Managing Mobile Change In a Constantly Connected World

The Utility of Mobility

The collective power of mobile has forever changed us all. We behave much differently in today's constantly connected world, affecting the way we do business. Mobility has become increasingly important for how we engage, how we inform, and how we forge new opportunities. Despite these uncomfortable changes, as industry leaders, we must adapt or otherwise risk being left behind.

According to a 2013 research study on understanding the mobile consumer, Google found that,

> "*Smartphone penetration has risen to 56% of the population and these smartphone owners are becoming increasingly reliant on their devices. 67% access the Internet every day on their smartphone and most never leave home without it. Implication: Businesses that make mobile a central part of their strategy will benefit from the opportunity to engage the new constantly connected consumer.*" [1]
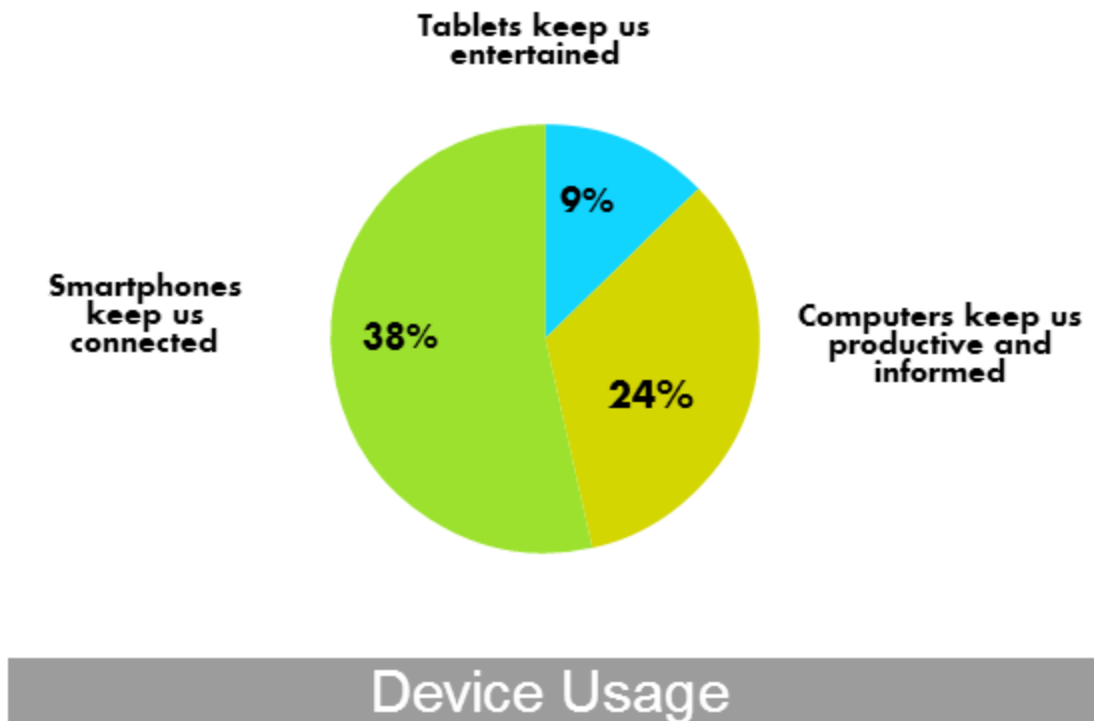
So there you have it, in plain English, from Google, one of the largest digital and mobile companies in the world. Mobile is everywhere, it's everything, and it's all the time. It has become an indispensable part of our daily lives, and it's time that we started embracing mobile as an opportunity to better understand, connect, and engage with our increasingly connected audiences.

We've witnessed the immersion of mobile in every other aspect of our lives, yet we are only just beginning to understand how it's taken shape in the meetings and events space.

