

Engage customers with mobile apps that provide wanted services

With growing competition for mobile subscribers' attention, organisations need to offer their customers personalised and valuable services to keep them returning to their mobile apps. To get a return on investment on the mobile apps, companies need to think carefully about how they will build value into their applications to ensure they create traction.



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Tracy Surkont, head of value-added services at Cellfind, says, "Consumers are spending more and more time using mobile apps, but they tend to stick with a few that they know and that they feel add value to their lives. Brands need to work hard to win some of users' mobile minutes away from the social media apps that already claim much of their time."

Nielsen research in the US has found that the average smartphone app downloader has around 42 apps on his or her device. However, more than half only use between one and four apps on a daily basis. Stats from ComScore and Quartz, meanwhile, show that the average US consumer has all but stopped downloading new applications.

"This poses an interesting challenge for companies such as insurers and telecoms companies that want to use mobile apps to build stronger relationships with their customers. They need to look at using contextual data, such as weather and location, to offer personalised services that enrich customers' lives - and thereby the customer experience.

"This might mean thinking beyond their own basic offerings to find ways to add value for their customers. For example, most consumers do not have a real reason to interact with their car insurer every day.

"An app that allows them to take snaps of a car accident and file an accident report online will be useful only in unusual circumstances. Likewise, renewing or changing a policy on an app is not something people would do every day.

"However, there is no reason why the insurer should not add a location-based service into the app, highlighting points of

interest for the consumer. For example, it could highlight that a customer is driving into an area where there is a higher risk than usual of car theft and motor vehicle accidents. Alternatively, it could provide traffic advisories or point-of-interest data through the app. A mobile panic assist service or a friend and family finder that enables people to locate loved ones are other ideas.

“Retailers, meanwhile, could use push coupons or specials to their app when a customer is near a store or they could offer a shopping list, reminders or a barcode scanner on their mobile apps.

“Companies should be looking at how they can aggregate services that enhance their relationships with customers rather than simply trying to capture existing business transactions or website functionality on mobile devices. The goal is to have personalised interactions that create brand experiences that create new revenue streams and promote customer retention,” concludes Surkont.

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