages:** Common Short Codes (CSCs) are a series of numbers, usually five or six digits, to which a user can send a text message. A response message from an advertiser is sent back with information or content, or with a contest you can enter (for example, *American Idol* encourages viewers to text *vote* to a number corresponding to their favorite contestant to place their vote). The section “Connecting with Customers via Short Codes” explains how they work.

✓ **QR Codes:** Quick Response Codes, or 2D barcodes, look like the little jumbled checkerboard patterns used to track FedEx or UPS shipments. In 1994, Denso Wave created them to track auto parts because they can contain so much more data than traditional bar codes (such as the ones on packages in grocery stores).

QR Codes work this way: Each code can contain up to 4,296 characters (or a string of 7,089 numbers). Users with cellphone cameras and the right software installed can take a picture of the QR Code, launching the phone’s browser and redirecting to the URL contained in the code. Find out how to create your own QR Codes in the section “Offering Links and more with QR Codes.”

✓ **Coupons:** Touted as “the coupons that you never forget to take with you,” mobile coupons are attracting attention from major advertisers like Hollywood Video, 1-800-Flowers.com, Sears, Supercuts, McDonalds, and others. Juniper Research estimates that by 2011, about 3 billion mobile coupons will be redeemed for $7 billion in discounts. One of the big advantages is that mobile coupons can deliver demographic information about the users, in addition to motivating them to come to a store and make a purchase. You find details about coupon ads in the section, “Handing out Coupons via the Mobile Web.”
Image recognition: Image recognition advertising allows you to take a picture of something (usually an ad in a magazine or on a billboard) and send it to the publisher or advertiser. In return, you get exclusive content or prizes. The offer might be a ringtone, coupon, or anything else that can be sent directly to a person’s mobile phone. See “Sharing Offers via Image Recognition” for more on this model.

Assessing the Impact of Mobile Advertising

Although mobile advertising agencies still debate the best way to measure how mobiles sway consumers to make purchases (is it intent to purchase after seeing an ad or do only dollars-and-cents sales figures count?), pioneers in the field report some compelling successes. Of course, the saying “The pioneers get all the arrows” also still holds true because detractors can point to ads that seemingly had no impact.

When mobile ads are targeted correctly and the campaign is well thought out, the response rates are much higher than direct mail or even Internet campaigns in which getting 0.1 percent of the audience to respond is considered success. Some mobile campaigns have response rates as high as 20 percent; basically, the ads are 200 times more effective than regular advertising.

Some notable examples of successful mobile campaigns include the following:

✓ The Stanislaus County Fair in central California was seeing sparse attendance during the middle of the day because of the hot sun during the day and concerts at night. By using mobile coupons, the fair was able to recruit young tech-savvy teens to show up in return for a $3 discount. Even in this rural market, the conversion rate on the coupons was 44 percent.

✓ The Gunstock Mountain Resort in New Hampshire started a program called JitterGram (basically, clever SMS messages) to get users to sign up for notices on lunch and happy hour specials, sales on ski clothes, and discounted lift tickets (that the resort used to drive traffic to the ski runs on off days). For each JitterGram sent to subscribers, the resort netted an extra $1,000 of business that day.

✓ In July 2009, Chicago’s Shedd Aquarium tested the difference in response rates. In one TV commercial, viewers were sent to a Web site to register for a contest. In the other TV commercial, viewers we told to enter the contest by sending a text message to a short code.

The short code campaign generated 325 percent more entries than the Web-based call-to-action. Although the short code campaign ran only in 25 percent of the ads, it generated 52 percent of the total entries.
Yamaha WaterCraft (the division that makes WaveRunners) ran a campaign in which people who texted WAVE to a short code or entered their mobile phone number into a form on the Yamaha mobile Web site were entered into a sweepstakes. Yamaha saw a 400 percent increase in the number of people who entered the sweepstakes (and also opted to receive more marketing information from Yamaha about their boats, motors, and Jet Skis).

Lane Bryant started a program in which customers waiting in line at the cash register signed up for coupons and discounts to be delivered over their phones. When the customers walked out of the store, their phones lit up with text messages offering them special deals, such as cash back or a percentage off their next purchase. Nearly 20 percent of the customers re-targeted this way came back within two weeks to use the discount codes they were sent on their phones to make additional purchases.

Reebok ran a campaign in which soccer fans could download pictures of their favorite players' jerseys and then send them to their friends via e-mail or SMS. This Gift a Jersey program led to Reebok vastly expanding its network of interested customers as well as a 14.6 percent increase in traffic to stores selling the real jerseys.

When Volkswagen experimented with the launch of their redesigned GTI, it was determined not to spend a single cent on TV, print, or the Internet. Instead, Volkswagen licensed a driving game designed specifically to be played on the iPhone, and put its new GTI in it, with all the performance and handling characteristics of the real car. More than 2 million people downloaded the game, and the six best players won a free souped-up GTI. And in the ultimate measure of success, Volkswagen reported that the marketing cost per car sold dropped by 97 percent.

PlayStation ran a mobile ad campaign for their Resistance 2 game. Out of 170,000 SMS messages sent, PlayStation got 27,000 people to click through and watch the video — about a 16 percent response rate.

For more great examples of successful mobile ad campaigns, check out Mobile Marketing Association’s Web site at http://mmaglobal.com/resources/case-studies. You might even find some inspiration for the kind of mobile ad campaign that could work for you.

Creating Banner Ads for Mobile Sites

Every new medium is influenced by what came before it. The first movies were basically plays on film; directors plunked their cameras on tripods in front of a stages and called “Action!” Decades passed before anyone picked up a camera and moved it around or did any of the trick photography people
now take for granted. When television came along, Hollywood figured it was just like radio — only with pictures. So directors took radio actors and stuck them in front of cameras, finding out in the process what the phrase “has a face for radio” means.

