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## Mobile World Calls for New Adoption, Marketing Strategic Thinking

BY [TRACEY WEINBERG](#)

Consistently bringing new products and services to your members is good; however, understanding how to effectively market them to encourage adoption is even better. How relevant are new offerings if members are not informed about them, their benefits, assured of their security and encouraged to take part?

Credit unions must make note that innovation and strategy do not stop with implementation. Too often credit unions think that members will come running just by saying they offer specific services. They mobilize to expand their product and service availability – moves that should ideally assert their competitiveness in the marketplace, help transition to a more efficient environment and deliver new cost savings – but none of those goals can be achieved without member support.

Take for instance the rise of familiarity with online account opening and person-to-person (P2P) payments over the past two years. Despite the growing knowledge around these services among both credit unions and their members, consumer adoption leaves considerable room for growth. So what *is* the challenge that credit unions have on marketing new products and services or promoting cross-sale opportunities?

For one, it can likely stem from the emphasis on a marketing approach that is 15 to 20 years dated, an approach that neglects to consider the Web as a vital marketing tool. Aite Group LLC reported in April that 59% of consumers use either mobile or online banking channels, or both. That volume of users certainly warrants the potential for credit unions to capture members' attention during those sessions. These services bring greater opportunities to truly capture members at their chosen point of interaction.

Unfortunately, some credit unions fail to realize that leveraging the Web as a marketing tool and cross-sale enabler can result in a greater response to any product or service promotion because of the immediacy and convenience of the call to action that is provided.

Aite also stated in a February 2011 report that the top three IT priorities for U.S. credit unions were 1) Basic mobile banking; 2) Online account opening; and 3) Mobile payments. This enforces that the role of technology for credit unions is more paramount than ever, especially as a way to overcome losses and growth impediments associated with fraud and ever-changing regulations.

Beyond attracting and maintaining membership, being more competitive and preparing for future growth, technology can also enhance product marketing initiatives. Consumers expect any Web experience to be interactive and are more likely to respond when prompted during these interactions. Online communication means having people at this exact moment of engagement.

Add to that, Web and mobile channels help more widely market to and address two key audiences that credit unions need to reach because of their profitability potential: small businesses and Generation Y.

There are more ways to appeal to small business owners than lending opportunities. This member subset relies on cash management tools daily, so how better to receive those services than through their financial institution?

With younger members, these individuals will not only be maturing with age, but also in their financial needs. As more seasoned members start to retire and require fewer services, Gen Y has entered the scene looking for loan options, multiple accounts and financial planning tools.

Secondly, credit unions should not expect members to come into a branch to ask about products and services. Instead, they need to have a strategic, proactive approach to marketing, rather than an afterthought. Credit unions are positioned to be advisers on what services are relevant to different members.

So with that opportunity comes the responsibility to be true initiators of the conversation. Leave behind the old “wait-and-see” approach, and take advantage of what momentum building can do. Why wait until your new small business online bill pay solution is available to market? Get the word out beforehand, engaging members in the conversation, and use browser- and mobile-based options to reach them.

Kenyon Blunt, CEO of SIGMA Marketing Group, in his “10 Trends for Financial Services Marketing for 2011” stated “*customer engagement is not a passing fad*” as his list topper. He drew this conclusion because with the level of interaction occurring daily in-branch, institutions are then charged with “replicating that level of engagement in the online world.” Credit unions must evolve their product and service promotions and cross sales to capitalize on what the Web can offer: reaching consumers at the moment of engagement.

Blunt also predicts *social media marketing will mature* and *mobile marketing is inevitable* as two other key trends for marketing this year, expecting each to gain prominence as the two mediums mature and become more prevalent in financial services. Coupled with the benefits of an online-dominated marketing approach, credit unions have the opportunity to modernize and organize their product and service promotions. And those that act now will more quickly realize just how to achieve optimal results in membership adoption.

*Tracey Weinberg is senior vice president of marketing for iPay Technologies.*

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Mark Arnold

You are spot-on. New products and technology may start with innovation but they must carry-through with implementation. Too many times credit unions launch a new technology product and then go on to the next thing on their project list. It takes a consistent marketing effort over a good period of time to get your members to the adoption stage. Don't assume that just because you build it they will come.

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