Take the U.S. Travel Industry for example. In a recent report, they made some astounding predictions about the growth of the travel market as a result of increased mobile adoption. They state, "*Mobile travel bookings will more than triple over the next two years, to reach $39.5 million by 2015.* " [2] That is over one quarter of an entire industry expected to be taken over by mobile.

The Digital Divide

Because of mobile, there is already a new breed of meetings out there. Its expectation to create better meeting experiences have become a business imperative, and it's time we took a more strategic approach. Before we can develop an effective strategy around mobile, we need to first think about how and why the technologies are being used.
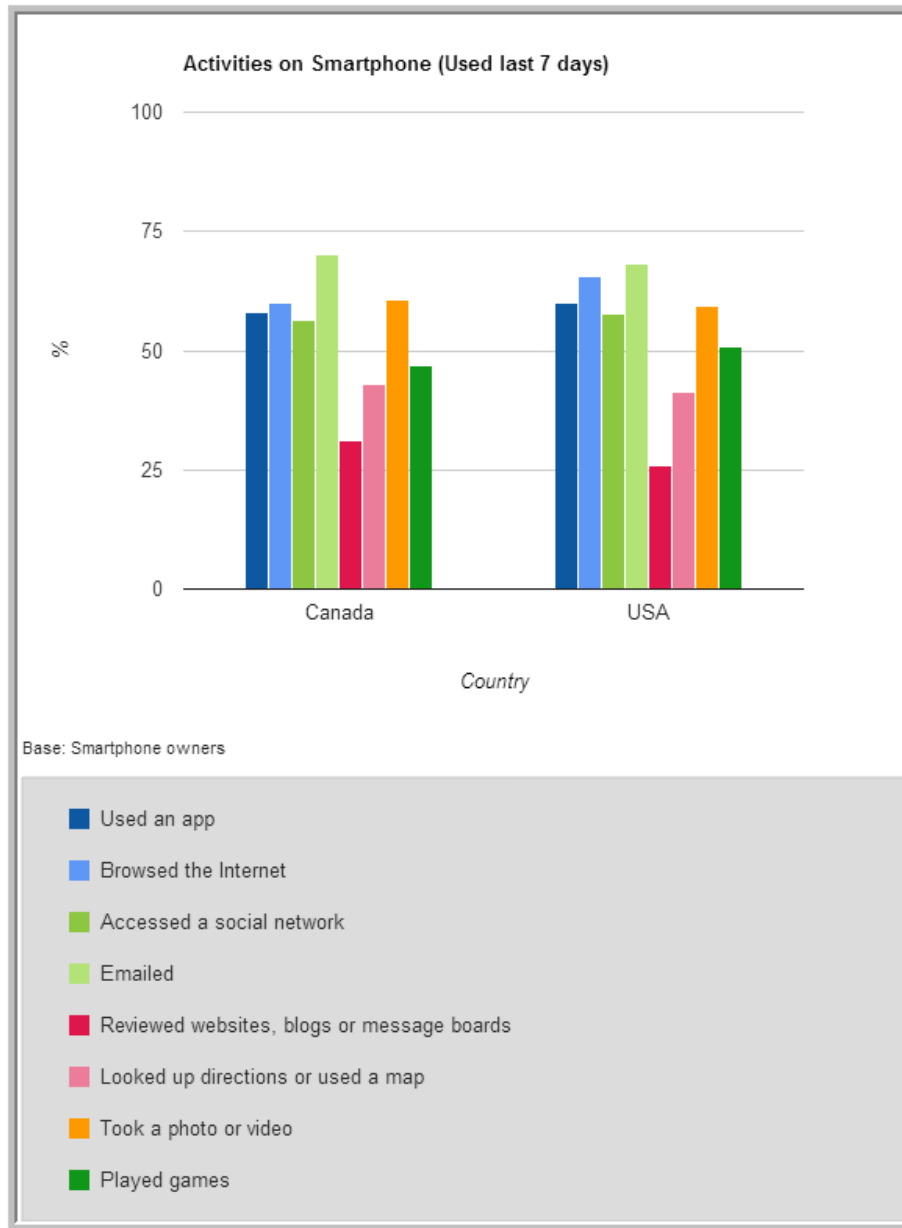
Tablets keep us entertained — 9%

