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Book Review

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Mobile Marketing: Achieving Competitive Advantage Through Wireless Technology

Alex Michael and Ben Salter

Butterworths Heinemann, 2006; paperback; £19.99; 230pp
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Remember when those first mobiles arrived on our streets with a battery pack the size (and weight) of a small suitcase? Remember the first mobile you got? Remember your first fumbling attempts to send a text? The history of the mobile is always close at hand because, like the web, it is a social and technical shift fresh in everyone's memory, and still unfolding in the world's pockets around us. Mobiles have revolutionised communication, accelerated the linkages we share and offer the promise of delivering the Martine culture of the mobile web: 'any time, any place, anywhere'. But for many marketers, harnessing this into the corporate game plan proves elusive, and in times of rapid change it is easy to be lost in the present without the foggiest idea of where to head next.

**A neat digest of the
what, the how and the
why.....**

Enter Michael and Salter, and their rather neat digest that guides marketers through the here and now of mobile. It is a clear and simple reference text for how mobile marketing works and how brands are using it: how campaigns work, which technologies are in place and all with a reasonable dose of 'why'. As a snapshot of mobile marketing today, it is a useful guide for bringing any marketer up to speed, fast. Which is rather needed as mobile marketing leaps from being at the bottom of the 'to-do' list to right up near the top.

**.....of approaches to
mobile marketing.....**

Firms need to be thinking mobile, because the sector has grown into a solid delivery channel. For the born digital generation, the mobile is both a constant companion and a gateway to their social networks. As with the web, the speed of technology involvement can trigger accidental prejudices, because the way in which senior marketers use mobiles might be rather embryonic compared with how many of their customers are using it. Just think about your own personal experience: fast forward from those early texts to the more recent MMSs, maybe the first attempts to google up a pub quiz answer, or downloading maps, and maybe along the way toying with the Crazy-Frog ringtone (okay, maybe not). These are the spaces most marketers find it hard to wrestle with, and that is where figuring out the approaches to mobiles can be extremely helpful. Just as in the early days of the web, many

...whose tipping point is in sight

brands have become whipped up into a frenzy over mobile marketing, only to have their hopes dashed, and their budgets fail to deliver.

When any new digital channel starts to take off, there is a need for navigation. Mobiles may have been an indispensable tool for voice traffic for well over a decade, but it is only now that mobile marketing and advertising is seeing its tipping point in sight. Across the board, the digital industries have been exceptionally poor at delivering navigation — confusing marketing departments into paralysis, rather than gently nurturing their enthusiasm to explore — which is one of the reasons most firms still feel nervous when embarking on their own digital campaigns. For them, Michael and Salter's case studies are particularly useful for giving a sense of the visualisation, but I did finish it yearning to have a massive download of mobile content — straight to the PDA. However, writing any text about digital marketing is tough, because even if the principles stand the test of time, the case studies and the data simply cannot.

There is a useful download of numbers about the market's size and trajectory at the end. The chapter on spam, the role of the codes and consumer rights is all clearly packaged, and by unravelling spam and the darker side of mobiles they offer an explanation of the mechanics. Also in the appendix is an acronym guide that will sort out your ARUPs from your ARPAs (it is unwise to confuse the Advanced Research Project Agency with the Average Revenue Per User), and clarify lots more of the jargon the mobile sector is notorious for.

Beyond the simple models to current good practice and future trends

Exploring the delivery of content to mobiles will help many digital managers who are trying to figure out where different vendors sit and what they actually offer, while the chapter on mobile commerce provides a useful overview of the good, the bad and the process between. For strategic marketers, Michael and Salter position mobiles beyond the simplified models of couponing and SMS that many traditional marketers still see as the sum total of the channel, but they fall short of the unwarranted overclaim many mobile marketers have that mobiles can do everything in the marketing mix. Michael and Salter explore the marketing models for the industry today, but give a reasonable sense of what is coming in the near future. They look at the nature of brand building techniques and support this with evidence of campaigns live today.

A round-up of measurement

The chapter on marketing measurement manages to create a digest of what must have taken our industry thousands of man hours to debate and agree — reading the text reminded me of industry committee meetings over five years ago, where groups of us wrestled with the precise definitions of what constituted a valid advertising impression and count. Fast forward another five years and there will be whole books on measurement and budgeting alone, because as the sector accelerates the need will come to deliver roadmaps at every stage in the marketing plan. However, for today's digital marketer, mobile marketing presents a good round-up and a neat summary.

A solid text

The takeout? For navigating through the jargon and the business applications, this is a solid text accessible to anyone, but still satisfying the geek in many of us that is curious about how the engine room of mobile marketing works. As the devices shrink and their power swells, as the mobile web truly arrives and social networking goes mobile, the gateway that never leaves our hands should never be far from a marketer's mind. This book will show you how.

Danny Meadows-Klue, F IDM