Banner ads came about through just such a process; early Web publishers took ads destined for newspaper or magazine pages, and then published them on Web pages (albeit with some enhancements such as simple animations that asked users to click to “Punch the Monkey”). The first impulse for mobile advertising was to take those existing banner advertisements from the Internet, shrink them, and stick them on the mobile Web. Although this may not be the most innovative approach, at this stage of development, it may be good enough (as long as the ads don’t include the Flash animations, which are common to the desktop Web but won’t work on many mobile devices). Of course, as mobile advertising evolves, banner ads will have to evolve and change with it.

All kinds of considerations come into play when displaying banner ads on a mobile phone. These include

- **Screen resolution**: Most often expressed as *screen width*, screen resolution refers to how many pixels wide the screen on the phone handset is.
- **File size**: Particularly crucial in mobile advertising because phones typically don’t have the random access memory (RAM) and hard drive storage that computers do. Larger file sizes are risky on the mobile platform, because uncertain wireless connections can cause significant load time delays.
- **Phone processor speed**: Just like in computers, the speed here is constantly improving, which means that most phones can render and display video.
- **Software/operating system on the phone**: These include Opera Mini, Symbian, Windows Mobile, Android, iPhone OS, Moblin, and more every day. If you’re designing an application instead of a Web site, you will need to create a different version for each operating system.
- **Functionality**: Clicking an ad on a mobile device can activate a script that causes your phone to make a call, launch an application, or go to a browser page.

At first glance, the technical challenges seem daunting: Handsets in the U.S. market have 31 screen widths coupled with different color depths.

The Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) has a chart that shows the recommended sizes in pixels for banner ads as well as the size of the graphic file. If you create a banner ad, you need to know and abide by these specifications.
Table 10-1 outlines what you find in the chart. The universal specification refers to basic banner ads that should display on most devices, while the supplemental specification is for banner ads that involve animation and that may have to be individually tailored to devices using content adaptation (see Chapter 6 for more on designing for different devices). The MMA is producing updated charts for the new wave of higher-resolution mobile device displays hitting the market; we have used the specifications for the 4:1 banner ads. A 4:1 aspect ratio refers to the relationship between the height and width of the ad, so that the ad is 4 times as wide as it is tall. Another common aspect ratio is 6:1; banner ads in this aspect ratio are therefore much wider than they are tall. You can download a PDF explaining these concepts in more depth at http://mmaglobal.com/mobileadvertising.pdf. You can see examples of the relative sizes and types of banner ads in Figure 10-1.

Table 10-1 Mobile Web Banner Ad Units in 4:1 Aspect Ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banner Ad Type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Universal Unit</th>
<th>Supplemental Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra Large banner (for phones with large screens, such as the iPhone or Droid)</td>
<td>300 x 75 pixels</td>
<td>GIF, PNG, and JPEG for still image</td>
<td>Animated GIF for animation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 5 kB file size</td>
<td>Less than 7.5 kB file size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large banner</td>
<td>216 x 54 pixels</td>
<td>GIF, PNG, and JPEG for still image</td>
<td>Animated GIF for animation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 3 kB file size</td>
<td>Less than 4.5 kB file size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium banner</td>
<td>168 x 42 pixels</td>
<td>GIF, PNG, and JPEG for still image</td>
<td>Animated GIF for animation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 2 kB file size</td>
<td>Less than 3 kB file size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banner Ad Type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Universal Unit</th>
<th>Supplemental Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small banner</td>
<td>120 x 30 pixels</td>
<td>GIF, PNG, and JPEG for still image</td>
<td>Animated GIF for animation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 1 kB file size</td>
<td>Less than 1.5 kB file size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text tagline (usually a hyperlink, used as an ad on low-end feature phones)</td>
<td>Up to 24 characters for Extra Large</td>
<td>Up to 18 characters for Large</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Up to 12 characters for Medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Up to 10 characters for Small</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The newest thing in mobile banner ads is the Adhesion product from Crisp Wireless. Adhesion is a banner ad that follows the user while he scrolls down the page — only unlike the other tagalong banners, this one disappears during the scrolling action and reappears only when the user comes to rest again. Adhesion is generating a lot of excitement in the mobile advertising world because one of the big problems with mobile banners is that the screen space is so limited that advertisers’ messages appear onscreen only for a few seconds before the users move past them.

Reaching Out with Text Messaging (SMS)

Most advertisers use SMS as a way to contact their (potential) customers to alert them to a special event, offer, or opportunity. A lot of merchants see SMS alerts as a great way to maintain customer loyalty. Few see SMS alerts as a way to bring in new customers because the messages go out to users who have opted-in already to hear about the products, rather than to people who are unaware that the merchant even exists. Here are some ways that you can use SMS ads to drum up new business:

✔ Promo ads: These are short marketing messages, with no special links or functions included. For example:

  Special discount this week. Mention DigitalFamily.com and get an extra 50% off all training.

✔ Site links: Text messages that include a link that, when clicked, causes the user’s phone browser to open and navigate to the advertiser’s Web site.
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- **Ad downloads**: These links download an ad to the phone. This download can be an audio file (usually a song), a photo, a video, or even a branded video game.

- **Appended ads**: These ads appear after some other kind of content. Think of them as the mobile equivalent of sponsorship, such as Packers 31–Vikings 10. These sports score alerts sponsored by DigitalFamily.com. Click here to get a 25% discount on all jerseys.

- **Voice call ads**: These ads use click-to-call functionality to deliver a prerecorded message. These are useful in situations when you want the impact of multimedia ads, but the data transmission network isn’t reliable. You can either set the user’s phone to make a call, or you can use a service that makes the calls (particularly useful in situations when incoming calls are free, and users don’t use all their minutes). An example could be Click here to get a call back from Big Dave about tomorrow’s surf report on Malibu Beach.

**WARNING!**

Most carriers charge mobile users for the text messages they send and receive. If you indiscriminately blast people with SMS, they may get charged money to see your ads. This can lead to very angry ex-customers, not to mention litigation from the FCC or cellphone carrier networks that have set up strict policies governing how cellphone users may be contacted.

