

Mobile Marketing's Quagmire

Jeremy Lockhorn, January 2010

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Someone once told me that "interactive TV has been a year away for 30 years." Mobile seems to be stuck in a similar quagmire -- driven largely by the fact that it's an incredibly complicated and fragmented space. Remember before the dot-com bust when mobile was "the next big thing"? Here we are almost nine years later and suddenly, as pointed out by Brian Morrissey at *Adweek*, in the wake of Google's \$750 million acquisition of AdMob, everyone is running around declaring 2009 "the year of mobile."

Brian's article does a great job of rounding up some of the key factors inhibiting growth in the mobile ad space, so I won't repeat that overview here. The industry undoubtedly has a lot of work to do, and a lot of hurdles to clear before we can really declare that mobile has arrived. But, while it may not be fair to say that this is the year of mobile, if you look more deeply at individual pieces of the mobile puzzle, you'll realize that some have already reached a level of maturity.

The reality is that mobile is difficult, at best, to navigate. It's kind of like the Internet; it's a flavor of digital marketing that offers many different mechanics and technologies to connect with your audience. In other words, "mobile" is so broad and varied that the "year of mobile" is almost meaningless. My colleague Paul Gelb puts it this way: "It's like saying 'the year of the TV'; or 'the year of DVD.'" All joking aside, maybe 2010 should be the year we stop trying to oversimplify mobile and recognize the channel for what it is: a robust platform with many different marketing opportunities. It's not a single arrow in the quiver of marketing weaponry. It's a specialized quiver with many of its own arrows. And to really use it well means understanding the ins and outs of fully leveraging each individual mechanic.

Mobile has implications for marketing strategy beyond advertising. It should be considered as part of CRM ([define](#)) and loyalty programs; potentially as a way to enhance product offerings or provide tools and utilities to your audience; and as a fantastic vehicle for promotions. Some of the specific mechanics you might leverage include things as varied as click-to-call, mobile display advertising, SMS promotions, mobile search, branded applications, Bluetooth, QR/2D bar codes, and many more.

It's a complex ecosystem, and that makes it dangerous to oversimplify it and think about mobile as a checkbox on the marketing plan, which is what "the year of mobile" implies. You simply can't properly leverage mobile as a marketing vehicle without understanding all the pieces of the puzzle. You must dig a level deeper and look at individual mobile mechanics, some of which have already matured; they've already had "their year." There's real insight there and it can be easier to uncover where the real opportunities lie.

Take SMS ([define](#)), for example. It is, perhaps, the most ubiquitous weapon in the mobile toolkit. You could make the argument that the year of SMS was 2002, when wildly popular *American Idol* taught mainstream U.S. how to text. Since then, it has exploded in terms of consumer usage, and marketing spend has grown rapidly as well. Spending on SMS-related programs is projected to finish 2009 at around \$940 million, according to *eMarketer*. To put that in perspective, *eMarketer* projects online video spending to hit \$1.05 billion this year. Given that you can't repurpose your TV spot into an SMS program, that roughly \$107 million difference isn't really all that much. Most major marketers are actively experimenting or making more significant investments in text-based marketing, and we've had more than one client demand that SMS be part of every campaign we do.

Similarly, take a look at the branded application space. I don't think even Apple knew how successful the app store would be, recently topping 100,000 applications available. Many brands have leapt into this space (see a great summary [here](#)), and there have been some notable success stories, including Kraft's iFood, VW's launch of the new 2010 GTI via a free version of Real Racing, and more. Nearly every conversation about mobile strategy with a client involves some mention of branded applications, indicating that at the very least, it's top of mind for senior marketing executives. So, maybe 2009 is the year of brand applications.

But what of mobile display? Even that requires a deeper look, as I [wrote](#) earlier this year. It's the same story with mobile search, QR/2D bar codes, and so on -- all complex pieces of the larger mobile marketing puzzle that have yet to really make their splash, at least in the U.S.

Mobile is a powerful and widely varied set of tools that can complement and enhance nearly any brand's marketing initiatives. But again, declaring "the year of mobile" oversimplifies things. It can be dangerous to jump in simply to tick the "mobile" checkbox, or potentially worse yet -- to isolate your thinking to only one of the many flavors of mobile marketing. The key is to carefully evaluate the ecosystem, and identify which arrows from the quiver are right for your brand.

About the Author



Jeremy is an emerging media expert at Razorfish where he is also a key leader of the agency's emerging media practice. The team functions as both a think-tank on next-generation media and an extension of current client teams and is focused on driving innovative marketing solutions for clients. As the marketing landscape continues to fragment and new channels emerge, Jeremy functions as a filter and consultant – helping clients and internal teams to understand, evaluate and roll out strategic pilot programs and analyze the results in an effort to fuel future efforts and broader campaigns. He helps teams take a core idea and extend it to new digital environments, building connections with target audiences in unexpected, yet efficient, ways. This approach goes beyond campaigns; it translates to powerful digital solutions that can transform businesses. While his expertise covers numerous emerging media technologies, his primary focus is on video across all platforms. Jeremy's efforts to research and assess the landscape ultimately feed global strategy development and uncover unique opportunities for innovative campaigns.

Jeremy is a 15-year advertising industry veteran, having spent time at offline and direct marketing agencies before joining Philadelphia-based digital agency startup i-FRONTIER in 1997 as its first employee. He teamed with founder Brad Aronson to grow the business and ultimately join forces with Razorfish. During his tenure at the agency, he has served many roles, but they all meet at the intersection of media, creative insights and technology.

He is a frequent speaker on emerging media, having presented at OMMA Video, Digital Hollywood, Streaming Media East and West, CES, Internet Retailer, the AAAA Media Conference and several others. Jeremy also writes a monthly column for onlinemagazine ClickZ (<http://clickz.com/showPage.html?page=3622705>) and regularly publishes whitepapers on a broad range of emerging media topics.

Jeremy holds a BSJ in Advertising Management from Ohio University's Scripps School of Journalism, and is currently based at agency headquarters in Seattle, WA.

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Razorfish is one of the largest interactive marketing and technology companies in the world. With a demonstrated commitment to innovation, Razorfish counsels its clients on how to leverage digital channels such as the Web, mobile devices, in-store technologies and other emerging media to engage people, build brand loyalty and provide excellent customer service. The company is increasingly advising marketers on Social Influence Marketing, its approach for employing social media and social influencers to achieve the marketing and business needs of an organization. Its award-winning client teams provide solutions through their strategic counsel, digital advertising and content creation, media buying, analytics, technology and user experience. Razorfish has offices in markets across the United States, and in Australia, China, France, Germany, Japan, Spain and the United Kingdom. Clients include Carnival Cruise Lines, MillerCoors, Levi Strauss & Co., McDonald's and Starwood Hotels. Visit www.razorfish.com for more information. Follow Razorfish on Twitter (@razorfish) and Facebook.

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