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The best mobile campaigns of 2011

By **Chris Wayman**

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It has been said many times that 2011 was the year of mobile. But was it really? By now, most of us have realized there is no such thing. To say that would mean the best is behind us, when that is far from the case. Don't think in terms of the year of mobile or even the decade of mobile. It's much bigger than that. Communication has been redefined. Mobile has fundamentally changed how we communicate every minute of the day in countless aspects of our personal and professional lives. The result is a sweeping cultural shift - on a global scale.

Reflecting on the most successful mobile marketing campaigns this year, the ones to admire aren't the ones you might think. Too many mobile campaigns are still about the fascination with a new shiny object. Sure, those were fun and intriguing for a brief moment in time. But, while interesting new technologies are inspiring, mobile is not just a flash in the pan.

The most notable campaigns serve as evidence that mobile is big -- that integrating mobile strategy across the entire marketing strategy will drive customer value. 2011 did mark a significant milestone in mobile marketing and not by chance. From one marketer to another, we need to recognize that successful mobile marketing programs take considerable effort, time, and even a reassessment of the value that a brand provides to the consumer.

Of the mobile programs we evaluated in all major consumer-facing industries, three stand out. These companies have established a meaningful brand-to-consumer engagement by delivering sustained, personalized value to the consumer. They are properly executing across the four pillars of mobile marketing by:

- Planning out mobile strategies
- Clearly identifying the target audience and how to engage the consumer by integrating mobile with the media mix
- Delivering not one but several mobile tactics that work in concert to provide a mobile presence
- Employing connected customer relationship marketing (CRM), which enables the marketer to segment, target, and develop valuable marketing insights.

It is important to remember that success is found using mobile not as a stand-alone media but as an integrated, multi-channel engagement vehicle. Let's look at the campaigns that best embody this premise.

It has only been a few years since Starbucks founder Howard Shultz had to step back into the business to turn the company around after several consecutive quarters of negative growth. The brand that put a coffee shop on nearly every corner seemed to have saturated the market. In fact, it turned out that Starbucks' best years were just around the corner.

What happened?

The answer is simple. Starbucks sharpened its focus by moving away from mass marketing to a one-to-one focus, putting the customer at the center of its marketing efforts. This thinking led to a mobile marketing strategy that is now an integral part of the overall marketing mix.

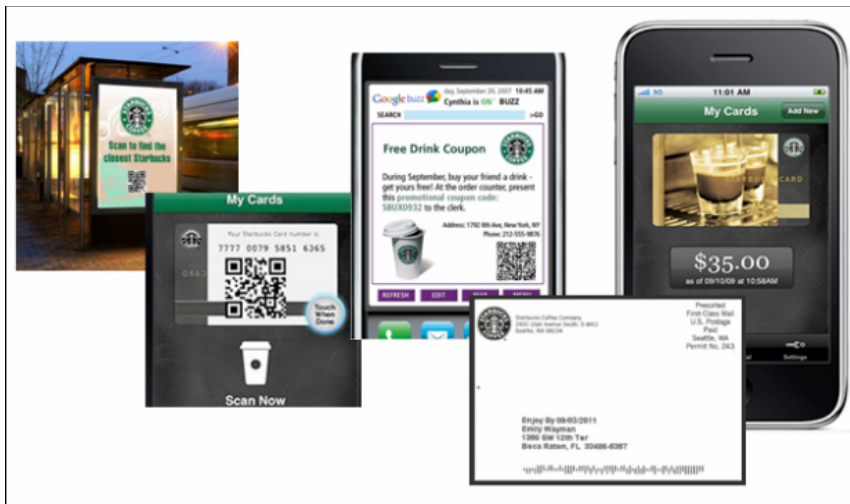
After working through years of testing and trials to get it right, Starbucks has developed a mobile marketing program that successfully blends loyalty, incentives, and commerce. What immediately comes to mind for many is the Starbucks store finder app that's been in the market for a few years now. In fact, the company's mobile marketing program is much more than an app or two, and it continues to delight consumers.

Starbucks has developed mobile programs that allow consumers to shop, search, and purchase through contactless payments. The significance of this mobile program is based on a fundamental understanding of consumer mobile habits and behaviors. But it goes further with the ability to personalize content. What's also very interesting is the media integration of web, app, text messaging, out-of-home, display, location-based services, in-store, and direct mail -- all leveraged as touchpoints to engage the consumer and drive people to the stores.