You **must** get permission from your customers to send them SMS alerts. Usually this is done by having them text you an activation code from their cellphone or having them fill out a form that clearly expresses to them that they agree to receive text messages on their cellphones. An activation code is usually included in other marketing materials; common places such codes appear include posters outside concerts or sporting events, on soft-drink packages, in radio spots, at the end of TV ads, or on the back side of clothing tags. Typically, the message says something like “Text [a six-digit code] to [the advertiser’s number] to receive news and special offers.”

### Finding an SMS campaign provider

SMS campaigns are much simpler to deal with than CSC (common short code) campaigns. Companies, such as the following, have lots of information on their Web sites about what you need to do if you want to run a large-scale SMS messaging campaign:

- **Clickatell**: [www.clickatell.com](http://www.clickatell.com) Clickatell claims to be the first online SMS gateway; that means that they were the first to allow users to send SMS messages to mobile devices from desktop computers. They say they can send SMS messages to devices in more than 220 countries and territories around the world. They also sell short codes in six countries, including the United States.
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✓ **txtwire:** [www.txtwire.com](http://www.txtwire.com) Originally created specifically to take advantage of mobile marketing, txtwire has branched out to also provide emergency alert services for schools and local government. They are not as large as some of the other companies here, and they seem to be more open to working with small businesses.

✓ **TxtImpact:** [www.smsgatewaypro.com](http://www.smsgatewaypro.com) This diversified company offers SMS applications to let people vote, enter contests, play trivia games, and much more. They also sell shared CSCs (ones that run only while your marketing campaign is running) as well as dedicated CSCs that would belong only to you.

✓ **iLoop Mobile:** [www.iloopmobile.com](http://www.iloopmobile.com) They have slick templates for SMS marketing campaigns and aim their product offerings at large advertising agencies. While they are not an SMS gateway, they do work with bulk SMS providers and bundle the technical services with their professional consulting work in a way that may be attractive to people who just want a one-stop solution.

If you want to shop around, search for **SMS gateway**; new companies spring up daily.

Most reputable companies charge 5 cents or less per text message sent. But be aware that the rates these companies charge for advertising campaigns can vary wildly; some want as much as 50 cents per customer for each text message they send. Make sure you understand what you’re signing up for before you start the campaign or you can wind up with a much more expensive bill than you expect.

If you want to get your feet wet, social media company Brightkite ([http://brightkite.com](http://brightkite.com)) just rolled out a free service that you can use to send bulk SMS messages to as many as 25 people at a time. Brightkite was originally conceived of as a kind of location-based Twitter; that is, a place where people could quickly and easily upload where they were and what they were doing. Then, their friends could track them and see whether they were nearby for a serendipitous meet-up. Like many other social networking sites, Brightkite expanded its range of functions to include sending mass text messages and to allow the message receivers to message each other (and you). This may be enough for a small business to stay in touch with its most loyal customers.

As an added bonus, the Brightkite Group Text service allows you to use Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr to share the messages with friends — which may help your loyal customers and fans reach out to their friends. Although Brightkite imposes a 25-person limit on the number of people you can send an SMS message to at any one time, you can always have multiple groups. If your business scales up to the point that you send hundreds of text message ads, make the jump to a dedicated bulk SMS gateway anyway. You can also use Brightkite’s iPhone or Android app to send these bulk SMS messages; these apps have their own sets of instructions to lead you through the process.
Launching a free SMS advertising campaign

To set up a free SMS text-messaging advertising service and send your first message, follow these steps:

1. **Open your browser and navigate to www.brightkite.com.**
   
   The Brightkite home page opens, as shown in Figure 10-2. This is where you log in to send SMS messages or to check whether any of your customers responded to the messages that you sent.
   
   If you already use Brightkite, skip to Step 6 and log in the way you always do. Otherwise, continue to Step 2 to create an account.

2. **Click the Group Text tab.**

   The Log In page opens.

3. **Click the Sign Up link, and on the page that appears, fill in your e-mail address, username, and password, and then type a security question answer.**

   For your username, use the name of your business, or if you promote your own services, use your name. Don’t get too funky with your choice — you don’t want to turn off your customers.

   The security question makes sure that automated bots don’t take over the service by creating thousands of spam accounts.
4. Click the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy links.
   Yes, reading these are tedious, but it’s good to know what you’re getting into, so make an effort.

5. Click the Sign Up button.

6. On the Brightkite home page, click the Log In button and enter your username and password.
   Your home screen appears with posts from users near you.

7. Click the Group Text tab again.
   The screen welcoming you to Group Text opens, with a short explanation of the features.

8. Click the Start Conversation button.
   A box opens on your screen with fields for you to fill out to send the text messages.

9. Type the phone numbers for the people that you want to send messages to.
   Press the Tab key to enter multiple phone numbers. And note that you enter the phone numbers without parentheses, commas, dashes, or periods. See Figure 10-3 for an example of how the text input field for the Group Text function looks when you are typing the phone numbers of your contacts into the fields.

10. Type the short (fewer than 160 characters) message and click the Send button.
    Congratulations! You just sent your first mass text message. You can also type the names of friends on Brightkite, if they have integrated Brightkite with their mobile phones. You can type in their names rather than having to remember their phone numbers if you have added them as friends on Brightkite. Because Brightkite is integrated with Facebook, if you have a Facebook page for your business, you can use that to contact your customers (if they have a cellphone associated with their Facebook account). You can also use your Facebook account to send out an SMS message to that person, rather than having to remember or know their mobile phone number.

Another way to build up your list of friends is to set Brightkite to show posts from people in a specified region. You can choose to find people who are anywhere from within 60 miles to 20 yards of your location. Take the time to fill out your profile so that people who friend you on the service learn about your location and what your business is about.
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The first time you send a mass text message with Brightkite, test this process on your phone and on the phones of some close friends to make sure that it works the way you expected.

When your customers receive the message, they can respond to you with a message of their own. Their messages are also sent to the other people on your SMS list, and you can monitor what they say about you or your business.

