

L’Oreal’s Redken drives salon visits and increases user engagement with robust mobile strategy



About L’Oreal/Redken

- m.redken.com

Goals

- Increase search traffic on the salon locator
- Created custom mobile experiences for three different audiences: cosmetology students, professional hair stylists, and consumers
- Implement smart measurement tactics for continual improvement

Approach

- Integrated mobile into overall strategy and created mobile-optimized site
- Deployed Google Mobile ads
- Developed mobile site for customers
- Created apps for education, tailored to professional and student audiences

Results

- Boosted salon finder search traffic 519% year over year
- Targeted mobile users with strong purchase intent through salon locator
- Created app that stylists spend 27 minutes engaging with, 8 times per month

For L’Oreal, mobile is a cornerstone of a smart marketing strategy that encompasses many channels. Especially for the company’s Redken brand, a 360-degree mobile effort focuses on custom mobile experiences for a variety of use cases: cosmetology students learning in a classroom, professional hairdressers working in a salon, and consumers on the go looking for products or services. For each one, the company takes a different approach, and all have become highly successful.

L’Oreal considered mobile highly strategic from the start. When Sarah Liang, Director of Integrated Marketing Communications for L’Oreal USA, joined the company in 2005, the marketing team was already investigating ways to reach its mobile audiences. Today, Redken takes a three-pronged approach, offering educational tools for cosmetology students through a tablet app, in-salon tools for stylists to upgrade the salon experience through a smartphone app, and access to product information and salon locations to consumers through a mobile-optimized website.

Getting to the root of the on-the-go user

The company conducted significant research to hone its mobile marketing strategies and adapt it to each target audience. For example, the company discovered that stylists—who stand behind a chair versus sitting behind a desk with a computer—upgrade to the latest smartphones quickly. In 2012, 66% of stylists reported owning a smartphone—a statistic that was surprising, because usage among the general population was about 50%.

The marketing team also conducted a purchase intent study focused on desktop searchers. After visiting the desktop site, 80% of users took action: 23% called a salon to check availability, or ask about services and costs; 23% visited the salon and bought a product. Because smartphone users usually show higher intent to action, Redken believes it can meet or exceed these results on the mobile web.

Mobile marketing with style

With statistics such as these in mind, Redken has created several mobile options targeted to its audiences. For consumers, the company created a mobile-friendly site. It includes a salon locator, product catalog, product recommendations, and a “look book.” An important key performance indicator (KPI) for the mobile website—one that is closely monitored—is the number of salon searches. “We saw how important our mobile site was for reaching new consumers who are on the go. We are meeting our objective of bringing them into a salon,” says Liang.

In 2010, when L’Oreal did not have a mobile-optimized site for Redken, only 3% of searches on the salon locator came from smartphone devices. In 2011, Redken launched its mobile website, m.redken.com, and saw mobile traffic increase to 10% of total salon searches. In 2012, with help of their agency Labelium, they deployed Google Mobile Ads. “After we launched our mobile site for Redken and Google mobile ads, the percentage of total salon searches coming from smartphone devices leapt to 23%—that’s a 519% increase year-over-year,” says Liang.

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A formula for success

For professional stylists, the primary objective is engagement. For them, Redken created a smartphone app that educates about applying the right colors and formulas. Stylists can use the app in salons to identify a specific client need based on a variety of variables (color, type of hair, and so on) and provide a suggested solution, customized for every client. The app has increased stylists' comfort level with Redken's hair coloring products, as well as deepened the relationship with the brand.

"For a stylist, switching color lines is very daunting," Liang explains. "It would be like going from a Mac to a PC and not knowing exactly where to click or how things work. But now, we've seen the average time spent per person on the app is an impressive 27 minutes per session with more than 8 sessions per month—that's how we know we're achieving good education and engagement."

Education goes mobile

Now Redken is transforming the education experience for its student audiences through tablet devices. At the beginning of every class conducted at the Redken Exchange Academy, a school for advanced, licensed cosmetologists, instructors ask students to download the app before the class begins to provide a guided, immersive educational experience. The app acts as a virtual notebook so students can save their notes for future reference and build upon their educational journey. The app is used as an education, sales, and marketing tool all in one that saves time and money previously spent creating various textbooks and classroom materials.

Untangling data to make smart decisions

The complex chain of distribution for the products makes it challenging to create a sophisticated attribution model for mobile. However, the company is very smart about measurement. Marketers conduct focus groups, go along with salespeople on sales calls, and more, in their efforts to gather intelligence about what works in mobile.

For Redken, the ultimate KPI on the mobile site is the salon locator, which they know is tied to purchase intent and sales. "Especially because we've had such strong search traffic growth for the salon locator through a mobile optimized site and Google Mobile Ads, everyone here understands how successful mobile marketing can be," says Liang. "Ultimately what we've learned is that you have to know your audience, and develop a robust strategy across screens that fits their need the most."

