

Don't neglect the B side while the A side is playing

 By [Mike Laws](#)

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The world of mobile can essentially be summarised into voice and text-based communication.



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Mental telepathy remains the stuff of science fiction, the movies and wishful thinking. So, when all is said and done, that's really it – either we communicate remotely by speaking or we communicate by writing. Now, when you divide the world of cellular communication into these 'A' and 'B' sides of the record we've all been playing since the advent of mobile in South Africa in 1994, it becomes clear that you'd best pay attention to both tunes because one always follows the other.

When mobile hit these shores in a huge way in the nineties, the ability to make a voice call from practically anywhere was the big thing. Then while we were all marvelling at the way we could flap our lips from our car seats and pool loungers, texting took off – massively, after a slow start, and incredibly unexpectedly. After all, the ability to send and receive SMS messages had been a feature on GSM cellular networks since the early 1980s. Suddenly, this erstwhile network-testing tool used by engineers was taken up by teenagers and the rest is history.

The texting revolution

The texting revolution was refined in Canada when Research in Motion developed a better way to compose written communication on mobile handsets. The result, of course, was the BlackBerry and for a (long) while it seemed that voice was truly finished. After all, voice was expensive, and the real-time emails between mobile users that BlackBerry devices enabled were so cheap as to be virtually unquantifiable by the average mobile user who could never explain to mom and dad exactly how much it cost to send an email across a cellular network.



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Just when WhatsApp threatened to consign the beautiful human voice to the evolutionary dustbin, the record was flipped again, and somehow, we all started using voice notes on these Over-The-Top (OTT) services. So, in fact, data started help

enable the voice re-revolution.

The annoyance of having to listen to a rambling voice note from someone with too much time on their hands is a small price to pay for the ability to accomplish something in a flash without having to exchange a dozen emails or text messages before even getting to the nuts and bolts of a particular action item.

The year of the voice

Last year is already being called “the year of voice” to reflect the fact that we are bypassing screen time and interacting more and more through the medium of voice. This moniker also reflects that fact that voice-based digital assistants have become all the rage, once again, after their initial much-hyped iPhone debut several years ago. The use of voice technology like Siri and her contemporaries Amazon Echo and Google Home has increased dramatically after a frustrating start.

The message for marketers is that it's not enough now, in 2018, to have a mobile marketing strategy in place. What we all need to be focusing on now, is to pay specific attention to voice and text-based mobile communication. We need to remind ourselves of these two sides of the same record, the same coin, and to organise our mobile strategies according to these two pillars of mobile marketing. If we don't, we risk being side-tracked by the details and becoming stuck in the mobile mire. Mobile, in essence, is not about location-based products and cellular services or Bluetooth marketing at the mall, it's about communicating to customers using one of two mediums: voice or text.



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Design everything around how you're going to talk to current and potential customers using these two basic platforms and don't forget the one lurking in the background while the other is the flavour of the decade. If you do this and keep it simple, you'll be okay for 2018.

ABOUT MIKE LAWS

Michael is the CEO of Imaginatrix.mobi. He has over 23 years' experience in the ICT industry, has worked in multiple mobile network operators across Africa. These include Econet Wireless and Vodacom South Africa where he was instrumental in establishing the mobile advertising division. Michael was responsible for commercialising the successful Please Call Me service, as well as the tagged-on advertising messaging propositions.

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