You can also geo-tag (include GPS data in your messages so that your location will show up on a mapping program like MapQuest or Google Maps) your messages to alert people to where you are, or send along photos for everyone to look at.

Connecting with Customers via Short Codes

To run an advertising campaign with CSC requires a lot of coordination; all the various carrier networks have to be notified and paid to allow the text messages sent to a number to go to the same place. Then the users have to be told that they need to send a text, to either opt-in to receive more content or to enter a contest.
To run a CSC ad campaign (such as “Text Free Pizza to JOESPIZZA to get a free Chicago deep-dish pizza delivered to your house”), you have to contract with a CSC reseller, who has contracts with all the major carrier networks so that your code works with all the phones in your area. These kinds of campaigns cost upward of $2,000 to set up and anywhere from $500 to $1,400 a month to maintain. They’re that expensive because they require a lot of coordination to run across an entire country. In the list of SMS campaign providers shown earlier in this chapter, we included a couple of companies that also offer CSCs.

**Offering Links and More with QR Codes**

QR codes (or 2D barcodes) can appear on newspaper pages, signs, buses, business cards, or any object on which you can print a decent resolution image. These examples illustrate just a few ways these codes are used:

- In San Francisco, Scanbuy partnered with Citysearch to produce QR codes that were placed in the windows of 580 restaurants. Customers with the ScanLife software on their phones can point their phone cameras at the code in the window. As soon as the software recognizes the code, the phone displays a Citysearch review and information about the food and drinks available.

- Not to be outdone, Antenna Audio put QR codes at tourist attractions in San Francisco. Users can point their phone cameras at the codes and are treated to an audio tour of the site and an explanation of its history.

- Newspapers, such as the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, run QR codes alongside concert reviews or sports stories. Readers can point their phone cameras at the code, and then their phones open a page where the reader can buy and download songs the reviewed band played, or browse through jerseys of teams that played in the game.

- Another very successful use of QR codes was done by the magazine *Get Married*. This magazine uses the Microsoft Tag engine, which makes it possible to create QR codes in color, rather than the black-and-white codes used in most QR codes. Another advantage is that with Microsoft Tags, you can turn almost any picture into a QR code, making the codes far more visually appealing. *Get Married* now includes Microsoft Tag QR Codes in nearly every ad in the print and online editions.

With the Microsoft Tag, anyone can create QR codes for mobile devices for free, which makes them an increasingly popular addition to everything from business cards to bumper stickers. For people to read your tags, they need a phone with an Internet connection and a camera, as well as the Tag Reader
application installed on their phone. On the iPhone, after you install the Tag Reader app, when you point the phone’s camera at any QR code, the phone buzzes in your hand, launches the Web browser, and takes you to the related content. Tag Reader already works with most smartphones and some feature phones. Find the most up-to-date details about Tag support at http://tag.microsoft.com/resources/mobile-support.aspx.

You can create colorful QR codes for free on the Microsoft Tag site, and you can even customize them with your own photos in the background. To get started:


   The Microsoft Tag home page opens. As you can see in Figure 10-4, Microsoft is making a concerted effort to reach out to the hip, urban market that is the most connected with mobile technology.

2. **Click the Sign In link in the upper-right corner.**

   Microsoft Tag requires that you sign up with a Windows Live account. Although you can use this account to access other Microsoft products, you don’t have to. If you already have a Windows Live ID (which you have if you’ve ever used Hotmail, Windows Live Messenger, or Xbox LIVE), you can use that to sign in. If you don’t have one, you can create an account for free.

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**Figure 10-4:**

The Microsoft Tag home page.
To create a Windows Live account, navigate to https://login.live.com/ and follow the instructions there. If you sign in on the Windows Live page, Microsoft will place a cookie (a snippet of software code that is temporarily stored on your computer’s hard drive, depending on whether or not you have your browser’s security settings set to accept cookies) onto your computer that will keep you signed in to all Microsoft sites with that Windows Live ID. That means that when you navigate back to the Microsoft Tag page, you will remain signed in with your Windows Live ID (as long as you are doing it during the same browsing session that you were in when you created the Windows Live ID or during the same session that you were using when you signed in to Windows Live using your Windows Live ID and you haven’t deleted your cookies). If you already have a Windows Live account, all you will have to do is sign in on the Microsoft Tag site, using the Sign In button and your existing Windows Live ID.

After you click the Sign In button next to your username, enter your password, and click the Sign In button again, the Manage Tags page opens.

3. **Click the Create a Tag button.**

The Tag Manager page opens.

4. **Type the title in the Tag Title text box.**

Start with something simple, such as **Test Tag**. When you run your own QR advertising programs, be more descriptive so that you can keep track of which QR codes correspond to what content.

5. **Choose what kind of QR code you want to create from the Tag Type drop-down list:**

   - **URL**: This is just a link to whatever Web site you want your users’ phones to navigate to.

   - **Free Text**: You can have a secret message appear on the phone’s screen; if you want, you can even protect that message with a secret password. This can be useful if you want to run a game, such as a scavenger hunt with clues.

   - **vCard**: This is the universal format for contact information that the user can then put into his electronic address book. Many people print these types of codes on their business cards in lieu of the increasingly diverse and complicated ways people have invented to contact each other.

   - **Dialer**: This is just a code that causes the user’s phone to wake up and dial the number you specify.

For this example, we create a code that drives users to a Web site, so as you can see in Figure 10-5, we chose www.slightlyusedcats.com.
6. Enter a brief description of the tag in the Tag Notes text box.
   This reminds you what the tag does.

7. Click the calendar next to the date to specify a different start date than the one shown.
   This is available if you want the code to be posted somewhere but to not deliver its content payload until a certain date (such as a code, printed on concert posters to let fans buy tickets, that you want to coordinate with the date and time the tickets go on sale).

8. (Optional) Choose an end date for the code.
   You can either leave the code open-ended — the code always works — by selecting the No End Date radio button, or you can limit the time the code works, such as when the code is for a coupon or a special phone message, by selecting the End By radio button and then choosing a date from the calendar.

