

Engaging **with customers**

Messaging gets results when coupled with mobile marketing

BY MIA ANDRIC

WITH THE MOBILE PHONE the most ubiquitous communication medium in South Africa, many companies are using it to keep in touch with their customers. Instant messaging develops a whole new channel of interaction and information when coupled with a mobile marketing campaign.

According to Russel Stromin, head of Strike Media, a powerful way for a business to get closer to their customers, whether they are consumers or other businesses is to use instant messages for optimising exceptionally well targeted data-gathering, and also for learning from customers by listening to what they have to say. "Each time a business sends a message, it is an opportunity to engage with the customer," he says. "Our research shows that it's a great way to ensure communication because a message received on a mobile phone has been read within 15 seconds."

One of the most useful things any mobile campaign can deliver is information to drive the next one. This showcases the need to gather relevant information.



RUSSEL STROMIN, HEAD OF STRIKE MEDIA

One example, says Stromin, is a recent campaign for a financial services company which encouraged around 10 000 intermediaries on its database to enter a competition to win a newly-launched card and R10 000. "The campaign garnered 2 000

entries with only 200 unsubscribe requests – a remarkable 20% response rate that was only possible because the campaign was carefully targeted to the interests of a known audience," he says.

Stromin points out that a client base is essential. "There's a lot of spam in the messaging industry, so companies really need a good database – the message has to be relevant to the customer, you can't just send random stuff." He adds that due to their concise nature, SMSes are the perfect way to get through to customers. "It's about cutting to the chase. You have to make sure the message is short and sweet," he says.

While SMS messages are still the lowest common denominator, Stromin believes that as more IP services become available, more messages will use this platform. "Do you care how a message gets into your inbox?" he asks. "It's all about the communication." As for the future, Stromin says it will be about ubiquitous messaging. "The customer will decide where they get the message, depending on their environment and their needs."