Mobile Marketer™
THE NEWS LEADER IN MOBILE MARKETING, MEDIA AND COMMERCE

SMS case study - Zorbaz Restaurants

By Mickey Alam Khan

January 20, 2010

Zorbaz pizza boxes

Name and city and state of marketer:
Zorbaz Restaurants, Detroit Lakes, MN.

Name and city and state of agency or marketing services firm:
H2M, Fargo, ND, and Catchwind, Des Moines, IA.

Campaign/program name:
ZIP Club, a guest loyalty program.

Common short code and keywords used:
Text the name of the Zorbaz location to 72466. Location keywords included: pelican lake, detroit lakez, big zandy, gull lake, ottertail, little pine, park rapidz, grand rapidz and crozz lake.

Duration:
November 2007 – present.

Objectives:
• Find a cost-effective way to reach potential guests
• Collect mobile phone numbers from those already in the customer loyalty program database
• Build a database of contacts and mobile phone numbers for the text portion of the customer loyalty program and for future marketing strategies
• Increase number of guests in each location and increase sales

Target audience:
The campaign targeted Zorbaz guests who considered themselves mobile savvy.

Strategy:
Zorbaz used H2M to develop an HTML email that was distributed to then-current ZIP members.

The email explained the new texting service and offered ZIP members a link directly to an online landing page, where consumers entered their mobile phone number and chose which Zorbaz location(s) they wanted to receive messages about.

The goal of any message is to drive guests into their location of choice, at which time they may take advantage of any specials that were promoted in the text.

Text messages almost always promote a discount or special on food or beverage, or inform or remind guests about a special event.

Each location's manager has control over when the message is sent and content of the message.

Call to action:
In-store signage and Zorbaz employees encouraged guests to sign up for the program to receive free food, drinks and other specials.

Results:
The Zorbaz text messaging program grew rapidly from its inception in late November 2007. As of Dec. 9, 2009, more than 3,450 people had signed up for the program.

Currently, every cellular company in the area allows its customers the technology to receive texts from Zorbaz. However, this was not always the case.

Many Zorbaz guests were frustrated when they learned they could not be a part of the text program because their carrier, Unicel, did not offer short code text as a service within the Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN market.

The demand from Unicel's customers to allow this service became so great that Unicel could not ignore the situation.

Unicel began noticing a large increase in attempted short code activity from its customers.

In addition, Unicel customers began to complain about the lack of service.

Puzzled by the sudden increase in text activity and complaints, Unicel representatives called Catchwind to find out what was causing this stir.

Catchwind explained the Zorbaz text program and how popular it had become.

In January 2009, about three months after the issue was brought to light, Unicel officially began to offer short code text messaging for the Zorbaz short code to its customers in the Fargo-Moorhead market allowing them to be a part of the Zorbaz text messaging program.

Lessons learned:
Public demand and endorsement of a quality text program can and will change how cellular providers operate and what they offer to their customers.

Executive's name, title and company for response attribution:
Cole Hanson, CEO, Zorbaz Restaurants.

Strategy quote:
"Our message strategy is to send texts intent on driving traffic during slower segments of our day depending upon the specific Zorbaz location, the time of year, and on the given objectives for that day," said Cole Hanson, CEO of Zorbaz.

"For example, at Zorbaz on Pokegama we are aggressively attempting to grow awareness of Zorbaz as a lunch destination and aggressively attempting to drive traffic from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.," he said. "Consequently, we send out texts for free items like tacos or burritos redeemable before 3 p.m.

"We're also trying to alter our late night clientele's arrival time with offerings such as free cocktails, beers and shots between 8 and 10 p.m. Additionally, another commonly sent message is an informative text focusing on upcoming events such as our Ugly Zweater Party, Winterfezt, Oyzterfezt, karaoke, live music and other events. Something complimentary is always included in our texts."

What challenge did mobile address quote (from same executive above):
"Two of the main challenges faced by establishments in our industry are how to maintain top of mind awareness with the market and how to effectively communicate with loyal guests in order to increase their frequency," Mr. Hanson said.

"Ultimately, we see text messaging as a way to drive traffic in an intelligent and targeted fashion," he

said. "My current philosophy is: It's impossible to send out too many intelligent and well-thought messages on a given day – as long as the messages include something desirable and free."

Editor in Chief Mickey Alam Khan covers advertising agencies, associations, research and mobile marketing issues, as well as column submissions. Reach him at mickey@napean.com.