9. Enter the URL that you want the users’ phones to navigate to in the URL text box.
   This can be the home page of your site or some special content on your site that you want the users to see, such as the menu for your restaurant or the map to your special super-secret party location.

10. Click the Save button.
    The Manage Tags page opens, showing you all the tags you have created.
11. **Under the Render heading, click the tag image to get an image file of the QR code you just created.**

You can generate an image of the tag as a PDF, WMF, JPEG, PNG, GIF, or TIFF file, depending on your needs. You can also choose to have just the code or an image with brief instructions on how to use it, as shown in Figure 10-6, along with the URL of the Web site where users can download the app that reads these codes to their smartphones.

That’s it — congratulations! You just created your very own customized code.

To check how people respond to your code, log in via the Microsoft Tag home page and click the Reports tab. You see a summary of how many people have clicked your tag along with tracking and demographic information.

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**Handing Out Coupons via the Mobile Web**

When customers use a printed coupon, you can only gather very limited information about them, such as what general zip code you distributed the coupon to (assuming your customers didn’t share their coupons with someone from across town).

In contrast, when you use mobile coupons, you can track exactly who you sent that coupon to, how long it took them to redeem it, what kind of phone it was sent to, and all kinds of other demographic information that can help you make your marketing and sales efforts more efficient.
The capability of the mobile Web to deliver a coupon to the user exactly when and where it will do the most good creates an immediate and personalized call-to-action that results in instant gratification. Imagine reaching out to customers with discounts and special offers to tempt them while they walk past your place of business.

Research done by Michael Hanley at Ball State University shows two-thirds of college students (one of the most hard to reach and eagerly pursued demographics) will change their behaviors if they have coupon incentives. The top-three coupons they’re most eager to use include at least one real surprise:

- Sit-down restaurants (because although college students may be broke, they’re still hungry and like to impress their dates once in a while)
- Movies (again for dates or entertainment)
- Dry cleaning (because sometimes Mom just isn’t available)

**Scanning mobile coupons**

There is, however, a major snag with mobile coupons: Because the coupon barcode appears on a phone’s LCD screen, many older laser barcode readers can’t process the information. Target recently spent tens of millions of dollars to replace all the scanners at their cash registers around the country for just this reason.

One way around this is to use other means to scan coupons. The mobile coupon companies are rolling out various small, point-of-sale terminals that can be used for coupons or for setting up toll-free numbers for merchants to call to verify and track coupons.

For example, Xtra Mobile Coupons ([www.xtracoupons.com](http://www.xtracoupons.com)) ran a test campaign with Outback Steakhouse. In this campaign, Xtra provided the restaurants with a small terminal (about the size of an iPhone) that allows the server to read an eight-digit code on the customer’s mobile phone screen and then punch that code into the coupon terminal to add the discount to the customer’s bill. Outback is delighted with the program because it can map and track the zip codes that the customers are from and what times of day they come into the restaurant. Based on this information, Outback re-targets customers with incentives to come back. The technology has also helped Outback avoid the type of coupon fraud that bedeviled the Subway sandwich chain a few years ago.
Sharing coupons with mobile technology

The next wave of mobile coupons is likely to be driven by the growing inclusion of GPS functionality in mobile devices. Already, startups such as mobiQpons and Yowza!! show coupons based on the user’s proximity to stores. Yowza!! even allows users to share coupons with their friends through social networking; thus, tying their coupons to the most popular use of the mobile Web today — updating Facebook and Twitter.

Creating free mobile coupons

You can try a free mobile coupon service to see whether it gets any traction and whether your customers like it. The following steps explain how to take advantage of the new technology platform created by MixMobi. MixMobi allows you to try its mobile coupon service for 14 days (and 5,000 page views). To continue after that costs $19.95 per month for the most basic plan. Follow these steps:

   The MixMobi home page (see Figure 10-7) opens.
2. Click the Free Trial tab.
   The sign-up page opens.
3. Fill in the name of your company and your e-mail address, and then choose your time zone.

4. Pick a username and password, and then click the Create Account button.

   The Account Dashboard page opens. Here you can manage your coupon campaigns. By clicking on the tabs, you can access a list of all the coupon campaigns you have running, schedule when coupons will be sent and when they will expire, track the redemption rates for your coupons, and, of course, pay for upgraded services on an account page.

5. Click around the various pages to familiarize yourself with some of the features that will be available to you and then click the New Offer button in the upper-right corner of the page.

6. Click on the radio button next to “a template.”

   The other choices are to create a coupon from an existing offer or a blank offer. Once you have created a few coupons, you can choose from your existing offers, but if you’re starting out, you obviously don’t have any to choose from yet. The blank offer option is a real sparse, stripped-down layout that you can play with later, once you get the hang of using the more user-friendly templates that MixMobi has provided.

7. Choose the layout of your mobile coupon from the Offer Template drop-down list or the gallery of templates below it.

   You can mix and match pictures, text, logos, and message headers, and choose from a variety of layouts (see Figure 10-7 for a sampling of how many headers you can choose from). For now, just choose a simple image and code.

8. Type the name of the coupon and a brief description of what it’s for in the Name and Description text boxes, respectively.

   As the page says, the description you type (or not) here is just for your internal use and will not be seen by your customers. It’s just a handy way for you to be able to tell at a glance what the coupon is for.

9. Choose the dates that the coupon is valid.

   The default is to start today and run for a week. You can even choose the exact times the coupon is valid, which can come in handy when you want to have coupons cascade during a day — that is, to give 50 percent off to the people who show up first, 20 percent to the ones who are there an hour before closing, and 10 percent to the people who show up at the last minute.

10. On the drop-down menu, choose which campaign this coupon is for, or click the New Campaign link next to the drop-down menu to create a new campaign.
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The first time you create a coupon, the default is “Your First Campaign.” After you have created your first coupons, you can get more ambitious and click New Campaign to start creating categories to organize your efforts.

