# DIGITAL DISCOURSE

## REAL-TIME ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

BY **LISABETH WEBER**

provides a more granular solution due to the high awareness of real-time events occurring, leading to more accurate predictive analytics.

Another advantage to an RTE platform over social media is the direct line of communication, when possible, giving the brand a better chance to hear the consumer, listen with clarity, pick up trends and react to them before potentially going viral on social media. In other words, there is huge value if the engagement platform can preempt issues from leading to unwanted negative social media posting. Here's another benefit to consumers. Let's say they're at a sporting event, and they have a mobile application for the stadium or team. For a fuller experience, if/when an issue arises, once the app is applied, the brand is alerted and can begin offering ways to alleviate problems on the spot, as well as offer bonuses and incentives for participating. Uniquely built for flexibility, this type of technology is customizable for brands

on the basis of what their customers and clients are looking for, and optional incentives can be built in as well. They would have the ability to email, text, call or chat in real time after the user initiates using the app. Consumers could request personal service, upload a picture, link to the Internet, ask a question or scan something on-site and send it in to be read in real time by a concierge.

Brands are beginning to see the light, and that's where the consumer wins. Companies need to adhere to the importance of the bottom line, and the route to get there is paved with good intentions, great products, best practices and top-level customer service. This matters to consumers because the brands that really understand this will rise to the top. Transparency, commitment to the customer and quick response can be the decision makers for consumers, especially among millennials. When consumers react, companies listen, and that is a win-win for everyone.

## BIO

**L**isaBeth Weber writes marketing content for Artful Decisions, a real-time engagement company specializing in mobile technology for brands to understand the emotions and real-time engagement of their customers. Her freelance writing and marketing work with clients such as Artful Decisions brings knowledge forward for companies to learn about cutting-edge technology to advance their businesses in a competitive marketplace. Connect with her on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

### Real-time engagement: What is it, and why should you care?

Real-time engagement (RTE) is feedback in real time. With social media at every turn, consumers have new ways to reach companies directly, but it's more of a fluke than a certainty. When large brands commit to engaging and interacting with consumers via social media, it can be a win-win. But if the consistency falls short and/or consumers get frustrated that their particular comment, question or complaint isn't being attended to, it can do the company more harm than good. The new way for companies to leverage real-time engagement is with direct and customizable interactions with consumers via mobile platforms specifically designed for their needs. It's a consumer-driven world these days, and there's a better way for the consumer to drive when it comes to real-time engagement. With RTE, brands can use cutting-edge mobile technology to target the needs of their consumer demographics and bring gathered information back to HQ. It puts the power in the palm of the consumer's hand, which empowers the brand to fulfill the needs of the consumer.

This pathway provides feedback to brands directly rather than from the brand to the consumer, as was the case with outdated surveys. Lou Carricarte, Founder and CEO of real-time engagement company Artful Decisions, explains, "Essentially, organizations can build their own private engagement platform, prompting a streamlined way to receive highly valuable information while remaining true to their customers," he says. "Additionally, anonymity and privacy features can offer an all-important differentiator compared to social media, which is, by definition, social."

To go even deeper with RTE, an enhanced live feed can be implemented, further personalizing the whole experience. Let's consider the hospitality industry, for example. With a real-time "engagement concierge" app, it's the consumer who initiates actions. From individual messaging to scanning products and providing feedback, the consumer has a direct link not only to

the brand, but to a human being for help with any issues that may arise. It's also a great tool to be able to alert a brand about a real-time event that could be occurring, good or bad. Have a question or concern? Rather than wait to aggregate responses on social media or—heaven forbid—sit in a phone queue for who knows how long, imagine choosing to initiate one-on-one engagement with a concierge. In a customer-centric application, it would be up to the consumer to take this action, and if they desire, options for push messaging can be implemented, adding an additional element of assistance in the form of alerts, discounts and updates from the brand. If they prefer more privacy, they can also opt out. The entire process is permission-based, and the non-invasive aspect to this cannot be overstated. When the consumer drives, the consumer and the company are both more likely to win.

An RTE platform distinguishes a brand and is a fantastic remediation tool for quickly identifying issues that are in play as well as capturing a unique depth of data to augment existing customer dimensions. Imagine a scenario where guests are at a resort with access to a concierge app. Should a problem arise, they would have the ability to create immediate awareness and begin the problem solving from the comfort of their own beach chair. If this were utilized at a national resort company, the brand would be alerted to what's trending and able to get ahead of issues more quickly. This

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