The mobile loyalty program is an extension of the CRM strategy -- it works with the loyalty card and is tied into commerce. Below is a high-level description of notable capabilities:

- The integrated 2D barcode capability turns an iPhone into a Starbucks card, allowing consumers to check balances and reload cards from the app.
- The app allows registration and includes a store locator and My Favs. It even puts nutritional information at the consumer's fingertips.
- The program launched in September in 16 test markets. In certain stores, consumers can tap and pay with their mobile device.





In a development that might be surprising to many, JCPenney is one of the most well-rounded and consistent mobile marketers within the retail space, continually integrating mobile into key media channels. From QR codes and text messaging (SMS), to social, mobile internet, and apps, JCPenney is paving the way for mobile in retail.

JCPenney has developed a clear mobile marketing strategy that appears to closely align with business goals and marketing objectives. The mobile program takes a 360-degree approach by integrating mobile with traditional and digital media. Social, in-store, direct mail, display, search, television, and mobile preference centers are incorporated within the internet and Facebook. Mobile programs are refined based on consumer adoption, while JCPenney continually tests and tries new mobile marketing tactics to enhance the consumer experience and establish a deeper relationship. This is accomplished through the use of:

- SMS coupons with some testing of multi-media messaging service (MMS) coupons
- Core tactics that include SMS, MMS, mobile web, apps, social, and scannable codes

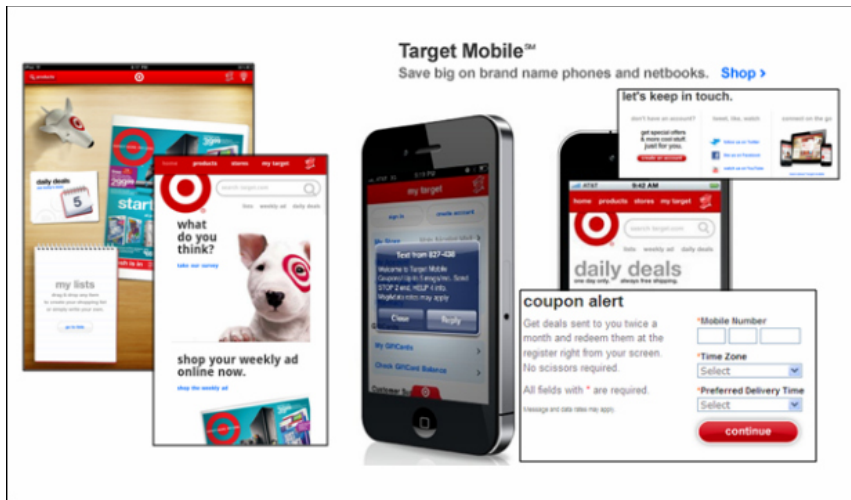


One of the best holiday mobile campaigns was from Target, which used a multi-channel mobile approach to meet consumers' needs. Target was the first big-box retailer to implement mobile barcode scanning in all its locations nationwide, setting the bar high for other retailers.

Going further, Target has recently delivered e-circulars to a target audience by providing a rich media ad format leveraging key functionality based on the device and location. What impresses us the most is that Target is taking a long-term approach by implementing mobile solutions well ahead of the market at scale, putting other retailers in catch-up mode. The mobile strategy includes text message marketing, 1-D and 2-D codes, consumer shopping apps for all devices, a mobile preference center, and a mobile site with the aim of making shopping at Target an easy and enjoyable experience.

Target continues to find success integrating mobile into its marketing strategy for several reasons:

- Mobile is part of its core value proposition.
- Target has a clear understanding of consumer needs and wants.
- The core program was developed as the consumers adapted.
- The foundational approach uses SMS and MMS to position coupons effectively.
- The program began with basic tactics and evolved to advanced tactics, such as mobile web, apps for all operating systems, location-based service offers, and the retailer's own proprietary QR and barcode program.
- Radio-frequency identification (RFID) and near-field communication (NFC) "tap and pay" services are being tested and coming soon.
- The mobile preference center on the site allows consumers to pick how they want to engage with Target.



Retailers like Starbucks, JCPenney, and Target are proving that the integration of mobile into the overall marketing strategy is a powerful and large-scale way to engage consumers and increase customer value. The commitment shared by these trailblazers is proof that mobile will continue to be a key business driver well into the future.

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