Writing the perfect push notification: 6 things you need to know

A push notification is a message you can send to users of your app who have opted in to receive them. It ‘pops up’ on the screen like a text message.

If the customer receives the message when the phone is locked, they can swipe the notification itself and it will open up your app.

Push notifications are a great new marketing channel for brands. They’re direct, timely, and reach your customer wherever they are. We’ve found with our apps that a large proportion of customers will opt into push notifications, as they want to hear more from their favourite brands.

Here’s a screenshot from one of our clients, showing a big peak in users following a push notification.

Because this is such a new channel, there’s not a lot of best practice advice out there. We’ve been working with our clients on push notifications for a while, so here are our top tips on making the most of push, together with some helpful examples from fashion retailers.
1. Keep it short and sweet

Make sure your message is pithy and direct. Think of it as a Twitter update crossed with an email newsletter. Get to the point straight away – your customers will only scan the message for a second before deciding whether to open it or ignore it.

If the push notification comes up while they are using the phone, it will appear as a banner on top of the screen, with only 65 characters showing. So make sure your message hits home in that limited space, as well as in the longer format.

That doesn’t mean your message has to be boring. This Ebay notification is short and easy to scan, but also includes emotive, personal words for greater impact – ‘private sales’ and the ‘brands you love’.

2. Make it relevant

The message should always aim to get customers interacting with your app. It could be a discount code, a notification that a popular product is back in stock, or an invitation to view the latest news.

Fab.com currently get about 40% of their sales via phones and tablets. Mobile works perfectly for their time-limited sales model, and they use push notifications effectively to let customers when new products are available to buy.

In general, push notifications should be about something that customers can do within the app, whether that’s looking at a new collection, using a discount, or getting style inspiration. Beware of sending push notifications with no tangible benefit.
3. Tell them what to do

Include a call to action such as ‘view our latest A/W lookbook, ‘shop our dresses’, or ‘open the app’ for maximum effect. If you don’t do this, your notification is likely to be ignored.

This Miss Selfridge push is great because it has a clear benefit for customers – a discount code – and a call to action.

4. Quality, not quantity.

Too many notifications might annoy your users and make them opt-out, or in a worst case scenario, delete the app. We’d recommend sending out notifications once a week at the most.

Of course, this varies depending on your customer base and the time of year. During sales time shoppers might want to know when you bring in further discounts, or when items are running low in stock. Introduce a sense of urgency to get more customers clicking.

Net-a-Porter uses push notifications to tell customers when new stock is in, sending updates very frequently. The amount of push notifications you can send without annoying customers depends on your business. We recommend testing a few and seeing what happens from there.

5. Timing is everything
Send them at times when your customers are most likely to want to receive them, and pay attention to them. Consider early morning, around lunchtime, or early evening. Look at when you get the most traffic on your app and you’re your notifications to happen at that time.

Our clients all have Google Analytics built into their apps. You can use this to look at when you’re getting the most users and sessions, and send out your notifications at that time. Find out more about that here.

6. Test, test, test

Push notifications are like every other kind of marketing – you need to test it and see. Send out a few, track what happens to your user stats and sales, see what works for you, and keep at it!
How to send out push notifications within the Poq Studio Admin System

To send a push notification, log into your app and mobile website admin system. Click on the 'messages' panel in the top right. You'll see this screen:

The number next to ‘Recipients’ tells you how many people are currently signed up to push notifications. The box below is where you can send out a notification. We’ve limited you to 106 characters.

When you press ‘send’, you’ll get a message to ask if you’re sure you want to send the message. Click ‘yes’ and your push notification will be sent!

If you want to visualise what a push notification will look like before you send it, there’s a very useful preview tool here.