

Wi-Fi Marketing



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Seventy-eight percent of meeting and trade-show managers are looking for new ways to communicate with attendees; this is indicated in a research study by MC-2, as I mentioned in my last white paper. Event planners are not the only professionals seeking more and better ways to communicate. Faced with dwindling results from traditional advertising and marketing communications, consumer and business-to-business marketers are also looking for new ways to communicate with potential customers. Over the last three years, I have presented several techniques to add to your chest of tools for marketing communications. These include social media marketing, Internet marketing and mobile marketing. Now I would like to add one more: **Wi-Fi marketing**.

Wi-Fi has been around for a while and most new laptop computers are equipped for wireless networking. In almost any coffee shop you can see legions of students and business people glued to their laptop screens, tapping on the keyboard with one hand and drinking a \$4.00 cup of coffee with the other. They are in those shops and buying coffee because the Wi-Fi connections are generally free. While this is certainly a marketing opportunity for the coffee shops, it has been somewhat limited as an opportunity for consumer and business product and service companies. **That has now changed.**

A couple of years ago, Apple Computer introduced a game-changer to Wi-Fi marketing: **the iPhone**. Since then, numerous handheld devices offering Wi-Fi connections have been introduced and adopted by the public. According to *Business Week*, there are now more than 74 million Wi-Fi users in the USA. As predicted by ABI Research, the number of Wi-Fi-enabled mobile phones shipped per year, worldwide, will reach 141 million in 2009 and 520 million by 2014.

This means that a great number of people are carrying, in their pockets, devices that they use numerous times a day from wherever they happen to be to connect to the Internet. In addition, a majority of these people would prefer to make that connection via Wi-Fi. When Devicescape asked users whether they preferred to connect to the Internet through Wi-Fi or through cellular connections, 82% said Wi-Fi.

So, we know that the number of Wi-Fi users is high and growing rapidly; we know that people with mobile devices prefer to connect via Wi-Fi. We also know from the study by Devicescape that 84% of people surveyed want to have citywide access to Wi-Fi. This is a need that marketers can fill. By doing so they will not only generate goodwill with their consumers but also create solid marketing opportunities.



How Marketers Can Use Wi-Fi: A Few Ideas

Trade shows. Set up Wi-Fi hot spots within a booth. This will attract attendees, and they will see your information when they log in. The information you present can include new products, seminar schedules, news and so on. By asking for registration before log-in, you can build your prospect list.

You can also set up Wi-Fi hot spots in high-traffic areas outside trade-show buildings. This allows you to attract attendees and direct them to your booth. Again, when they log in you can present information and ask them to register.

Events. Setting up Wi-Fi hot spots at consumer events, concerts, golf tournaments, races and other popular events will attract people. When they log in to your Wi-Fi connection, they will receive your marketing message. Your information can include free offers, discounts or other promotional messages.

Retail. For restaurants, salons, cafes and other retail establishments where customers spend a long time, free Wi-Fi is a marketing tool in itself. To offer something that people want gives you an advantage. Since it also offers you a new opportunity to communicate with those customers, the effect is exponential.

Larger companies could sponsor free Wi-Fi in retail establishments creating goodwill with the establishment, and also benefit by connecting with consumers to offer information and promotions.

For instance, a salon that sells a popular line of hair-care products would make a great target for the manufacturer of the product. Customers in the salon and using the Wi-Fi connection would see reminders and promotional information that would drive additional sales for both the salon and the manufacturer.

Public spaces. You can sponsor Wi-Fi hot spots in high-traffic areas of a city or town. As people enter your hot spot and use your Wi-Fi connection, they receive your messages. These could be promotions, discounts or simple branding information. Using opt-in techniques, you can send emails or text messages as your registrants enter your hot-spot area.

For example, by sponsoring free Wi-Fi at dog parks in a city, a chain of pet stores would obtain a new way to connect with highly sought-after prospects.



Combining New Media Techniques for More Marketing Power

By combining social media with mobile and Wi-Fi marketing, you can increase the marketing effectiveness of all of these new media tools. You can collect phone numbers to use for sending text messages, direct people to your social-media site so they can sign up, obtain registrations that provide customers' information and email addresses, and cross-promote among these media.

With 141 million current users and 520 million people estimated to sport smart phones by 2014, it makes sense to start Wi-Fi marketing now. In this new consumer world, marketers must find ways to connect to be competitive.

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Special thanks go to my new Wi-Fi partner, C-Channel, for their help in writing this white paper. C-channel (www.c-channelatlanta.com/) is owned and operated by PreNet Media LLC (www.prenetmedia.com). PreNet Media's networks, which include C-Channel, provide businesses access to consumers with unlimited potential for personalized promotions, product introductions, data collection and one-on-one conversations.

C-Channel is currently operating in Atlanta with additional hubs planned for major cities throughout the USA.

If you have questions about Wi-Fi, contact Iricelis Patino at 404-661-7192 or iri@c-channelatlanta.com.

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