

Why Apps will Jump-Start "Friend-of-Mine" Marketing

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You may know that over 1 million apps are downloadable on an iPhone. But did you know how businesses are counting on these apps to break the mold of traditional marketing? Just at the point where you may feel comfortable sporting your inbound marketing badge, you may want to research this new generation of Friend-of-Mine marketing. As explained further, smart marketers are finding clever ways to befriend consumers addicted to "self-help" apps while reinforcing their brand image in the process.

From "Top-of-Mind" to "Frame-of-Mind" to "Friend of-Mine"

Let's first rewind. For years, marketers counted on Top-of-Mind awareness to reach audiences. So after constantly hearing AFLAC!, AFLAC!, we would remember them if and when we become a prospect. This assumes a great deal of consistency, channel breadth and cash.

But along came search engines and social content marketing. This shifted "Top-of-Mind" to "Frame-of-Mind" awareness. The goal here is to align your problem solving content (e.g., webinars, eBooks, blogs, etc.) with targeted audiences precisely when and where they are in their buying cycle. This inbound marketing approach is less intrusive than Top-of-Mind and is based on the generous giving of helpful content.

Enter the "app" generation.

Big brands see the move toward mobile apps as a way to engage in Friend-of-Mine marketing. The concept works like this. Charmin's "Sit or Squat" app allows you to download a map of rated restrooms in your area.

Why would they do this? Hopefully, you will associate Charmin's brand with helpfulness while inviting them into your circle of friends. Okay, that may be a stretch. But imagine seeing only this brand name at the time of need.

The Geek Squad is often questioned why their self-help electronic repair videos don't jeopardize their own repairs. Instead, they find the typical overextended gadget fixer searching for a bail-out. Upon witnessing the Geek Squad's expertise, they make the call. This "Let me Help" form of marketing is not employed as a sales tactic but as a way for the Geek Squad to become a friend. But in the process of helping, they undoubtedly generate new demand.

A widely downloaded app for stain removals is sponsored by Clorox. Although much of their researched advice goes well beyond the scope of their offerings, they can actually stimulate new demand as users consider new possibilities for stain removal. Similarly, Ortho has an app that will help you identify and treat harmful weeds in real-time. Whose weed killer and fertilizer are you going to remember?

Friend-of-Mine Marketing Offers Entrepreneurial Advantages

Small businesses are also capitalizing on low cost app development to offset the high costs of top of mind advertising. Consider how Columbia Gear has an app to explain the various knots to tie when engaged in outdoor excursions. Rather than sporting ads for their outdoor clothing, they are banking on your befriending them at a time when you might consider their products.

So what cool apps do you think can qualify as an exemplary use of Friend-of-Mine marketing?

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