

# 12 Reasons to Rethink Mobile

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Mobile is at the forefront of a completely new way of thinking about marketing. But in order to understand its potential we need to look beyond the sms, the advertising and the text voting. We need to stop thinking of mobile as just a technology or a tool, but instead start concentrating on how people use it and the behaviour of those users; because people, not technology, drive innovation in communications.

**Mobile is not a media platform, it's a**

# communications device.

It is a means for people to exchange ideas and build relationships, quite the opposite of a one-directional content distribution system.

The traditional advertising and media landscape is, as suggested by Kevin Slavin, MD at Area/code, “a competition of stories”, where the editorial content of one media channel is forced to compete against the content of others. When a brand’s advertising enters the mix, three, four or five stories can compete for the same attention. This has led to an enormous focus on attention strategy, where a lot of the investment goes into getting noticed. However, for this attention to be worthwhile, it needs to be earned, not just grabbed.

As C2C and personal devices become more and more prominent for marketers, it’s important to take notice; as consumers we share information because it’s valuable, not simply because we are aware of it. This is the starting point from which we need to rethink mobile strategy. But to create shareable value, how should our strategies change and what should we be thinking about? We need a new mindset. The following list suggests twelve ways in which can rethink our approach for future mobile platforms. Hopefully one or more of them can ignite the imagination and new ideas.

## 1. Every day life

The PC is inaccessible in almost all situations where the brand is relevant. Technology is everywhere; it has become both ubiquitous and invisible and allows us to place our marketing initiatives within easy reach of the participants every hour of the waking day.

But companies often fail to maximise the opportunities available, using portable devices as tools to fill the available spaces inside the lives of consumers with senseless messaging.

What we really need to understand is that even though people are technologically available, it doesn’t mean they are behaviourally available. As marketing moves from the battle of

stories (in media) to everyday life, it turns from thinking about short-sighted attention strategies to long-term relationship-building.

We are moving away from attention-grabbing and towards value, from time being a cost, to time being an opportunity, from campaigns to relationships.

## 2. Design

The graphical user interface (GUI) has to be designed to invite people in, and facilitate the activity. The GUI has to be designed to invite people in and facilitate the activity.

Behavioral Psychologist Donald Norman has been quoted as saying: "Each time a new technology comes along, new designers make the same horrible mistakes as their predecessors. Technologists are not noted for learning the errors of the past. They look forward, not back, so they repeat the same problems over and over again."

When it comes to design for interactive platforms, it seems that the knowledge from existing design practices has been overlooked in favour of designing interfaces that ease the technological development budget, rather than accommodate the human mind.

This is certainly true when it comes to mobile, with devastating effects when it comes to engaging the mobile user. Algorithmic logic and robotic rationality seem to shape the reasoning behind the interfaces trying to engage people in services, content and marketing.

Luckily there are exceptions. Companies like TAT from Sweden have been exploring mobile design for years, and whilst not every project has been a commercial success, it seems that they are creating valuable insights that will lead to more dynamic, desirable and effective solutions. Design is for humans, not robots, and it should force technology to adapt and evolve, not the other way around.

## 3. Gaming

Never underestimate the power of gaming activities.

There is a common misconception in participatory culture that content equals participation. This is fundamentally wrong. Inviting people in to register and submit content, gives no reason for return visits, and no reason for active collaboration over time.

There are clear guidelines and suggestions as to what creates a liveable, breathable community. It has little to do with the gathering of content and more to do with the lubrication of the exchange of ideas through mechanics and dynamics.

One of the more effective ones is the application of gaming concepts. Not necessarily games themselves, but embedding mechanics or dynamics from gaming culture into the functionality of the application in order to enhance exploration and engagement.

This applies to our instinctive human curiosity, regarding understanding how things work, and our competitiveness, which is embedded deep within the human mind.

Adding a bit of the gaming mindset to an otherwise tedious task can both liven up your existing audiences, and also open up new models for participation and collaboration that dramatically increases engagement with the activity.

