



THE 5 KILLER MISTAKES THAT CAUSE
YOUR PUSH CAMPAIGNS TO FAIL

A Swrve Whitepaper

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INTRODUCTION

Ask most mobile app businesses how they communicate with their users and you're likely to hear the same answer repeatedly: "push notifications." Effectively the equivalent of email, they allow mobile app developers to talk to users at any time, inform them of offers, new features and updated content, and theoretically drive increased engagement levels.

That's the theory. And for a select few app businesses, push notifications are doing a great job. But for many the experience is decidedly mixed. Despite sending huge numbers of campaigns, in many cases to millions of users, it can be hard to determine what effect push campaigns have on the business where it really counts: in terms of revenue.

Worse again, in some cases push can actively drive users away from an app. Used indiscriminately (and we've experienced the other side of this equation) push campaigns irritate users and can actually drive them to uninstall the app. Spending time and money to deliver a negative outcome is obviously a nightmare scenario for any business. So how do you avoid that happening to you?

This whitepaper looks at 5 mistakes we see commonly made that lead to ineffective (or worse) push campaigns. Read, absorb - and make sure you're not making them in future.

Enjoy!





1. ASKING FOR OPT-IN AT THE WRONG TIME (AND WITHOUT CONTEXT)

The effectiveness of your push campaigns is directly correlated with how many of your users are willing to receive them. That isn't an academic point: at present opt-in rates for push are hovering at around the 50% mark, which means any given campaign can only ever reach half its potential audience and your push campaigns are only ever at half their potential effectiveness.

What causes such low opt-in rates? We believe the single biggest 'killer' in this context is asking for push opt-in before the app has fully launched, and without providing any information around how push will be used and most importantly what's in it for the user. To use a direct analogy, this is equivalent to visiting a website for the first time only to see a pop-up obscuring your view and asking for permission to send you email. Would you agree to that? Precisely.

The good news is there's two relatively straightforward ways to combat this issue and drive your opt-in rates upwards:

1. WAIT UNTIL USERS ARE FAMILIAR WITH YOUR APP BEFORE REQUESTING A PUSH OPT-IN.

The reasons to do this are obvious: it's when you are a trusted entity and the user feels comfortable with your service that they are more likely to say 'yes' to push. But of course exactly when to ask isn't simply a matter of delaying as long as possible. App attrition being what it is, the longer you delay the fewer people you are asking! Ideally you would test alternatives: we've found the start of the third session to be a good starting point.

2. DELIVER A 'TWO-STEP' OPT-IN PROCESS.

Users are significantly more likely to opt-in to receive notifications if you first show an in-app message that explains why you are asking them and what's in it for them. Look at the example from Uber. It both explains why you should opt-in, but also appears at a relevant point in the app - when the user is being asked how they would like to receive confirmations. The result is some of the highest opt-in rates in the business.



A smart opt-in request from Uber



2. SENDING TOO MANY MESSAGES (TO ALL THE WRONG PEOPLE)

This is probably the mother, father and - let's be honest - entire extended family of push notification campaign mistakes. There's a reason why many end users associate push with 'spam': the fact that too many marketers use it indiscriminately and without thought for the consequences of irritated users.

Let's take a step back. It's understandable that marketers want to send messages to lots of people. That's what we do. But except in very specific circumstances, if you're sending a message to the entirety of your user base, something has almost certainly gone wrong.

USERS CAN TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS... BUT THERE'S A SIMPLER WAY TO GET IRRITATING PUSH NOTIFICATIONS OFF THE SCREEN, AND THAT'S DELETING THE APP.

To give one example, imagine the mobile app of a news channel. Perhaps they would feel that any user of that app who has opted in to push notifications should

receive breaking new alerts? Well, maybe. But what if this specific alert relates to sports - and the user has never visited the sports section despite having spent over 2 hours in the app? What if it promotes a story the user has already seen? What if it's the middle of the night local time and the user has never used the app at this time?

If you're not asking these questions (and many others like them) and creating more sophisticated segmentation based on the answers, you may well be in spam territory.

That's going to kill the effectiveness of your campaigns, but the consequences can get significantly worse than that...

It's true that users can turn off push notifications either via your app's menus or their own phone's settings. But there's a simpler way to get irritating push notifications off the screen, and that's deleting the app. So before you assume that 'more is better' and throw everyone you can think of into your push campaigns - think again!



Always build targeted audiences for push campaigns



3. WAITING TOO LONG

If push is associated with one thing, it's probably bringing users back to the app. Again, it's something that marketers find it easy to understand, easy to measure (although it is often measured incorrectly, but that's a story for another day), and thus it tends to be something that gets done!

