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Digital Marketing's New Rock Star

**Marketers with a taste for life on the edge
will love the new generation of mobile phones.**

The **Yellow** Papers Series

If the nineties were about the personal computer and the current decade has been about web applications, then we're entering an era of portable digital devices.

Desktop and laptop computers have improved our lives by making us more productive and putting the world's information, entertainment and other services within our reach.

They've become such a effortless and ubiquitous feature of our lifestyle that they're even being used to aid interaction with the people around us.

What's next? Well, technologists are investing in more compact storage, low-power processors, better batteries and more mature connectivity. Advances such as these mean that the new generation of internet-capable devices won't be chained to the desk. Instead, they'll be in our pockets and all around us.

If the nineties were about the personal computer and the current decade has been about web applications, then we're entering an era of portable digital devices. The most noticeable step in this shift towards portable digital devices is the uptake of new generation of mobile phones, known as third-generation (3G) mobile phones. 3G is a big hit because 3G means new methods of communicating, putting new and more interesting twists on text, voice and video – in general it means the ability to send and receive more compelling content.

3G even changes the way that we think about the internet by unleashing it from the desktop and augmenting it with technologies like GPS

positioning, Quick Response tags and Bluetooth.

The explosive uptake of 3G mobile phones is also partly due to the fact that they are now a lower price point alternative to a typical PC and broadband package.

This is especially true in developing economies, where entrepreneurial internet services providers are bypassing highly regulated and state-owned, fixed-line networks by investing in mobile networks.

This influx of investment has resulted in innovation, and in some nations, mobile internet connections that are faster and cheaper than fixed line connections.



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Jit Hoong Ng, the managing director of Tribal DDB Shanghai, provided a usage scenario that highlights the affordability of internet-capable mobile phones – farmers in Chinese towns without broadband or electricity have been known to use the mobile internet to check the value of their crops and negotiate a fair price. The potential of the mobile internet as an entry-level internet connection can also be seen in the US, where 'The Million' project has provided mobile internet devices and internet access to underprivileged students in New York City's public school system, to help them with their studies.

Given their explosive uptake, it's no surprise that many markets are left lagging on 3G mobile phones' marketing potential. The era of 3G presents a huge opportunity for marketers to establish a one-on-one communication with their consumers.

Many marketing executives agree that mobile marketing is still underrepresented in terms of budget allocation, given the capability and the opportunity, and some are projecting astronomical mobile media growth – one predicting that worldwide marketing revenue for mobile phones would climb to as high as \$19.1 billion within five years.

Despite the promise, marketers would be wise to tread carefully. One of the biggest traps in digital marketing generally is that there's often a disparity between what's possible and what's desirable. The new 3G mobile phones give marketers the ability to establish a direct line of contact with consumers, but they need to respect consumer's personal space. It's a balancing act. And with that in mind, the purpose of this paper is to establish guidelines in three main areas to lead marketers safely and confidently into this new territory.

- **Content:** Mobile phone content should have a clear role within a wider campaign and it should be produced specifically for mobile phones, not repurposed from other channels.
- **Interaction:** Extensive prototyping and user studies are required to ensure mobile interaction is quick and easy, with minimal burden on the user.
- **Directness:** Mobile messages should be considered direct communication, personalized, with a strong call-to-action and reason for being

Optimizing Your Content

Content convergence is a buzzword used frequently in digital marketing today. The belief is that content will be syndicated, integrated, repurposed, and redistributed across an ever-increasing repertoire of digital devices. For example, Hollywood films are already sold in theatres, hotels, airplanes, DVDs, on pay TV, iTunes, and free TV – so naturally we expect that people will also want to buy and play videos on their mobile phones.

However, at this stage, people aren't buying 3G phones only for consuming content on the go. Markets and cultures will differ, but according to a study that was carried out over 24 focus groups in six countries and published in *The Journal of Interactive*

Marketing, the most important determinants of the adoption of 3G, in order of importance, are: perceived usefulness, ease of use, price, and speed of use.