## **4. Ecosystem**

Mobile is always just one part of a larger interconnected ecosystem.

Digital is not a silo; it's an ecosystem of activities. It engages people on a range of platforms; depending on context and availability, and connects these interactions into one coherent, synchronous universe. It is only people building content for platforms who think about platforms. Customers think about experiences.

Mobile is a trigger, a lead generator, a remote, a sensor or a recording device. By using its capacity to be everywhere anytime; you can create relevance for the brand and value for

the participant. But mobile has clear limitations, both due to limited interaction abilities, limited bandwidth (at present), and limited processing strength.

As marketing campaigns now utilise numerous formats and activities, it is clear that one platform alone cannot do everything. Mobile has clear and definite abilities that can be rivalled by no other platform. Using mobile for these specific operations puts it to work doing what it does best.

## **5. Collaborative & social device**

It's a collaborative platform helping people connect and do stuff together.

It is interesting to note that before we put computers into telephones, they were purely collaborative devices – it's almost as if, by introducing technology, the telephone has tuned into an anti-social device.

People belong to networks, and enabling these groups through the exchange of ideas is one of the most important abilities of the digital/real world.

The mobile is essential to this, and has historically been a great socialising device, strengthening our connections with friends and family.

The mobile platform expands our present notion of the telephone into something more like a super-communications device, with strengths in all dimensions of communication. This means that whereas most applications today are inherently unsocial and database-driven, we are only at the start of a new learning curve; soon it will be the exception when applications or abilities remain individual.

## **6. Context**

Adding value to the situation where the product is valuable and the brand meaningful. The difference between traditional advertising and new marketing can be summarised in two

sentences:

- Traditional advertising is all about affecting our anticipation of an experience outside of the experience itself, in order to change or manipulate the evaluation of the experience after it has happened.
- New marketing is about adding value inside the experience itself.

Traditional advertising proves to be complex and costly. This is because our ability to reach out and talk to people is to a large extent limited to media, consumed in specific contexts, unrelated to the communicated products or brands. But technology has changed; it has become ubiquitous and invisible. This means that people and participants can access our marketing all the time. But why would they want to access it?

Context is about understanding the situation where the product is relevant. It is about understanding that product design is about identifying the features of a situation and adding value to it through a specific product. Service design is similar. You must understand the context surrounding the product and then design services that create additional value inside this context. By doing this you will create a more unique brand experience, rendering the product invaluable.

Digital services are now a part of the product development process as they can offer unique experiences and value to an otherwise ordinary product.

## 7. Objects

The mobile is just the thing stuff talks to.

Already we are seeing our everyday objects being upgraded to include some form of 'intelligence', able to communicate with us and enforcing its utility.

What we as marketers need to understand is that mobile strategy is not about being accessible through an application on the phone, it is increasingly about helping people

connect to stuff in the real world.

A quote by Kevin Slavin explains it: “Mobile is just a reference to an ecosystem that phones are a part of.”

In his talk at Webstock in 2009, Matt Jones, an expert in interaction design, referenced the future of smart objects: “now, hackers are building sensors, bots and software into everything around them, bottom up, fast, cheap and out of control. They are creating environments that react, adapt and respond to us – and perhaps, more importantly – each other.”

This is a reference to a future already here, where objects gain a level of intelligence, being connected and in a dialogue with their surroundings. And in this world mobile will be the interface, receiving their feedback, communicating with them and enabling us to control them.

## **8. Value chain**

Tracing participant action from A to Z.

A sale is the result of a chain of events happening in mostly random order from the time when a customer first shows interest in a product to its final purchase. Digital has a clear role in this process but often fails to prove its direct effect on sales due to black holes, non-digital, nonrecordable steps in the purchase process.

This is often the case in retail, where engagement online is parallel to increased awareness in-store, but where the opportunity to accurately or correctly measure the related activity is non-existent because of lack of measurability. Mobile can help remove these black holes so that, to a more certain degree, we can measure the direct effect of an online marketing activity to actual in-store purchasing. Mobile can be the platform connecting online to in-store.

