Push notification series

Be sure to check all parts

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# P1 What are these

Writing and targeting game push notifications is a part of my day-to-day routine or business-as-usual (BAU) stuff as we call it inside our team. While it looks like a pretty simple task at the first glance, it is a really time-consuming daily challenge for me. Mainly because I’m not a native speaker and push notification copies require at least a bit of creativity. But what makes the task even more responsible is knowing the fact that they have quite a big impact on the game overall. Plus I deliver them to hundreds of thousands of players directly. So, it is a bad practice to underestimate the role of push notifications in a game growth, monetization, or live ops activities.

Let me start with an explanation of what game push notifications are and why they are so important. I believe that most of you are familiar with this thing. If not game-related then regular ones. For some of you, it may be even so familiar that it wakes up a bit of a disgusting feeling. And another 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 spammy. (I’ll look into this situation more closely in part 2)

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

# P2 Why are they important?

But why are they so important? Obviously, because they provide an additional way to notify the players about in-game sales or events. The most common way of information delivery to players is an in-game pop-up. It may find players only when they are playing the game (or even only on a login). Then go email notifications that are quite often in the folder that has notification disabaled. Or players have already unsubscribed from these emails to have their inbox cleaner. Or even moved the sender (the game) to a spam folder and this action affected the game domain rating overall. Push notifications are the last frontier keeping information delivery. So you need to do all you can to avoid players from unsubscribing (more in part 2). Now back to the importance.

Imagine that you want to run a sale with a bigger discount than usual (70% off instead of the usual 50% off). As it may have an impact on the in-game economy you may not want to run it for a whole day but for two hours. Plus you may want to create a limited-time offer feeling. We can call it a happy hour sale and it is a common practice in mobile game monetization. But what if your players are aware of your current in-store situation because it is the same daily. They know that you run a 50% sale now, or no sale at all for a whole day. They are going to buy the stuff on their way home in the subway when their bosses and colleagues are not watching them over the shoulder. In situations like this - push notifications are your only chance to give your players an idea of what is going on in the game right now and why they 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 to promote a new in-game event or content launch for your audience. Or a freebie is on the way to the players and they just need 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 task reminders for them (which is another benefit of push notifications usage). In case of a happy hour sale - push notifications are your only way to get the most out of it. Leave a comment with more events that can benefit from push notifications usage.

# P3 How to avoid unsubscribing

Now, let’s talk about how to avoid player unsubscribing. This part may be relative to the email notifications too. Some of us are trying to play as many games as possible in order to be up to date with the market situation. Quite often we turn notifications off because of push notifications waterfall from these games. It is really easy to miss important notifications among dozens of freebies. Or the push notifications are just repetitive boring copies that are not worth following.

But I met a few games that made me leave the notifications turned on because they were interesting, use jokes, or sometimes tried to add erotic double meaning. Just read this example from War and Magic:

*“The other girls and I talked about you last night. Thanks for taking care of us. Please take this gift. We hope that your city becomes even more prosperous!*

The first sentence makes you expand the end of the copy. The second part asks the player in a fictional form to log in and take a freebie. And every push notification there is like this one. Because of this game, I decided to have an additional section in my live ops creative assets collection specifically for push notifications. Previously there were only popups, user interface ideas, and interesting game mechanics. Now push notifications too.

## How segmentation helps you to avoid unsubscribing

This one is pretty simple. First - do not show players notifications promoting stuff that they are not able to access. For example, you launch new content sooner for VIP players (payers) than for non-payers. Do not tease non-payers. Unless you want to. I mean, you might want to show non-payers that payers have access sooner and they can join their lines by spending money. But friend, you are a blade runner.

Same segmentation can help you decrease the unsubscription rate by targeting players with personalized messages. Greet US players with Independent Day on the 4th of July and Ukrainian players on July 24. Same event, different audiences, different dates.

## P4 And go with the best creative only

Basically, interesting or creative or at least different from one another copies minimize players' unsubscribing. But you can't go with one copy. You need to have a 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 quite often. Short answer - A\B testing. For sure, if it is releasing a new weekly content that has a bunch of themed events - you need to consider whether it is worth AB testing every event push notifications.

But, if it is player onboarding path notifications - AB testing is your only way. In the first case, with new content, players already stay with you and know about updates because it is tribal knowledge. But in the second case (the onboarding path) it is a matter of whether the game will live or not.

A few years ago I was working in SMS marketing. It was challenging work too because your creatives are blocked every hour and you need to come up with new ones. Not only new ones but also working ones. By working ones I mean they have a good click-through rate (CTR) and more importantly they should bring purchases.