Computers keep us productive and informed — 24%

Smartphones keep us connected — 38%

Device Usage

Consumed by media, our lives have become largely online and screen-based, moving between multiple devices seamlessly throughout the day. According to a 2012 study done by Google on the new multi-screen world,[3] we split up our time between at least four devices on any given day:

1. **Smartphone**
2. **Tablet**
3. **Computer**
4. **Television**

Devices allow us the ability to be constantly connected, entertained, and informed with the rest of the world's activities, without ever missing a moment. But it's not just about the device. What we do with that device depends on a number of factors, including what our goal is, what type of action we take (simple vs. complex), what is our physical location, what time of day it is, what day of the week it is, etc. Here are some key activities completed on smartphones:

Activities on Smartphone (Used last 7 days)

Base: Smartphone owners

Legend:
- Used an app
- Browsed the Internet
- Accessed a social network
- Emailed
- Reviewed websites, blogs or message boards
- Looked up directions or used a map
- Took a photo or video
- Played games

Source: Our Mobile Planet Tool - Google Think Insights

But, whether you're on the go or simply sitting at home, your mobile behaviors will change. Given this, the question to invest in mobile is no longer the case. It is now, "How will you invest in mobile?"

Achieving Mobile Success

Businesses now have even more ways to maximize their effectiveness across multiple devices and multiple channels. To start, Google offers five major components to an effective mobile strategy: [4]

1. Focus your value proposition so it meets true mobile-specific needs.

2. Create mobile-first, not desktop-lite, destinations.
3. Build mobile accountability into your organization.
4. Drive ROI (return on investment) and branding with mobile marketing.
5. Integrate mobile into multi-screen marketing.

Mobile is a way to build a bridge between your brand and your audience. Therefore, by adopting a "mobile-first" mentality, businesses can then devise strategies to drive tangible results.

Armed with the proper tools, you can create rich, personalized experiences that build deeper relationships with audiences both online and offline. Below, you will see a variety of mobile tactics aligned with the strategy components, mentioned above:

1. QR Codes
When customers scan your QR code with their smartphone, they can access information and other online content via a web page or landing page. QR codes are usually tied to specific metric, or measurable action that you would like to track. Common uses of QR codes may include:

- Display product information
- Coupons and special offers
- Contest entries or giveaways
- Surveys and video clips
- Promotional or informational videos
- Sending email messages
- Liking a Facebook page or follows on Twitter
- Checking in via foursquare or Google Places

QR codes have made it very easy for event managers to track specific actions related to their ROI, but they are quickly becoming obsolete.

Strategy: Create mobile-first, not desktop-lite destinations

2. Geo-targeting
Geo-targeting, or "location-based marketing", is a method used to deliver different content to users based on their geographical location. Two primary methods of geo-targeting are: [5]

1) Different content by choice - The user selects their location after being prompted by a site.

2) Automated content - Location services either from the website or the mobile device are used to determine the geo-location of the user such as Country, Region, State, and/or City.

This tactic can be used to streamline the search experience by incorporating location-specific information in addition to other search terms used.

Strategy: Focus your value proposition so it meets true, mobile-specific needs.

3. Mobile display ads

These work similarly to geo-targeting in that they help improve the search experience by delivering relevant content, but they also help business stay top of mind. In Google's 2013 research study on understanding consumer's mobile behaviors, they state,

"Mobile ads are noticed by 89% of smartphone users. Smartphones are also a critical component of traditional advertising as 56% have performed a search on their smartphone after seeing an offline ad. Implication: Making mobile ads a part of an integrated marketing strategy can drive greater consumer engagement." [1]

Strategy: Integrate mobile into multi-screened marketing.