11. Type tags relevant to what you create the coupon for.

   Tags help search engines find and categorize stuff on the Web. For example, if you sell a cat in a hat, you could use tags like Cat, Hat, Apparel, Cute, Feline, and so on.

12. Select the check box next to “list builder” if you want to add a field to your coupon where customers can send you their e-mail address or phone number.

   Choosing this feature for your coupons will enable you to start building a mailing list of your best customers, or at least people who have responded to your special offers. When one of your customers registers, an e-mail will be sent to the e-mail address you used to open your MixMobi account.

13. Next to Page Views Allowed, enter the maximum number of page views that you want to allow users of your mobile coupon to do. Leave this field blank if you do not want to limit the number of page views, although MixMobi says that their limit is 500,000 page views for your entire account.

   This field is only crucial if you are running a large-scale mobile coupon campaign where you anticipate that hundreds of thousands of people are going to be responding to your offer, or if you have a lot of rich media (such as a video that takes up many megabytes of space) on the page that you are directing your users to.

14. Click the Continue button.

   The Edit Offer page opens to allow you to further customize your coupon. Here you can replace the text and images in the template with your own. The default for the images is a JPEG that’s optimized for the Web and 320 x 305 pixels. If you have a picture of one of your products, make sure that when you resize it to use in this coupon, you use the Save for Web function in your image editor. For more about optimizing images for mobile, see Chapter 8 and Appendix B.

15. Click on the drop-down menu under Offer Elements to find options that you can use to design your coupon, as shown in Figure 10-8.

   You can choose to add design elements such as images, headlines, and descriptive text. Choose the category from the drop-down list and fill in the fields for that category. You can include any or all of the options. Each has its own fields for you to fill out.
16. Click on the green arrows to the left of the elements that you have added to your coupon, and drag them up or down in the list to change the order they appear on your coupon.

17. Click the Save button to see a preview of how your coupon will look.

The updated coupon will load into the right side of the page, reflecting the changes and updates you have made.

18. If you are completely satisfied with the way the coupon looks, click the Save and Close button to proceed to the Share page.

The Share page opens with links to the coupon you just created as well as buttons to send your coupon to friends, customers, and other contacts via Twitter or Facebook.

19. Click the Clipboard icon next to the link to the right of the words "Public URL to copy the link code for your mobile coupon."

If you run an SMS campaign (such as one created with Brightkite, discussed in the section “Launching a free SMS advertising campaign,” earlier in this chapter), you can paste the link code for your coupon into the Group Text page on Brightkite. That will allow you to send this URL to people via SMS messages; they can then click on the URL in the SMS message to open their browser and navigate to the mobile coupon that you just created. Taking the initiative for distributing the coupon is a simple way to “close the loop” on this campaign.

Test the link code first by sending it to your own phone by using the Private URL so that you don’t mess up your tracking statistics. After that, send the code to a few friends and see what they think about it.
Chapter 10: Mobile Marketing and Social Media

Sharing Offers via Image Recognition

Similar to QR codes, image recognition advertising allows the user to take a picture of any object, including a print advertisement, send that image to a publisher or advertiser, and, in return, get exclusive content (wallpaper, ringtones, coupons, and so on). *Men’s Health* and *Rolling Stone* were the first print publications to take advantage of this new product, which is attractive for publishers because it allows them to offer advertisers a chance to tie together their print and online ad campaigns in a seamless way.

This technology faces some initially daunting challenges. For instance, many cellphone cameras produce blurry, dim images, sending those images can be expensive or complicated, and the computing power required to process and recognize those photos is significant.

Among the companies making inroads with image recognition ads are:

- **GetFugu**: The mobile start-up company GetFugu recently launched its See It technology, which allows users to point their phone’s camera at any modern corporate logo or sign, take a picture, and then be directed to that brand’s Web site. The app also includes voice and GPS search functions.

  GetFugu claims that its technology has made the logo recognition process almost 90 percent accurate and that it can discern among such similar items as the Apple logo, the AT&T logo, and the Death Star from *Star Wars*.

- **Amazon**: Amazon tests its own image recognition engine and claims that if a user takes a picture of his dog, the phone responds by showing ads for dog food or flea medication.

- **Google Goggles**: This app runs only on the Android operating system, but it’s gotten a lot of press because it has a great “wow factor.” With Google Goggles you can point your phone’s camera at almost anything and get more information about it. Point the camera at a label on a wine bottle, and you’ll likely be directed to the winery or a wine distributor. Point your phone’s camera at a building or other landmark, and you get information on the architect, the history of the location, or other details. You can even take a picture of someone’s business card, and Goggles automatically enters that information into your contact database. This technology seems destined to become increasingly popular for all kinds of uses.
Advertising via the Power of Mobile Social Media

The number one use of the mobile Web is to participate in social media sites; after all, social media is all about communicating with your friends, and the one tried-and-true use of phones is to call friends, right? The statistics about how people use social media are enough to make advertisers perk up: Users spend about 2.7 hours a day on the mobile Web. Forty-five percent post comments on social networking sites, 43 percent connect with friends on social networking sites, 40 percent share content with others, and 38 percent share photos.

That’s a lot of time and attention, but advertising over social media is still an extremely tricky thing. Advertising conferences are full of woeful stories of social media campaigns gone wrong, such as when Facebook tried to roll out a Beacon service that served up ads that mined all the things people had done on the Web and then offered suggestions. A businessman got all kinds of suggestions for expensive jewelry and racy underwear based on his recent purchases. Was he happy to see these ads? His wife certainly wasn’t.

If you haven’t been running social media advertising campaigns, the best way to begin is to start using the medium that you’re going to be working in. People use social media — blogs, Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Foursquare, Brightkite, hi5, and dozens of others — as virtual water coolers or corner bars. Places to congregate and swap gossip, trade good-natured insults, flirt, plan outings, and generally commiserate. Using the traditional advertising techniques in this kind of milieu is like barging into someone’s intimate private party and pulling out a briefcase full of samples; it comes off as rude and intrusive.