So from 5 to 10 times per day we had the next cycle. Get 10 copies from a creative bank (or write if the bank is empty), send them to the 7k people that we know usually are clicking on the links in the SMS (we can track and segment them). We use a 7k audience for the test in order to have around 700 people per creative. This number is the smallest possible number for statistically correct insight. 5 mins later, pick 4-5 creatives with the best CTR out of those 10 and send them to 15k clickers in order to get a more correct answer about the best creatives from the most active audience. After 5 min pick the best 1-3 creatives and work with them until you are blocked again. If you see that creative has good ctr but is bringing small revenue - you may kick it out of the list. But if you see the creative brought good revenue and was blocked later - modify it and go with a new modification.

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

# P5 How to stay creative

As I have already said, being a non-native speaker and having a large audience makes it a challenging task to write push notifications. Especially, when new content comes every week and has a lot of promotions or events that require push notifications. Quite often event types or promos are similar from week to week so it’s hard to stay creative.

But after a year of copywriting I came up with a few tricks that make the process less stressful. Usually, my copies for push notifications have two parts. The flavor part is supposed to get player's attention, and the info part to give the player an idea of what is going on. While the second part is usually straightforward the first one may be hard to come up with. So here are a few tricks that I use when I’m stuck.

## 1.Rhyme thing

There is a nice service called rhymezone .com. If you enter a word that you want to rhyme, then pick an advanced view - it gives you a list of words that may be useful for your copy. The list will even be sorted ascending by popularity. Here are a few examples:

1. For hugging day “PLUG a 🫂 HUG into your routine! Celebrate Hugging Day with…“
2. Or another holiday “💪 The body ACHIEVES what the 🧠 mind BELIEVES! Celebrate Mind-Body Wellness Day with…”
3. For the content with the word “orb” in its name “🔮 Wanna be the LORD? Roll this new ORB! 🔥 Join…
4. For Oktoberfest a “mag” was rhyming with “🍺 GRAB a MAG and CHUG! Score a special…”

## 2. images

I believe you know about the image search tab in Google as well as you should be familiar with Pinterest. Try to enter your keyword, add “quotes / phrases / captions ” word, and hit Enter. Both of these services have a lot of images that have text on them about every topic possible.

But there is an even more useful trick! When you find a good phrase - click on it, and these services provide you with more similar or at least related content. For sure, not all of it will be creative, quite a lot of images will have the same text with different fonts. Start scrolling until you find something that suits you. Here are a few examples that I build with a help of these services:

1. [new content] is 🌶️ too hot to handle! Celebrate Hot and Spicy Food Day 🥵 with us…
2. 💂 Let's get crackin’ with a new 🎄 Nutcracker holiday-themed [your content here]!
3. 🍹 Bartenders know too much! 🍸 or 🍹 For those who warm us up! 🍸 Celebrate National Bartender Day with [your content here]!

## 2. Words play

There are cases where it is possible to play with a word and it might look cool. For example:

1. 𓆏 CROAK the system! Join [your content here]
2. 🕺🎸 DISCO IT with the new [70’s themed content here]
3. 🐈 Raise a PAWsome friend that will leave a paw print on your heart! 😺 Join the [your content here]
4. 🐈 Less stress, more cats! 😺 Raise your PURRsome friend in a new [your content here]
5. 🦜 Tweet-tweet! 👯Twin-twin! Celebrate National Twin Day [here we had bird-themed content]
6. 🦅 Celebrate Wildlife Conservation Day with ROARsome 🐅 [your content here]

## 3. Rewrite previous examples.

If you are using push notifications for at least half a year or your team was sending them before you joined the team - there is a chance that you will end up with a solid creative copies bank. Especially when you were writing a few creatives per promotion for AB testing. In half of a year, you will end up with a solid creative bank with copies that may be reused after modification. To pick a potentially useful one - just use the keyword search in a document or filtering if you store them in a table sheet.

## 4. emojis

If you are struggling to find appropriate emojis for push notification, or you feel that there are more appropriate emojis that you have in mind - there are a few services that can help you.

1. Enter a keyword in emojipedia .org search and it will list down all related emojis. If you click one it will show you more emojis related to that one.
2. Enter a keyword in emojicombos .com and you will be offered a list of emoji collections related to the keyword. Looks like some users build these collections and other users rate them. So on the top you can see a really useful collection for your topic.

## 5. Next day improvements.

Copywriting is like winemaking. If you leave them and come back after a while you can make them better. Do not write and publish on the same day.

## 5. Typos and grammar

I make typos a lot. But there are few tools that help me to identify these and eliminate them. As I write copies in Google Docs - there is a cool baked-in tool that checks spelling and grammar. Usually I do not approve suggestions with one click but rewrite the words again in order to build a habit to write them correctly.

The second tool is Grammarly. I use it not as an option instead of Google's built-in tool, but as a second checking frontier. After using these tools, if a run date for these notifications is not today I ask my wife to check them too. Usually, she can find 1-2 mistakes too, or suggests better slang.

In conclusion, I want to highlight that while all these tips and tricks alone are not super useful, if you use them together they can boost your creativity and speed up copywriting.

Words count 716 + 704 + 936

Google and Grammarly mistakes 43 + 29 + 48

Zoriana mistakes 9