If you want consumers to be receptive to your marketing via 3G mobile phones, then your marketing will need to meet these criteria. Cost is beyond our control, and ease of use and speed of use will be discussed later in the paper, but usefulness is a quality that we can (and should) aspire to when developing content for mobile phones.

The same study found that the vast majority of people use the mobile internet as a communications medium, and their focus is on the ease of communication as opposed

to enjoyment. This insight – that users view their mobile phones as a communications device and place value on usefulness — is in stark contrast with (and brings into question) a belief that many marketers still hold: the belief that the mobile internet will function like a broadcast medium.

Fig 1 Common mobile marketing terms

<p>3G: a third-generation mobile phone</p> <p>Bluetooth: a communications protocol that enables content to be sent directly (or 'casted') to nearby handhelds</p> <p>Chat Bots: A personalised computer-generated response within a conversational context, e.g. to an SMS</p> <p>Day Parting: serving ads at a time of day where they are most relevant</p> <p>Java: a programming language that can run on a wide range of devices</p> <p>MPEG: (pronounced "em-peg") a compression technology for voice and video that suits small-bandwidth networks or difficult links</p> <p>Mobisode: A trademarked term owned by Newscorp/FOX to describe mobile video programs</p>	<p>P2P: Peer to peer communication (between users)</p> <p>Pre-roll: the streaming of a 5-10 second advert before a mobile video clip</p> <p>QR: A two-dimensional barcode that can be read by a mobile phone's inbuilt camera. RFID tags can store a link to a web server or even a small amount of data, such as contact details</p> <p>RFID: a chip used to tag or 'numberplate' phones, credit cards, and other objects</p> <p>Vodcast: a video intended to be watched on a video-enabled iPod or iPhone</p> <p>Wi-Fi: communications protocol for wireless internet access</p>
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It would be a dangerous oversight for marketers to simply repurpose broadcast media content and expect favourable results. One would hope that the future holds something far more interesting than simply taking video content and reformatting it for mobile phones/devices. The film director David Lynch has famously warned that “you will be cheated if you try to experience a film via a mobile phone”. He has a point – mobile phones do have smaller screens and there’s a limit to the richness of experience that you can achieve – and he is right to question the entertainment value of video on mobile phones when there are more high-fidelity alternatives available. There’s also the issue that mobile phones are ubiquitous, and unlike a TV or cinema screen, they aren’t meant to command your full attention at all times.

Mobile marketing’s strength is that it enables unique, data-driven, personalized and customized adverts, and it has the ability to engage consumers in interaction – making it more akin to personal selling. For this reason, many of the concepts, principles and processes of direct marketing are highly relevant to marketing via mobile phones.

So can something that’s useful, easy and quick be creative enough to be memorable? Of course it can. Here are some standout examples of mobile marketing that have gained attention in the media and at Cannes – and this is by no means an exhaustive list:

- An athletics company in the US released a sports tool to organize street games via mobile devices
 - A life insurer in the UK accepted photos from mobile handsets and sent them back doctored to make the subjects look elderly
 - A chain of restaurants in Japan is testing the use of RFID-equipped handsets, with which customers can both choose and pay for their food using a mobile phone
 - A coffee franchiser in the US has launched an iPhone application that customers can use to both choose and pay for their orders
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Mastering Interaction

Now that we've established the fact that marketing via mobile phones needs to be useful, easy and quick, we'll provide more detail to support this style of communication by highlighting best practices in interaction design, and discussing what makes some interactions via 3G mobile phones quicker and easier than others.

As you know, 3G mobile phones are highly functional – they're designed to access the internet, and carry out tasks that were previously only carried out on desktop and laptop personal computers. Mobile phones can be used to access Facebook, Google Maps, MySpace, Yellow Pages, eBay, and thousands of other sites. They can also be used to manage email, calendars and files.