## 9. Chess

People watch a tv programme once, maybe twice. But they can play chess a thousand times.

In the words of Kevin Slavin: “people watch a tv-programme once, maybe twice, but they can play chess a thousand times.” this quote has great implications for how we think about marketing. We need to stop asking ourselves which platform is best suited for display advertising, because there is no question: traditional media far out-trumps the ability of online and mobile. What we need to ask ourselves is this; is online and mobile a direct sales medium for our brand? What are the best abilities of the connected platforms?

It seems we have been blinded by our eagerness to measure direct sales, the ease of analytics engines spewing out statistics on click rates and unique visitors at extremely low costs.

But this has led us into a haze, where the simplicity of measuring our ability to transport people around the web has got in the way of us seeing the platform’s real potential: establishing lasting relationships with participants through fresh content, conversations, ideas and limitless value.

Online is a relationship platform, not a direct sales platform. It may be easy to measure, but is also guilty of creating the illusion that most products can be sold solely through a display ad.

As the New York Times suggests, more and more business models are focusing on subscriptions rather than single sales. As an ever increasing number of products are becoming inherently similar, the unique offering of one business has to come through unique experiences offered through its marketing, rather than the product alone. The question is: where can we grow our most important customers? This is the single most important future role of connected platforms.



## 10. Remote control

When the device interacts with the surroundings – on the participant's behalf.

A chip implant in the back of the neck or the retina might be some decades away but mobile is already offering a lot of the functionality presented in movies as a remote control to communicate and respond to future connected environments.

The mobile is a sensing device, connected to a database of knowledge through its access to the owner's social networks. By combining it with either geo-positioning or near field technology, it can control the surrounding environment in order to either accommodate disability or facilitate tailored real world services.

We are already familiar with conscious action related to direct payment or ticket registering via mobile. At the same time geo-apps on the iPhone or Android are tracking our every move and can react or have our surroundings react to us.

## 11. Geotility and spimes

Devices responsive to geolocation and time.

A spime is an abbreviation of the combination of space and time, referencing an object that combines temporal awareness with geographic location.

Even though the term was coined by author Bruce Sterling only some years ago, the idea of spimes have been on the lips of direct marketers since the dawn of mobile.

The dream has been to have an object 'attached' to a person, pushing coupons, freebies and other short-sighted intrusive incentives, as one is moving around in civic surroundings. Passing an IKEA sends you a sms of a free dinner if you come into the store, Jessops photo laboratory would offer you a free 20×15 print, and the coffee shop invites your

friends in for a free cup.

Luckily, these ideas became illegal even before they had the opportunity to intrude on people's lives. However, some retail chain applications do offer this as an option to their service today. But spimes have far greater reach, and are only restricted presently by our own actions. Let us look beyond coupons and augmented reality layered maps, and integrate the functionality into our services and ecosystem.

## 12. Sense/Record

The beauty of digital is its ability to record anything – as it is happening. The mobile becomes a huge sensing device. This brings with it two opportunities. The first is as a measuring device, giving us access to knowledge that we didn't have previously, the second is in regard to the quality of data we can acquire when technology obtains it without demanding any conscious participation on our behalf.

Traditionally, we tend to understand situations by asking people directly or indirectly about to experiences outside the situation itself. This is a rational approach to discovering secrets hidden away inside a rather complex and subconscious brain. Asking people to imagine why they did something, or how they experienced it, when they might be completely unaware of why and how they did it creates a huge source for error.

With the mobile set to record, the experience can be sampled as it is happening. Without the person acting as a filter between the action and the recording, the mobile will be able to record an unbiased record of the process providing unique insights which cannot be collected through interview or observation alone.

Future digital activities will have to be built with data collection integrated, as marketers will grow increasingly aware of the value these recordings will have when it comes to understanding participants and contexts.

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