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Is your brand ready for on-demand?



By Jodi Harris

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Learn how careful planning of the right marketing experiences can help your brand support your customers' need for content where, when, and how they want it.

It's becoming *de rigueur* in the marketing world for people to play a number of different roles when engaging with brand messages -- participant, customer, community member, content producer, just to name a few. With the expansion of consumer activity with and surrounding brands, it is no longer enough to just push messages out to them; marketers now need to invite consumers into the brand's world, and connect with them in ways that are more meaningful and valuable to the consumers' lives and daily activities.

Starting communications: Is your brand on-demand?

So how can marketers plan to provide on-demand value for consumers? The best way to start, said Allyson Hohman, experience distribution director at Critical Mass, is to analyze what channels will work for your brand, and to make sure you are engaging in the right conversations -- not just engaging in any conversation for the sake of having a presence there.

In a presentation at iMedia's Brand Summit in Colorado Springs, Hohman outlined seven characteristics of the on-demand brand, as well as her company's recommendations for becoming more aligned with these emerging marketing requirements:

1. **On-demand brands are insightful.** Hohman looked to the Webster's dictionary to define insightful: "The act or result of apprehending the inner nature of things or of seeing intuitively." In this context, marketers need to bring in qualitative data, demonstrating not only how well they can initiate consumer communication, but how well they can *listen* to consumers in the process.

For example, Critical Mass put together a private community of 150 people in the U.S. and asked them to give details on their own personal shopping processes. Armed with this insight, they were able to apply social monitoring tools to get a rounded picture of consumption patterns that they can share with clients.

2. **On-demand brands are remarkable.** Hohman asserted that brands need to resonate with the specific people they want to engage with,

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rather than sending out communications designed to fit anyone and everyone.

3. **On-demand brands are valuable.** Brands need to focus on outreach that makes an impact on consumers above and beyond their purchase of a particular product or service. Did your campaign effort make your consumers laugh? Were they entertained by it? Did it make their lives easier in some way? Was it tailored to a particular consumer need? "Customization is extremely valuable," Hohman said.
4. **On-demand brands are dynamic.** With analysts reporting that nearly 3 million pieces of content are posted online every day, brands need to be flexible and fluid. They can't send something out into the ether and expect that it will be the end-all/be-all forever. "Be prepared to present value that will keep audiences coming back," Hohman said.
5. **On-demand brands are portable.** Hohman explained that no matter how well planned out your campaigns are, if they aren't able to deliver the right information when and where a consumer needs it, they are worthless. Hohman gave an example of walking around in Chicago when she decided, at the last minute, that she wanted to see a live show. Despite being in-market and aware of a brand that could help her -- eTickets -- she was unable to access the eTicket site from her particular mobile device, and therefore, eTickets and its partners lost a potential sale.
6. **On-demand brands are conversational.** If consumers are using social media tools to talk about your brand, you need to be using those same tools to talk back. For example, on Twitter, a consumer named Roger tweeted about a horrible experience he had with American Airlines that had escalated his frustration to the point where he decided he would avoid flying American at all costs. Luckily, a Twitter user affiliated with the airline stepped into the conversation. Though "Dennis" couldn't provide the assistance that Roger needed, just acknowledging the problem provided some necessary goodwill that held him over until "Marty" tweeted that he could help Roger solve the problem.
7. **On-demand brands are everywhere they need to be.** Hohman recommended that when analyzing platforms to deliver messages on -- particularly in social media -- brands need to think strategically about each channel. Just because a medium is available, doesn't mean you have to be there. But you should know enough about that medium to know if it's a worthy place for you to be, as well as if it's the wrong place for you. Quoting an eMarketer study, Hohman remarked that consumers don't see the difference between marketing channels -- they just see the brand and then use the channel that's most useful to them.

Jodi Harris is senior editor at iMedia Connection.

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