

IPHONE 4S – ANOTHER NAIL IN THE COFFIN FOR BLACKBERRY?

BlackBerry has long been the smartphone of choice for business users – mainly due to its “push email” functionality and its security features. However, the iPhone now has a sizeable chunk of the personal mobile phone market and the new iPhone 4S has its sights set on attracting BlackBerry users.

To start with, the “Retina Display” on the Apple iPhone 4S gives the latest BlackBerry Bold's display a run for its money (BlackBerries are renowned for their high quality displays). Under the bonnet, the Apple iPhone 4S gets a dual-core 1GHz A5 chipset with 512MB RAM. As for the BlackBerry Bold 9900, it comes with a 1.2GHz processor with 768MB RAM. As for the memory, the Apple iPhone 4S has three versions - 16GB, 32GB and 64GB. On the BlackBerry Bold 9900, there is 8GB internal memory with a microSD slot that supports up to 32GB.

On the connectivity front, the Apple iPhone 4S is a world phone with both CDMA + GSM support. The BlackBerry Bold 9900 is the GSM version in the Bold range and there is also a BlackBerry 9930 that works specifically for CDMA networks. Both have WiFi functionality, but WiFi hotspot is only available on the Apple iPhone 4S, there is Bluetooth support as well. WiFi hotspot is particularly useful for business users as it allows the iPhone 4S to be used as a wifi router to connect your laptop to the internet wirelessly (using the iPhone's 3G network connection).

The other big news in the latest iPhone is Siri, the voice recognition personal assistant. This is possibly the most advanced voice recognition system currently on the market and is particularly useful for business-users who use their device while on the move or in the car.

The big question is whether the enterprise / corporate user will make the jump to the Apple iPhone 4S? With its good looks and accessible operating system, the Apple iPhone 4S may appeal to casual users, in spite of its pricing. But for the serious enterprise user or BlackBerry addict, the Apple iPhone 4S is going to be a tough sell. The BlackBerry Internet Service (BIS) is still a huge advantage for business users as it allows companies to secure sensitive emails, or shield browsing and BlackBerry Messenger is also a favourite among BlackBerry users.

ENCOURAGE YOUR TEAM TO GET FIT, HEALTHY AND MORE PRODUCTIVE

Most of us have heard the old adage of “healthy mind, healthy body”. The stress-busting effects of regular exercise are well documented and the benefits to employees of regular exercise are many. However, few employers actively encourage their staff to exercise during working hours (lunch hour, etc).

Research by scientists at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm revealed that reducing the number of work hours performed by employees in favour of exercise resulted in increased levels of productivity. An employer that introduced a mandatory exercise programme during working hours saw a significant increase in their employee's performance coupled with a fall in instances of absence due to illness.

So, by getting your staff fit and healthy, your firm should benefit from increased productivity and less absenteeism. The question is, what can an employer do to encourage staff to get into shape?

Managers can lead by example if they are serious about supporting the health and wellbeing of their staff as employees look to their superiors for guidance on how to behave at work. It is advisable to provide the necessary facilities for employees to get active during work hours such as installing exercise equipment in the workplace or offering gym membership for lunchtime sessions. Some offices even provide shower and locker facilities on site (perhaps in the basement of the office) to allow staff to take a lunch time run and then clean up for work in the afternoon.

Your firm could also consider partaking in charity events (as a team) such as a sponsored run. This can improve the reputation of an organisation at the same time as enhancing the health and wellbeing of its employees. Starting a company sports squad is another initiative that can prove valuable for team building although it is important to avoid excluding certain groups of people so choosing a mixed-gender activity like running or tag-rugby is advisable. The challenge when attempting to incorporate exercise into everyday working life is how not to adversely affect business processes. It is really down to the management team to identify fitness initiatives that will work well within the business without affecting the day-to-day activities of the firm.

CUSTOMER RETENTION STRATEGIES

Without customers your business simply would not exist. Some businesses are so focused on winning new customers that they often neglect to put any effort into retaining the customers they already have! Winning new customers is often far more expensive than retaining existing ones. Winning a new contract may cost time in terms of developing a sales pitch and cash in terms of corporate entertainment in order to win over your target client. By contrast, retaining an existing customer might be as simple as sending them a thank-you card with a voucher enclosed offering 10% off their next purchase!

Businesses constantly strive to grow their client base and to do this they must go out and put time and hard earned money into sales and advertising efforts. It's during these times that many business people take their eyes off satisfying their current customers and this can lead to customers leaving. Customers of any business generally fall into three categories:

Loyal customers won't leave for another product or service provider – even if a special offer is put to them. At the very minimum they will give their existing supplier the opportunity to meet or beat the offer. Maintaining loyal customers is an integral part of any business. Over time it has been proven that loyal customers will spend more with you and they will refer new clients on to you.

Satisfied customers are customers who are open to a better offer from the competition. They feel that the product or service they are receiving is on a par with other offerings on the market but they are open to switching to something better (given the right special offer).

Dissatisfied customers are not happy with your product or service. Some will complain, giving you the opportunity to target the customer with client retention measures. However, for every complaint that is received from discontented customers, there will be several who will complain to their friends or publish their complaints online without telling you. These customers must be targeted pre-emptively with customer retention tools.

The goal of any business is to move the customers up along the customer chain. Dissatisfied customers move to the satisfied category, satisfied customers move to the loyal customer category and the business continues to look after the life-blood that is the loyal customer category. Identifying and categorising each customer will take time and effort (hours analysing sales data). However it will be worth the effort if it helps you retain some hard earned clients.

WEBINAR TIPS – IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTENT

The first rule of creating a memorable and engaging webinar is to “be prepared”. Spend time rehearsing your presentation and if you are using slides, take the time to prepare a great looking presentation. Your slides should really stand out with strong graphics which reinforce what you are saying.

World class athletes make sports look easy, but in reality their performance is the result of focused, intense rehearsal. The same is true with webinars. You should have two or three rehearsals, the first beginning about two weeks ahead of the event. Ask trusted colleagues to give honest feedback to the presenter so that the presentation is up to scratch. The day before the event, do a front to back rehearsal, including the operator, announcer, speaker, annotation team, and any other role that was assigned. Make sure everyone is happy with the rehearsal. Again ask a few colleagues to sit in on the rehearsal to give feedback and any final tips before the actual presentation.

Take care to avoid “death by PowerPoint” – keep the content level light with no more than 3 or 4 bullet points on each slide. If you put a vast amount of text on your slides your audience will read rather than listen to what you have to say, therefore defeating the entire purpose of a webinar – to engage with your target audience.

As far as content is concerned you have to walk the line between giving enough content so that your attendees will feel that it is worth their time and attention, but also ensure that you leave them hungry for more. As such, you need to balance the need for sharing good information with creating a desire to know more about your topic. And that desire to know more should translate into potential sales leads.

Go out with a bang – your presentation should build up to a high note at the end. At the end of the session, drop your audience on a webpage where they can get more information, opt in for further contact or fill in a feedback form on the event. This “call to action” gives you the opportunity to screen potential leads for follow up calls by your sales team.

Please contact a member of our team if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised.