

At Adobe, the 'App Is the Ad'

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As senior vice president and CMO of Adobe, Ann Lewnes leads the company's corporate brand, corporate communications and integrated marketing efforts worldwide. Lewnes spoke with eMarketer's Tobi Elkin about Adobe's philosophy on mobile marketing and experiments with live-streaming video app Periscope.

eMarketer: Adobe is known for Photoshop and its cloud-based products and services, but how is Adobe looking at mobile?

Ann Lewnes: We believe the app is the ad, and we're trying to invest in getting people to download applications. Because we're a software company and we believe that applications are the most value that we can offer to our customers, our No. 1 goal is to get people to download apps.

It's very applicable across industries. If you're a bank, you want to get somebody to download your app and use it regularly and have a great experience with it. Once you've gotten people to download an app that they're satisfied with and using regularly, you've won.

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eMarketer: What do you say to companies struggling to prioritize "do I create an app or do I enhance my mobile site"?

Lewnes: It's not an either/or—you need both. Your website has to be optimized for mobile, but the app allows you to engage with your customer in ways that the mobile web experience can't. And then you don't even need to talk about advertising, because you're communicating and talking with your customer in a way that doesn't feel like advertising. That's why the app is critical. But the mobile web is also critical, and it has to be optimized for a mobile device. You need both.

The other thing is that the app is also the experience. For us, being a software business, our product is the marketing, and the marketing is the product. We have about 90 mobile apps, and they are largely in the creative space, so they're everything from super-simple ones like Adobe Voice, which enables people with absolutely no experience to create an animated video

and other content, to sophisticated apps where you can capture images and seamlessly connect them to Photoshop, etc. For us, it's all about getting people to download our apps.

These apps were specifically designed for mobile, and we wanted to create a very optimized experience for devices.

eMarketer: If the No. 1 goal is to get people to download your apps, how do you do that?

Lewnes: On the app stores, you need to invest in SEO (search engine optimization), so that you are going to be discoverable. We need to make sure that we have created an optimized search experience so that we pop up very easily. [The solution is not] a display ad. So once you download the app, then you're in the experience, and we're letting you take photographs, draw pictures, whatever we do. We're getting you to download our product.

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I think video is a very strong way to get people to engage with the brand and then take an action. A lot of brands in consumer packaged goods, auto and travel are doing that effectively. I think the best advertising in many cases is video-based, and that's where we're investing a lot of our time and energy.

eMarketer: What's Adobe experimenting with in video?

Lewnes: We're using Periscope to launch a new version of Creative Cloud [an Adobe software collection for graphic design, video editing and other tasks]. And we did a Periscope global marathon where we showed specific features of the new product—30,000 people watched the video within 24 hours.

We staggered the videos around the world and to local evangelists. It was the first time we've used it for a major product launch. It was a more advanced audience.

On the marketing technology side of our product line—web analytics and optimization products, content management, etc.—you need a bunch of training and white papers in order to be able to use those products and extract the most value.

Sometimes it's not the most exciting kind of stuff to read about, so we've been using video to get that kind of information out, but we decided to try something else. We did a mobile white paper that's audio-based. It's essentially a podcast. We picked a number of different topics, chose narrators like the English actor Malcolm McDowell to do the first one. Of course, anyone who's English automatically sounds good reading anything! We got 33,000 downloads within a month.

eMarketer: Downloading apps and using them is just one piece of the puzzle. What's the "killer app," so to speak?

Lewnes: I think the killer app for mobile is video. I would advise all marketers to use video heavily because it works in a very small format. It's an incredible way to get your message across. For us, the No. 1 marketing activity that drives the most traffic is video. I would say that you should invest heavily in video.