

Understand the social networks ecosystem for effective adspend

Most people use multiple social networks, says Marc Herson of 2go - and brands need to become familiar with this landscape to ensure they target their spending effectively.

"People tend to use their mobile phones to snack on content and conversation," says Herson. "Far more than desktop-based users, they tend to be looking for an immediate hit of social connection - so interfaces need to be fast and intuitive."

Although many of 2go's users simply enjoy the ability to message their family and friends for free, says Herson, "there's an important entertainment component via our chat rooms". There are hundreds of chat rooms within the 2go network, where users can play social games or share their view on topics ranging from football through beauty tips, to religion, to support new mothers and those living with HIV.

Always evolving

Users can't set up their own rooms, says Herson, but 2go is responsive to requests. "Last week we added over 100 rooms and deleted 50 that weren't being used. It's always evolving."

Chat room users don't have to reveal their real names, and Herson says this, combined with the fact that chats happen in real time, creates an entirely different social space for 2go users than networks like Facebook or LinkedIn, "where your profile is closely tied to your real-world identity."

"Chat rooms in general provide the same kind of pleasure as striking up a conversation on the bus," says Herson. "It's instant gratification - and in some ways a more honest and expressive form of communication, because people don't have to worry what others will think of them."

Herson notes that "social activities always work best when there's some structure and rules. We provide a guided user experience as well as rigorous community moderation. Those are key ingredients of what makes the 2go social network successful."

"People in our chat rooms are engaging in real, meaningful conversations about things that matter to them," Herson adds. "But there's also this awareness that they're in a semi-public transient space, so their response to advertising is arguably much more honest and engaged than to ads that appear in spaces they regard as private."

Advertising in chat rooms

Ads in chat-based environments also work well, adds Herson, "because when people are chatting on their phones they're wholly absorbed. It's not a multi-tasking environment. It's like the difference between TV and cinema -- people do other things while they're watching TV, but not at the cinema unless they want to be shouted at. In that context, well-done advertising can be part of the experience."

"Our lives are nuanced and multi-dimensional, and the proliferation of social networks reflects this", Herson points out. "The trick for marketers and advertisers is to work out how best to reach people in these different spaces, without disrupting them."