The best use of social media that advertisers have found so far is to use it to reinforce relationships and empower their best customers to say nice things about them to all their friends. Marketers talk about engagement (although there is a lot of disagreement as to what an engaged customer actually means) as the goal of forward-thinking campaigns to get people engaged in the brand or product you’re marketing. The means to achieve this include SMS notifications, newsfeeds, integrated profiles, partner pages, surveys, competitions, games, widgets, and more. When you give your customers something that they like and then provide them with the means and encouragement to share it with all their friends, you can earn a lot of great buzz, but you also give up a lot of the power and control that come with more traditional forms of advertising.
When consumers get exclusive or early information, invitations to special events, promotions, or free stuff, they naturally feel like the advertiser has formed an intimate bond with them. And what do people like to do when they get something special? They like to brag to their friends. Make sharing information about your product easy for them to do, and you’re off to a good start with a social-media marketing campaign.

The quickest and easiest tool for adding Facebook features to your Web site is available via the Facebook developer’s page at http://developers.facebook.com/docs/guides/web. If you have some basic knowledge of HTML, (you find an introduction to the Hypertext Markup Language in Chapter 4) and you aren’t afraid of a few lines of code, you can download the files from Facebook and follow the instructions in the Readme.md file. Facebook Connect allows you to let your customers (who have experience with your product) click and post their enthusiastic recommendations to their Facebook pages. The service also lets users log into comment sections, forum boards, and other content using their Facebook profiles as their login identities, which saves them having to create new usernames and passwords.

Exploring Video and Other Rich Media Ads

With video on the mobile platform, the same forces that constrain other forms of advertising apply, only more so. So the dictum, “Never use four words when two will do,” translated to mobile means that the traditional 30-second TV spots that advertisers shrunk to 15-second pre-rolls for the Internet get cut down to 7 seconds on the mobile platform. Any more than that and users get frustrated, or the ad interferes with the content users wanted to get to in the first place.

Even for a seven-second video clip, the challenges of serving targeted video ads to the mobile platform are still daunting. The restrictions on banner ads seem quaint when considering the demands of serving video or animated content to a cellphone. Consider the following hurdles:

- A humble, low-resolution YouTube video can take up 3–5 MB (megabytes) of space. An iffy cellphone connection or a dropped call means the mobile user never sees the content or the ad.
- The phone has to have enough processor power to render the video, and enough storage space and RAM buffer to hold the data until it’s ready to stream.
- The carrier has to have a server backbone sufficient to deliver the files.
The tradeoff for the length of the ad is (at least in theory) a radical increase in effectiveness because the ad can be targeted to the user based on the time, location, browsing habits, and all the other data points available to a mobile advertiser. Marrying the mobile video ad with another content form has shown great results for companies, such as Mogreet and Vdopia (see Figure 10-9), as well as a recent interactive video product out of AdMob.

The AdMob Interactive Video Mobile Ad Unit product was bought by Google, a clear sign that Google sees a big future in the mobile advertising market. The considerable resources and expertise of Google mean that the AdMob ad product will probably get a wide market rollout. The technology allows users of iPhones and Droid phones to order products or get more information by simply tapping a button, a link, or even an image of a product on their mobile screens while a video is playing. It works like this: Imagine you’re watching a movie and see a character wearing a really cool pair of sunglasses; with the AdMob product, you can pause the video, tap on the sunglasses on the screen, and a window pops up asking whether you want to learn more or order the merchandise on the spot.

This very sophisticated technology is still not quite ready for prime time and it will be complicated to make it all work because the ad servers will have to be able to interpret in real time the actions of a user (which item in the video the user is clicking on, for example) and then connect to one or more databases containing both the description of the product and the user’s financial information to pay for it. Whether Google (or any other company) can make all these moving pieces work well together remains to be seen, but it seems promising.

The predictions are that mobile video will grow at the rate of 137 percent per year, and that it will comprise the single largest segment of global mobile data usage by 2013. Because advertising follows where the eyeballs are, most major ad agencies are feverishly working to prepare their creative directors and staff to take advantage of this shift.
Advertising via Apps and Immersive Environments

The runaway success of Apple’s iPhone App Store has been both a benefit and a nightmare for mobile advertising designers: It’s a benefit because the market awareness that Apple’s “There’s an App for that” saturation TV campaign has created with the public, along with the widely publicized stories of 14-year-old coders becoming overnight millionaires when their quirky apps hit the big time, has finally made people take mobile advertising seriously.

The downside is that the App Store has sparked a frenzied gold-rush type mentality on the part of marketers who, in their panicked rush to not feel left out, have demanded that developers build apps for their products — no matter how absurd the resulting app is. Entire sessions at mobile advertising conferences are devoted to topics like “To App or Not to App?” and “How to Talk Your Client Out of an App.” So before you rush toward apps as an advertising platform, make sure you’ve truly weighed the craze for apps against the drawbacks of investing time and resources into app development. Here are the key issues to consider:

- **The limited market reach of apps**: A truly well-designed mobile Web site can offer most of the functionalities that advertisers crave without having to custom-code an application — a process that then has to be repeated for each handset operating system. The iPhone, despite all the buzz, is still less than 5 percent of the market in the United States and far less than that worldwide. When you create an app for the iPhone, you freeze out the other 95 percent of the market. The same goes for apps that are designed for any of the other operating systems, such as Android, Symbian, BlackBerry, Palm, and so on. If you create an app, you need to create a different version for each operating system.

- **The competition among apps in the App Store**: Just about any human activity imaginable has had some bright coder try to produce an app to help do it better. But with more than 150,000 apps (and growing) in the App store, and many more on the way in the Android store, the idea of using an app to advertise your products is somewhat backward. Just to get people to become aware of the existence of your app, much less to download it and try it out, requires that you actually put money into advertising on other platforms. Thus, an app can become a net cost rather than a revenue-generator.

