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## Column: Engagement-- Making the Most of Mobile

by Michael Koziol, March 2007 issue

They say that 2007 is the year for mobile marketing. I think *they* said the same thing about 2006 and some of *them* probably said it in 2005. But the idea of marketing to the more than 201.7 million U.S. consumers carrying mobile devices (Source: 2005 eMarketer) is so promising that marketers, agencies, media properties, and carriers are all ready to do it.

However, before we begin marketing to consumers through phones or other devices, we need to understand what mobile marketing means and what consumers want in terms of messages.

Don't get me wrong: I believe in the possibilities of mobile marketing and think that the buzz is fully warranted. However, I get nervous when mobile marketing is described as advertising. Last quarter, Sprint and Verizon announced their intent to place ads on mobile phones. Two carriers serving a more youthful demographic - Amp'd and Virgin Mobile - are bribing their cost-conscious audiences with lower bills if they watch ads. But mobile media bears virtually no resemblance to advertising through print, broadcast, or even the Internet.

Mobile devices are primarily communication utility devices, not entertainment applications or news sources.

The interface of a mobile device brings with it unique challenges: How do you build a brand or advertising message into a tiny space with already hard-to-read content?

Therefore, new rules of engagement need to be created to guide marketers. Here's my view of a few key guidelines that should be followed:

**Market at the point of need.** Consumers' information needs are situational, locational, and circumstantial - all of which can be planned. But plans often change. Preparing information in advance for all possible scenarios isn't practical.

By its very definition, mobility means "moving freely." Previously, freedom and information were mutually exclusive. Deep information - the type found in printed materials or the Internet - was not portable. Therefore, planning for information needs when individuals were mobile could only be based on assumption or expectation of needs.

The ideal model provides valuable and timely information at the *point of*



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*need.* Marketers and brands alike need to figure out where and how they can connect at a point of need and help people see and do things that they could not do on their own. Vindigo, Yahoo Go, and Google Maps Mobile are examples of services that help people consolidate, access, and transport information. There's no better marketing entry point for people on the go.

**Make the real world interactive.** Mobile devices live in the real world, playing a role in physical settings and situations. An important mobile marketing strategy is to help people use mobile devices to deepen real-world experiences. Camera phones as scanners or readers, GPS technologies, and pervasive gaming are three ways mobile devices help people make the real world interactive.

PaperClick (now called Qode) has an application that allows you to use a camera phone to read bar codes for comparison shopping or to get more information from a print ad or outdoor ad. There are other applications that read Semacodes and Shotcodes and can allow for deeper digital interaction with a physical ad or location.

More and more, location-based information is becoming a reality. We are working with Georgia Tech's mobile technology group to create new user interfaces for GPS-enabled mobile phones that can act as wayfinders.

Pervasive gaming will catch on with more mass audiences. There are groups of people in New York City who play a life-sized version of Pac-Man where they run around courses made of city streets and act out their characters' roles using GPS devices as their guides.

**Always ask permission.** If permission is required for e-mail, you definitely need to get it to engage someone via a mobile device. Remember that people only allow those with whom they have a close relationship entry. Be conscious, too, of the cost factor. Use of interactive applications or receipt of a marketing message could result in a cost to the consumer.

Maybe this is finally the year of mobile marketing. I hope it is. And I hope that people will approach it in a way that works for the consumers and the marketers.

***Michael Koziol is executive vice president- North America at nurun/ant farm interactive.***

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