But all too often, it isn't done particularly well and results are disappointing. And there are typically two reasons why that is going to be the case:

1. The organization has waited too long before making a concerted effort to bring the user back
2. The 'come back' message has no real hook or incentive that motivates the user to respond

These two factors are in fact related, in the sense that when some form of value is being given away (the incentive) then organizations may be wary of offering that value to users who were coming back anyway. As a concern it is justified, but the correct response is to test ROI on these campaigns rather than simply not run them.

Most marketers need to understand that although from their perspective they are at the center of the known universe, to the smartphone user with 100+ apps on their phone they are a distant comet in a galaxy far, far away. If you let users leave for one, two or three weeks without making any effort to bring them back - they've gone for good.

As always in digital business: inertia is both your enemy and your friend. It is vital to act early and aggressively to keep users engaged and in your ecosystem. If you don't, you'll find it almost impossible to bring them back - no matter how tempting you believe the notifications you are putting together are. And that in turn will mean ineffective campaigns that don't get the job done.





4. FAILURE TO DEEP LINK

As we saw previously, a successful push campaign is both timely and relevant. Hopefully that results in a click. Engagement! In a sense our push notification has at this point done its job. But what happens then?

In far, far too many cases the user is led straight back to the 'home screen' of the app, at which point they can be forgiven for wondering what happened to the fantastic offer or content they were told about moments ago. The trail then goes cold as the user struggles to find precisely the incentive that led them back to the app in the first place.

As a result what may on face value look like a superficial success is anything but (of which more in point number 5). However, it's easy to make sure this doesn't happen to your push campaigns: simply ensure that a click deposits the user in a meaningful place in the app that maintains the 'context' of the initial message.

To do that you'll probably need to be able to edit the in-app experience dynamically in order to construct and deploy the relevant content without requiring app-store approval. Thus they can create locations to direct deep links to for each push campaign.

A further alternative is to create in-app messages or campaigns (think pop-up screens) that trigger as soon as the app opens in response to the specific click. In this instance, highly targeted messages can be created that continue the user on their journey and help ensure the user gets to the end goal that really matters to you. Simple.





5. MEASURING THE WRONG THING

It's easy to measure how successful a push campaign is. Simply fire it out to your millions of lapsed users and count the clicks! OK, so that's not entirely true. But you would be surprised just how many marketing departments behaved as if it was.

We're making two mistakes in one here, and either of them has the potential to kill the effectiveness of your campaigns - simply because you'll believe you're doing the right thing without the evidence to really know.

The first of those mistakes is relatively easy to correct - and that mistake is failing to compare campaign results against a control group to determine whether the number of users returning to the app is in fact out of the ordinary. In other words, given that there is an 'organic' rate of reactivation (people get up to all sorts of strange things after all), did the campaign actually drive any uplift against that number?

The second mistake is a little more complex, and requires thinking clearly around what success really means in the context of a push campaign. It surely DOESN'T mean simply generating a click. After all, those that bounce straight out of the app again do nothing for your business. Rather, you are likely to have a specific event (like subscription) or a general metric (like revenue) that you are hoping to influence.



So unless you are measuring your push campaigns against these metrics, chances are you're optimizing for clicks. Which is not good. And as above, it is essential to ensure that you're looking at uplift, rather than (for example) simply total numbers from the group you sent the campaign to.

Lastly, remember that it is particularly vital to measure against meaningful metrics when running A/B tests on push campaigns. If you don't, you'll simply pick as a winner the most effective 'click bait' - regardless of how frustrated (or not) the user is when they reach the app.

ENGAGEMENT METRICS		After Seeing		After Clicking	
		Click-through Rate clicks/impressions	Subsequent Time in App after seeing	Subsequent Number of Sessions after seeing	
A Variant 1 (1 user, 1 clicked)	33.33% 1/3	10.74 minutes/user	17 sessions/user		
B Variant 2 (2 users, 1 clicked)	33.33% 1/3	10.69 minutes/user	13.5 sessions/user		
C Variant 3 (2 users, 0 clicked)	0.00% 0/2	10.69 minutes/user	13.5 sessions/user		

Swrve automatically measures engagement (seen here) and revenue metrics for all push campaigns



ABOUT SWRVE

Swrve is the world leader in mobile marketing automation. Our solutions help many of the world's leading brands deliver outstanding mobile app user experiences and build profitable, long-term customer relationships on mobile.

The Swrve Mobile Engagement Platform delivers everything businesses need to keep their mobile app users engaged.

This includes user experience a/b testing, personalized in-app messaging campaigns, targeted push notifications and ultra granular-segmentation and targeting.

Swrve ensures that app and brand marketers can deliver the personalized mobile experiences, to ensure that app and brand marketers can deliver the personalized mobile experiences, relevant messages and action-oriented campaigns that keep app users engaged, loyal and profitable.

Learn more about Swrve and our engagement solutions for mobile app users www.swrve.com