- **Ease of updates**: If you want to change an app, the user has to download and install updates for it. On a mobile site, however, you can simply update your mobile Web pages, and the user sees the new content the next time he visits your site.
Still, an app can do some things that provide advertisers with significant marketing opportunities. Notable successes include

- The Pizza Hut app allows users to register with their home address and login information and then build their own pizza using the touch-screen menus. People can add ingredients, choose the crust, and take advantage of special mobile coupons and discounts.
- Southwest Airlines lets you book and modify airline reservations, view flight status and flight schedules, and check your rapid rewards all from your iPhone.
- The E*Trade app allows investors to check stock prices, trends, and recent stories as well as place orders all from the same screen.

One emerging trend is that of stub apps — small applications that reside on the home screen of the mobile device and mainly open the device’s Web browser and navigate to the mobile Web site of the app designer. To some developers, these combine the best of both worlds; because they’re on the screen all the time, the mobile user is aware of it (the “out of sight, out of mind” paradigm is particularly powerful in the mobile world) and uses it more often. And because the content in the app resides on the mobile Web, it can be updated frequently, without requiring that the user download and install updates every time he wants to try something new and fresh.

Stub apps are also much cheaper to design and implement than full-fledged mobile apps, which start at about $10,000 and get more expensive from there.

The business of converting expectations: Interview with United Future CEO Scott Holmes

Mobile is an extension. Brands want to control their brand perception, and mobile is a part of that. When you talk about the scenarios that a consumer has with a brand’s touch points, where does mobile fit? Mobile typically fits in

- **Utility**, such as Alaska Airlines in which you can check in using your phone
- **Push-pull** to give users some opportunity to sign up for some kind of redemption and reward
- **Entertainment**, whether it be some kind of game play, social interaction (because that’s a form of entertainment), your Facebook account, or highlights of the Super Bowl

If you accept that these are the three main areas, United Future looks at the utility first. Mobile advertising has to be done in the form of a reward. If you can check in sooner or check pricing on a product from Best Buy when you’re in the store (versus making you go down the street or getting a quick validation on some type of local-based service or product), that has real utility and you’ll use it. Things are becoming more common as people get used to the utility...
of a mobile device and the speed and connectivity. Very quickly mobile broadband will be just as fast as Internet connectivity.

United Future designs the mobile Web site for Holland America Line, which was developed to increase information and decrease the amount of confusion. Holland America Line really put a depth of information there because when booking a cruise, people plan six months out. People who go on these cruises have to go through pages and pages of choices in advance, planning everything from being on the Veranda deck to the Lido deck and the 57 excursion choices.

Holland America was very fearful of having too good of an online experience because it didn’t want to disrupt its most important channel — travel agents. You never want to outsell your best salesmen. So United Future walked a very fine line between how much information to provide and how easy you could make a reservation or a conversion from researching a cruise to booking a cruise. United Future did such a good job that cruise bookings have gone up 191 percent. And most surprising of all, instead of resenting and fearing it, the travel agents use the site as a tool. They now use the site as a one-stop shop to be able to explain to their customers on the phone what the difference is between the Veranda and the Lido and to say, by the way, here’s your room. They have something to show the person in their office.

United Future is now building out the experience on the cruise. Now you can record your trip, not just with a video camera, but with your mobile device that’s with you all the time.

People forget, though, that consumers don’t adapt as well as companies would like them to. All this wonderful technology is out there, but how many people can take advantage of it? When does technology become a barrier? Companies have to make sure they aren’t overdoing it.

When people encounter something while they’re out of their home or office and they have their phones with them, eight times out of ten, they go to their calendar function and write it down. Isn’t that strange? They add it to their to-do list. Your phone is your organizer. Philosophically, people still use the phone as an organizer, even though you can do all these things with it. People still instinctively come back to that initial use — it’s what people are trained or programmed to do. A 13 year old doesn’t do that with his phone, but that’s a different story.

When Scott is in client conversations and strategic discussions, so many times people say, “We need a mobile app. We need an iPhone app.” They saw the ads on TV, and they’re in their heads. The first question Scott asks is “What is it that you’re looking to achieve when the consumer uses that app?” Anything you want them to achieve, you can typically do it online, and if your Web site was semantic in nature, they could probably just type in your Web site.

What Scott tries to envision these days is what happens when advertising really goes to the mobile device. What’s acceptable? United Future accepts banners on the Web page; it accepts pre-rolls and post-rolls in online video, but they’re a little frustrating. Will you accept that on a mobile device?

Scott may not be the only one who thinks this way, but we say no. As a mobile user, it’s going to cost you money for the data. So why sit through a pre-roll or a post-roll or anything? You want access to information right now; Scott’s patience for advertising is teeny.

People skip commercials because the commercials don’t mean anything to them. If a commercial meant something to you, maybe you’d watch it. If you’re watching TV, you’re relaxed and in a casual mode. If you’re online, you’re (continued)
in search mode. If you’re on mobile, you’re in a rush. What that means is that you don’t want to be annoyed with an ad unless it’s really, really relevant to you.

It’s all about finding your niche audience. Television has a place. You can get the word out and do a mass approach, a roadblock. If you have the money, someone can reach you.

But then the next step is paying attention to what happens next. Because ads are the business of converting expectations: It’s not a lead until somebody’s interested, and it’s not a sale until someone’s been enticed and understands enough about the product and probably researched three other places to come back and purchase it.

After you convert them, did you give them something to make them a loyalist and part of your brand community? Mobile is about loyalists.

That’s why mobile Web sites will become more and more important. After a customer decides to make a purchase, she’s going to be in the store handling the merchandise, and she’s going to do a last-second reality check, using her mobile phone.

Your mobile Web site has to validate that purchase.

The way you do that is to show them reviews and tell them that they’re making the right decision. Maybe there’s a service you can provide that provides more utility after the purchase is made — some added value.

The question then becomes how do people make this service on the mobile a loyalty service rather than an advertisement? Scott won’t push ads on the mobile device. When you can do so much more on an interactive device like mobile, why settle for replicating the old TV interruptive advertising model? It’s the equivalent of shovelware.