However, despite their shared functionality, mobile phones and personal computers are completely different appliances with crucial differences that are likely to trip up marketers who are new to the platform. Unlike PCs, which are used in a relatively controlled environment that is free of distractions, mobile phones are used hurriedly. Most often, mobile phone users are juggling another task – such as driving a car, or having a separate conversation. Time is of the essence in situations like these. This issue is compounded by the fact that their keyboards are tiny and they're rarely QWERTY, which makes typing on a mobile – in the colourful words of Aza Raskin, head of user experience at Mozilla Labs – “like trying to remove a contact lens with a cotton ball... not fun”.

Let's walk through two examples that illustrate the approach that should be applied to interaction design for 3G mobiles. The examples are over ten years old, focusing on PDA's, the precursor to today's 3G mobile phones, but it remains a clear illustration of the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful approach. The two examples, pictured below, are from the General Cap and the PalmPilot. General Cap was the operating system developed in 1995 for a Sony portable device and has since faded into obscurity. The PalmPilot was intended for a similar purpose and released at around the same time, in 1996.



Fig 2 Screen capture from General Cap

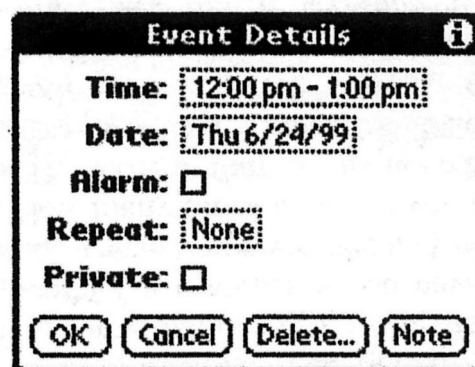


Fig 3 Screen capture from first-generation PalmPilot

While the PalmPilot's interface was very text-dependent, General Cap opted for a visual interface based on the point-and-click navigation style which was becoming popular at the time amongst desktop PCs. The visual point-and-click style of interaction has been proven to make PCs easier to use, so General Cap chose to carry this convention over to the handheld platform. This was their big mistake – the PDA platform is tightly constrained by limited screen space, less-powerful processors and different usage – and as a result, General Cap encountered a slew of usability problems. The issue was then compounded by the choices made by the designers. As you can see in the diagram above, General Cap's menu is presented as a series of disparate, unlabelled, unclear and ultimately frustrating icons.

My point here is not to suggest that visual point-and-click icons are not an appropriate interface for mobile devices. They are an important aid – and technological advances over the past 12 years have made visual interfaces feasible.

Instead, I'd like to draw your attention to the approaches taken by the two parties. All of these usability problems should have been picked up in testing. The lack of testing (or ineffective testing) on General Cap's part manifested as a slew of unchecked usability problems that ultimately effected the commercial success of the operating system. The team behind the PalmPilot, on the other hand, understood that handhelds weren't used like PCs and factored testing and prototyping into their production schedule, which helped them to design a user-friendly product. It was the combined effect of thousands of small but well-considered changes based on continuous testing, user insights and platform appropriate design that ultimately made the PalmPilot a market leader.

If you can recognize and kick the old habits that you've picked up after years of working with PCs, you'll be headed in the right direction. Success requires continual testing and a commitment to the needs of users. User studies are essential in order to establish your customers' digital habits. Appoint an information architect to conduct rigorous planning. Create detailed user flows, wireframes and wire flows. Then produce a prototype to help identify and address potential problems early. With measures such as these in place, you should find that the problems associated with the new platform are much more manageable.

How do you interrupt people without making them feel like they're being interrupted?

Leveraging the First Direct Mass Medium

Earlier we touched on the point that in digital marketing there's often a disparity between what's possible and what's desirable. Best practices in direct marketing would suggest that we send adverts that don't make our consumers feel like they're being interrupted.

This is an important issue because, as with any form of direct marketing, failure on the 3G mobile platform comes at a cost. Be warned that 3G mobile marketing has the potential to infuriate users leading to negative consumer perceptions and criticism. The terms 'Bluespam' or 'm-spam' could join the list of annoyances that includes endless junk mail, dinnertime telemarketers and the deluge of spam that chokes our email inboxes.

