Amazon AppStore

Ebook

Best Practices for Device Messaging

One of the most challenging tasks for today's app developers is to ensure that users are actively engaging with their app.

To encourage increased engagement, smart app developers today are increasingly relying on Push Notifications, which are proving to provide higher click-through and conversion rates.

No one can doubt the power of push. As you may already be aware, push notifications can be targeted to particular segments of your user base and personalized for specific app users – a major advantage when compared to SMS text messaging.

And similar to in-app messages, the best push notifications are part of a cohesive, personalized, omni-channel experience that delivers value with each message. Most importantly, personalized push messages gently nudge the customer toward an action that has already been defined.

Popular Push Notification 'Flavors'

Simply put, push notifications are messages sent to a user's mobile device. The message pops up even if a device is locked or if the user is using a different app.

In order to rise above the noise, savvy developers are realizing the importance of developing a strategy that's unique to push. As part of their approach, effective tactics must take location, time and user demographics into account.

It's important to understand the basics of push notifications before forging ahead with a strategy. So, how does it work? After a user downloads your app, they typically must provide explicit permission before you can send them notifications. Similar to capturing email addresses, you must have a solid value proposition to convince the majority of users to opt in.

Push notifications fall into two camps: transactional and engagement:

- **Transactional**. These messages provide information that users need to receive at a specific time. For instance, many travel apps leverage the power of transactional push to send messages about flight updates and gate changes to passengers. And financial services apps are increasingly using transactional notifications to deliver messages about bank account updates or fraudulent charge alerts.

- **Engagement**. These messages deliver information that drives user action. For example, perhaps there is a limited time sale on a particular product and you want customers to know the clock is ticking. Or, perhaps your network took an action on social media that is relevant to a user. You might also use engagement

push messaging to unveil a new level in a player's favorite mobile game. For instance, at the Amazon AppStore, developers can use our version of push – Amazon Device Messaging (AMD) – to send encrypted, real-time notifications to update users on breaking news or let them know that a new game task is available for them to complete. You can also use ADM for instant messaging functionality or social networking notifications within your app.

With Push, Most Customers Are 'Game'

According to recent reports by the Localytics Data Team**,** push notifications are said to boost app engagement by 88 percent.

When used properly, push notifications can be a great way to drive users to engage with your app on a more regular basis. The key is to find the right cadence so that messages are neither too frequent – or too few and far between.

More and more developers are realizing that well-planned push strategies can increase user retention by constantly looping players back into an app. They also can help decrease churn by bringing back users who've stopped using an app but haven't uninstalled it to date.

Essentially, the push notifications that do well tend to follow the same basic rules that govern appropriate social interactions in real life: a good push offers an incentive to be opened, respects the user and arrives at the right time to kindly "interrupt."

Best Practices: Crafting Notifications Your Users Actually Want

While user-centric push notifications are the building blocks of any great mobile marketing strategy, our team members at the Amazon AppStore understand that creating the "perfect" push may seem daunting at first.

Here are four best practices we recommend developers consider in order to master the basics of push notifications:

1. **Personalization Is Key**.

One common issue with push notifications is that they often lack the personalized experience that drives engagement. With this said, personalized content can be executed in a number of ways. It can factor in smaller details, like the receiver's first name. Or, it can dive deeper to incorporate an action item, language, lifecycle, real-time location, event parameter and much more.

The true value of personalized content lies in making a user feel engaged. It initiates a relevant, one-to-one conversation, rather than putting the user on the receiving end of an impersonal, generic blast.

Mobile marketing platform Leanplum recently released a data science report, "Personalize or Bust: The Impact on App Engagement," in which it analyzed 1.5 billion push notifications. The report's biggest finding: personalization increases open rates by

up to 800 percent. The study also reports that personalized, targeted messages enjoy four times the open rate of generic blasts.

Still confused? Let's say you segment users to find those who downloaded your app but have not actually created an account yet. By leveraging this data, you can send a push notification reminding them that "it's been a few days" since they last checked in.

Segmented messages – think user behavior, demographics and location – are an even more reliable way of targeting the right users, with many proving to have an average of a nine percent click-through rate within the first week, according to the Leanplum report.

