Why to use

Writing and targeting in-game push-notifications is a part of my day-to-day routine. Or bussines-as-usual (BAU) stuff as we call inside our team. While it looks pretty simple task at the first glance, it is realy time consuming daily callange for me. Mainly because I’m not native speaker and push notifications copy requite at least a bit of creativity. But what is even more important - they have quite a big impact on the game overall. More over - writing these is a big responsobilyty as I deliver them to the hundreds of thouthands players directly. So, it is a bad practice to underestimate the role of push-notifications in game growth, monetization or  live ops activities.

Let me start with an explanation of what are in-game push-notifications and why they are so important. I believe that most of you are familiar with this thing. If not an in-game type then a regular one. For some of you it may be even so familiar that wakes up a bit of disgust feeling. And other part of you may not have that feeling because you just have your notifications turned off for the apps or games whose notifications were too spamy. (I’ll look into this situation more closely too)

But basically, what push notifications are in a nutshell  - it’s a way to deliver an information to all or certain players when they are out of the game.

But why they are so important? Obviously because they are an additional way to notify the players about in-game sales or events. The most common in-game info delivery option is an in-game pou-up. It may find players only when they are in the game (or even only on a login). Then go email notifications that are quite often in the folder that has notification turned off. Or player unsubscribed from these emails to have his inbox more cleaner. Or even moved the sender (the game) to spam and this action affected the domain rating overall. Push-notifications are the last frontier that keeps information delivery. So you need to do all you can to avoid players from unsubscribing. Now back to the importancy.

Imagine that you want to run a sale with a bigger discount than usually (70% off instead of usuall 50% off).  As it may have an inpact on the in-game economy you may not want to run it for a whole day but for a two hours. Plus you may want to create a limited time offer feeling. We can call it happy hour sale and it is a common practice in mobile game monetization. But what if your players are aware about your today’s in-store situation because it is the same from day-to-day. They know that you run a 50% sale now, or no sale at all for a whole day. And they know that they can buy the stuff on their way home in the subway when their bosses and celuagues are not watching them over the shoulder. In the sytuations like this - push-notifcations are your only chance to give the players info on what is going on in the game right now and they better should visit the game right now and save money. (read spend money).

Of course there are other, more simple and more regular situations where you might want to use pushes like a new in-game event or content launch. Or freebie is on the way to the player and he need just to login to get it. In fact most of the developer activities whether they have monetization, retention or engagement in mind - might be boosted with push notifications. But players may already know the cadence of these activities and these push notifications are more like a task-reminders for them (which is one more important reason that is benefiting push notifications usage). In case with happy hour sale - PNs are your only way to get the most out of it. Leave a comment more events that can benefit from PNs usage.

How to avoid unsubscribing

Now, lets talk how to avoid palyers from unsubscribing.

This part may be relative to email notifications too. especially for emeil titles.

Some of us try to play in as many games as possible in order to be familiar with the market. Quite often we turn notifications off because it is really easy to miss personal messeges in the waterfalls of games’ push-notifications. Or the push notifications are just repetitive borring copies that are not worth to follow. But I met few games that made me left the notifications turned on because they were interesting, or use jokes, or sometimes tried to add erotic double meaning. Just read this an example from War and Magic: “The other girls and I talked about you last night. (the first sentence makes you to expand the end of the copy) Thanks for taking care of us. Please take this gift. We hope that your city becimes event more prosperous! (the last part ask player in a fictional form to take a freebie). And every push notification there is like this one. Because of this game I decided to have additional section in my live ops creative assets collection specifically for push notifications. Previously there were only popups, user interface ideas and inreresting game mechanics.

How to pick the best creative

So, basically interesting or creative or at least different from one another copies minimise players unsubscribing. But it cant go with one copy. You need to have few and pick the best one. How to pick these? We may think the copy is great, but the data can prove we are wrong. Short answer - A\B testing. For sure, if it is releasing a new weekly content you need to consider whether it is worth to A\B test creatives. But if it is player onboarding period its your only way. Because in the first case players already stay with you and know about updates because it is obvious stuff for them. But in the second case (the onboarding period) it is a metter whether the game will live or not.

Few years ago I was working in SMS marketing. It was challanging work too because your creatives are blocked every hour and you need to create a new ones. But not only a new ones, but a working ones, the ones that have good click-through-rate (CTR) and what is even more important they should bring purchases. So around 5 to 10 times per day we had the next cycle. Get 10-12 copies from creative bank (or write if the bank is empty), send them to the 7-8k people that we know usually are clicking on the links in the sms (and we can track and segment them). (we had 7k audience for the test in order to have at no more no lees then 700 people for a creative. this number is the smallest possible number for statistically correct insight.  5 mins after publishing pick 4-5 creative with the best CTR, send them to 10k people in order get more correct answer from bigger audience with best creatives. Pick 1-3 and work with them untill you are blocked again. If you see that creative has good ctr but is bringing few revenue - you may kick it out of list. And you see the creative brought good revenue but was blocked you may modify it and go with new modification.

The same a/b test strategy you can use for picking best creative for push notification if you belive it is worth it.

How segmentetion helps you to avoid unsubscribing

This one is pretty simple. First - do not show players notifications about the stuff that they are not able to access. For example you launch new content sooner for payers that to not payers. Do not tease them. Unless you might want to. I mean you might want to show non peyers that payers have the access already and they can join their lines by spending money. But this is really blade running.

Same segmentation can help you decrease unsubscription rate by targeting players with personalised messeges. Greet US players with Independenth Day on 4th of July and ukrainian players on July 24.

How to write push notifications

I have few approaches here.

1. Rhyme thing
2. words play
3. google quotes
4. rewrite prewious examples.