This is a problem. Marketing via 3G mobile phones is not like marketing via the web because users aren't chained to their desks and actively dedicating their attention to your product, nor is it like a broadcast channel where we can assume that people will be receptive to advertising in exchange for free entertainment.

How do you interrupt people without making them feel like they're being interrupted? There are simple things you can do, like offering a useful coupon. However, the ultimate solution might be to leverage behavioural targeting and triggers to reach a consumer at the very moment that they're making a purchase decision. 3G mobile marketing could be used to reach the people who are walking past your store deciding if they should go in; or standing at the grocery shelf choosing between your brand and an alternative. These behaviours and triggers can even form the basis of your message's creative reason for being.

This can all be achieved using Bluetooth and GPS technologies today, and soon we'll be able to piggyback on services like Facebook which (presumably) will add GPS functionality and package it for advertisers – but regardless of how it is implemented, the design of the mechanism at the heart of this campaign would need to be based on strong consumer insights, data capture and data handling strategies, and plans to translate this data into platform and context appropriate messages. You should also be cleansing your database of 'cold' leads at every opportunity.

There will be a handful of industries in which predictable behaviours and triggers might suggest that your brand is being considered, and in these cases mobile marketing will prove indispensable. Here are a few examples:

- Travel/Tourism: Promote segments such as airlines, hotels and auto rental to foot traffic in airports, intercity train stations, and ski fields.
- Automotive: Provide vehicle specifications and financing calculators to crowds at auto shows, in showrooms, and at motor-sports events.
- Hospitality: Restaurants, bars and coffee shops might offer a self-service and payment mechanism.
- Entertainment: Organizers might offer maps and show programs to crowds at sports and music events.
- Retail: Supermarkets might issue coupons and recipes that relate to merchandizing, or issue coupons outside of peak hours. While apparel and fashion retailers might target people who have visited the fitting room several times.

Let's take a closer look at that final retail point. Here's a typical retail application, a great example that I have seen set up in a busy shopping mall in Singapore, outside a grocery store. This approach is a perfect example of digital marketing interactivity occurring in the real world with real people. It does a great job of targeting parents – a time-poor segment who are difficult to motivate to respond to other forms of digital marketing – from the general foot-traffic and encouraging them to buy:

- A children's Pac-Man style game is projected onto the floor from above.
 - Parents and children wander over to the maze, which is marked out on the floor.
 - Children chase the ghosts that are projected onto the floor. The projector is linked to a camera that senses the location of the children in the maze.
 - Children run around the maze, playing the game.
 - As parents stand by and watch their children, an advertisement for a product relevant to young mothers is displayed on the ground next to the game.
 - Parents standing in the area around the game are sent a coupon for the product, via passive Bluetooth to their mobiles, for redemption in the adjacent store.
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What's needed is the vision to pull a suite of technologies together and interlink them to develop a mechanism to engage consumers in a context-appropriate manner.

Summing up

To me, 3G mobile marketing is like a rock star. It is worthy of all the attention we can give it because it's just that cool. We know that it's radically different from traditional forms of advertising, and that it's going to be trouble, but we love it anyway. And for those about to rock, we salute you... hopefully you will find the mandates outlined in this paper useful. In summary:

- Mobile phone content should be produced specifically for mobile phones – not repurposed from other channels.
- Content for the mobile phone should interlink with other media channels and have a clear role within the wider campaign.
- Messages should be considered direct communication and personalized with personal and contextual data whenever possible.
- Creatives need to be aware that each message requires a reason for being.
- Each message should be response-driven, with a strong call to action.
- Interaction needs to be quick and easy, with a minimal burden on the user.
- Behavioural triggers should be leveraged.
- Interaction designers need to carry out extensive prototyping and user studies.

What's needed is the vision to pull a suite of technologies together and interlink them to develop a mechanism to engage consumers in a context-appropriate manner. This can only be achieved through good planning and strategy, with partners who possess the necessary expertise and experience.

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