One way to illustrate out point is to consider a popular video streaming service that uses push notifications to let its users know when their favorite shows are available. Instead of sending every single user a message every time a new show is released, the service recognizes the specific shows that each user regularly watches, and only sends a notification when a user's favorite show has new content. The end result: each of the streaming service's users receives a well-crafted, relevant, personalized message about the specific shows they watch.

Message personalization is vital to generating great content, but as the above example demonstrates, your push notification approach must factor in your specific users' behavior across platforms and devices, and in real time in order to be effective.

2. Optimal Time and Frequency Matters.

It's clear that users who enable push want to get the most out of the apps they use. In 2015, users who enabled push notifications launched an app nearly 15 times per month on average compared to a little over five times for those who did not, according to Localytics. That's an astounding three times more app launches from push notification-enabled users.

According to Tapjoy, open rates are highest on Mondays**.** Notifications sent early in the week have the highest open rates. Weekly frequency gets opened the most**. "**Like "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," app users don't like "too much or too little" in their notifications.

And what about the right hour? Tapjoy's recent report states, "just after lunch."

When it comes to timing, send push notifications during the moments when your users are most likely to engage. This concept draws from each user's past behavior to predict future engagement. By analyzing when an individual interacts with your app, you can then send messages when he or she is most likely to open it.

For instance, perhaps one person prefers to engage with your app in the morning hours. Another person may like to engage at night, after winding down from a long day. Your app should be able to send the same push notification to both those users during the respective times they specifically interact with your app, ensuring higher open rates.

3. Developing for cross-function across all platforms is key.

Today's customers want to receive push notifications from the cloud to any kind of device they run your app on – smartphone, tablet, TV. While the bulk of push notifications today are delivered on mobile phones and tablets, they are quickly expanding to reach all kinds of new internet connected devices – such as desktops, e-readers, entertainment systems, and even cars. In fact, the world will have more connected devices than people – 75 billion devices connected to the "Internet of things" by 2020.

A developer creating a mobile app for multiple platforms must become familiar with multiple different push notification engines and must set up a proper server environment for each.

For example, at the Amazon AppStore, we have our own solution to this challenge: the Simple Notification Service. As part of the service, developers can broadcast messages to multiple devices with a single publish request, essentially reaching "anyone, anywhere." Notifications can be sent to Apple, Google, Fire OS and Windows devices, as well as to Android devices in China with Baidu Cloud Push. Furthermore, you can also send push notifications to MacOS desktops and Voice over IP (VoIP) apps on iOS devices.

When it comes to cross-platform, the important thing to keep in mind is that the call-to-action may differ by device due to limitations imposed by the target hardware and/or software (i.e., no browser available on Fire TV).

4. Include A/B Testing In Your Process

How can developers make great push notifications even better? Test them and test them again. A|B testing – using AWS or a third-party service to generate data tailored to your own situation – is critical for a sophisticated strategy, as even the slightest word change can make a dramatic difference in a message's overall effectiveness.

In fact, by conducting their own experiments on a per-app basis, developers can fine-tune frequency, messaging, and CTA.

Furthermore, developers should include push notification scenarios as part of the testing process. That is, when push is indicated and what it might look like. For example, this might include feature updates, item left in a user's cart; "your turn" in async multi-player games, a new top score and more.

Conclusion

It's no secret that push notifications that add real value to your users' lives are becoming increasingly vital to improving your brand, and, in turn, your revenue and customer loyalty.

With this in mind, developers of apps and devices must "understand" who we are as individuals in order for their brands to remain relevant and impact growth. Most importantly, developers must realize that a user-centric, personalized approach is much more than a marketing trend. It's a must.

Getting started with push notifications is easy. To learn more about how Amazon AppStore team can help you improve your app's messaging engagement, contact us today.

SUGGESTED SIDE BAR:

Push notifications for Amazon devices

Amazon Device Messaging (ADM) lets you send push notifications from the cloud to Amazon devices that run your app. ADM helps you engage with your customers and creates new opportunities for monetization with your app or game.

With Amazon Device Messaging, you can send push notifications and messages to individual users on specific devices. You can update customers on game play, invite them to purchase a related product or send other messages that create a richer app experience.