



HIGH-DEFINITION NEWS

On-the-fly Media Present New Opportunities: Reaching Out in Real Time

By Clark Crowdus

Parents of pre-teens who like Barbie dolls, brace yourselves: any day now, you're going to be asked for a Barbie cell phone. "Fine," you'll say, thinking it's not a *real* cell phone.

Think again.

Mattel, the maker of Barbie, recently announced a new pre-paid Barbie mobile phone aimed at pre-teens. It's also a handy parental control device. For example, parents can go online; buy time for the phone; and include a list of chores or "daughter-do's" that reach her through the phone and incent her to earn additional minutes that are released only when the tasks are accomplished.

It's also a marketer's dream, giving sellers the ability to text message pre-teens in real time and in ways that appeal to their sensibilities.

That's just one example of the new age of wireless marketing, and, not surprisingly, wireless providers are leading the way into what is sure to become the 'Next Big Thing' in what we know as "reach."

According to *BusinessWeek Online*, more than 170 million mobile phones in the USA are enabled with text messaging and more than 2.5 billion text messages are sent each month. That figure will grow exponentially in the next few years because 80% of people with those text-enabled devices *have never sent a text message*.

Wireless is just one of a number of 'on-the-fly' media that have recently come into vogue as more media options are added to the mix. Here are some others:

Internet Alerts — New tools that alert users to deals while they are online are plentiful. Southwest Airlines, for example, has DING!, which users can download for free to deliver live updates of airfare offers to the desktop.

Games — Game developers are offering technology that embeds advertising in cell phone games. The technology enables advertisers to deliver specific ads to a specific game.

Venue-Specific Promotions — The old banner messages which trailed biplanes over stadiums have been transformed into interactive events at modern ballparks. Cellphone users are prompted by the video scoreboard to text messages to one another, enter sweepstakes, answer trivia questions, or select the sexiest player on the spot, with results tabulated during the seventh-inning stretch. By doing so, they opt-in to additional

messages through the medium.

Outdoor Advertising — The medium that built Burma Shave brand awareness decades ago has a new twist: billboards can profile passing drivers and later cater ads to appeal to those drivers. Scanners on the billboards pick up "leakage frequencies" from radio signals coming from passing car radios. That information is used to identify which radio stations most people in the vicinity listen to at certain times of the day. Billboard ads are then tailored to appeal to the demographic of the drivers.

Of course, on-the-fly marketing is evolving, so protocols and standards of appropriateness have not been worked out by the marketplace. That being the case, marketers adopting these media should lean on common sense and marketing fundamentals.

If you're taking the plunge with some of these new media this year, consider the following guidelines:

- Research your audience to understand them and their media habits
- Understand new media platforms that will deliver your messages—and the technology that's involved
- Adhere to appropriate content; for example, if pre-teens are the audience, research best practices and precedents in other categories
- Test the medium and the message on a small scale to see what works

The question of intrusiveness always looms over any aggressive marketing technique, but catching individual users at the right moment isn't problematic if they're already using the medium and have opted-in through a promotion or other method of permission.

It won't be long before the ring of a cell phone sounds like the ring of a cash register. As the year unfolds, it will be interesting to observe how much marketers utilize on-the-fly marketing and unleash new and creative techniques for reaching consumers in the midst of their increasingly busy, round-the-clock lifestyles.

Stay tuned.

Your feedback is welcomed and should be directed to Clark Crowds, Principal, High-Definition Consulting Group at clark@high-def.biz.

RESOURCES:

The following resources are recommended by High-Definition Consulting Group:

Web site: Mobilmedia (cellphone news) — <http://www.mobiledia.com/>

Web site: ITFacts (cellphone statistics) — <http://www.itfacts.biz/index.php?id=P2011>

Article: Direct Marketing Association "Marketing Mistakes: Reaching Wireless Devices" — <http://www.the-dma.org/guidelines/wirelessmarketing.shtml>

Article: BusinessWeek Online "Cell Phones Ring for Marketers" —

<http://www.allbusiness.com/articles/content/23768.asp>

Article: BusinessWeek Online "Calling Preteens with a Barbie Phone" —
http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/feb2005/tc20050218_4609_tc024.htm

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TO CONTACT HIGH-DEFINITION CONSULTING GROUP, please do not reply to this message, but use the following contact information:

E-mail: clark@high-def.biz

Phone: 1-415-876-4300

Fax: 1-415-876-4333

33 Lupine Avenue, Ste. 300, San Francisco, CA 94118 USA

www.high-def.biz

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