4. Mobile Optimized Website

A mobile search is conducted primarily for speed and convenience. Therefore, when a customer visits your event website, you need to be there to meet them with a mobile-friendly experience.

"Mobile-friendly experiences typically feature very simplified navigation, quick-to-load images, and streamlined text. Many successful mobile sites reduce or eliminate the need for scrolling or typing, and may have large 'touch targets' for clicking that take into account the lack of precision on a touch screen."
- Jason Speros, Head of Global Mobile Sales & Strategy at Google [6]

Given this, the easier you make it for someone to access your website via a mobile device, the more inclined they will be to visit your site again, and again.

Strategy: Build mobile accountability into your organization.

5. Mobile Apps

According to MobileStatistics.com, in 2013, there were over ninety-eight million app downloads, between the Android Market and Apple's App Store alone. Surprisingly, that number will continue to grow.

Apps Are Everywhere
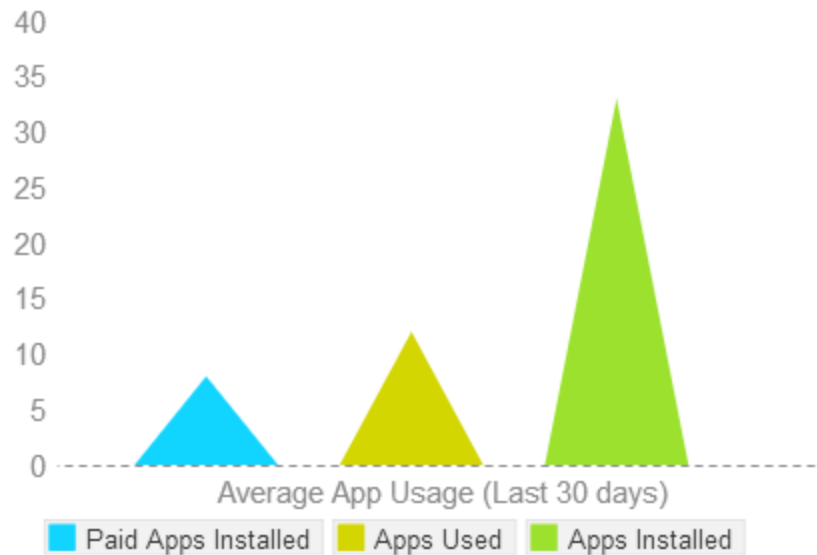
Mobile apps are everywhere and having them for an in-person event can create an experience all in it's own. We recently conducted a survey consisting primarily of senior-level meeting planners to find their top priorities in 2014 regarding event technology. An overwhelming number of responses indicated that event mobile apps will continue to be a prime focus in the upcoming year for meetings organizations.

Take TripIt for example, a leading mobile travel organizer from Concur Technologies. Their main goals were to drive ROI and to reach frequent travelers on multiple devices, which they were able to do with their mobile app.

"Promoting our app helped us to grow our business and reach more business travelers while they're on the road,"......."We're now able to redirect the dollars we've saved on app promotion to improving our app and providing a better trip-organizer service to our business travelers."*
—Rhonda Hanson, Senior Director of Search Marketing, Concur Technologies [7]

Strategy: Drive ROI (return on investment) and branding with mobile marketing.

Moving Forward with Mobile

Ever-increasing expectations have supplied the need for more mobile-based, more personal events. It is no longer an idea, but a significant reality. The tactics you use should flow out of your strategy, and the most obvious component when thinking about a mobile strategy is

creating experiences, which makes it easy for mobile attendees to interact with brands before, during, and after events. With the right features, you can shape a positive and memorable attendee experience, helping attendees maximize their time and helping you maximize your results. New trends and opportunities are being created by mobile everyday. Those who invest in people as well as mobile, invest in the future.

Resources

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