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Personalized Mobile Messaging: Game-Changer? Q&A With Attentive's Brian Long

by **Gavin O'Malley** (/publications/author/1167/gavin-omalley/), Staff Writer, February 7, 2018

Of late, personalized mobile messaging has been attracting serious investment and brand interest. That's good news for Attentive, a personalized mobile messaging platform for ecommerce and retail businesses, which is emerging out of stealth this week, announcing a \$13 million Series A investment led by Bain Capital Ventures. The news presented the perfect opportunity to ask CEO Brian Long some questions about Attentive and this emerging space.

Mobile Insider: Why is personalized mobile messaging such a game-changer?

Brian Long: Consumers are tired of one-way, one-size-fits-all communications from brands -- whether it's emails or ads. Almost any marketer will tell you that email click-through rates continue to steadily decline, and that ads are increasingly blocked or fraudulent. Consumers want two-way communications and relevant updates about the products and services they care about.

Brands that adopt personalized mobile messaging will see powerful results, delivering nearly 100% open rates and upwards of 30% click-through rates. In a few years, mobile commerce will be the largest source of online revenue, and mobile messaging will lead that consumer funnel.

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Mobile Insider: How is Attentive setting itself apart from the pack?

Long: Our name hints at our goal: being thoughtful about creating something that meets the needs of both marketers and consumers. Attentive provides a personalized messaging platform where we deliver mobile messages across the customer lifecycle. Some of our key features include: rich tools to start customer conversations; real-time, behavioral segmentation to send the right message to the right person; integrations across the entire customer lifecycle, leading into customer service platforms, payments, and other marketing channels.

Mobile Insider: When do you mean by "personalized"?

Long: Each message is relevant to each individual subscriber. By using behavioral data (like past purchases, for example), we can automatically create and send different types of content that is important to each subscriber. For instance, we can remind someone that it's time to restock one of their favorite products, or recover an abandoned shopping cart.

Mobile Insider: What messaging platforms can you access?

Long: We've built our product for the native SMS messaging platform across all mobile devices. Why? Text messaging has a nearly universal adoption rate. According to Pew Research Center, 98% of U.S. smartphone owners ages 30-49 regularly text, and that figure jumps to 100% for users between the ages of 18-29. It's the most common activity that people use their phones for -- even more than email or messaging apps. Wireless plans that include unlimited texting are now the industry norm, and the capabilities of SMS have evolved greatly over time. There's huge potential here.

Mobile Insider: Are you effectively competing against Facebook and its ongoing efforts to help brands connect with consumers via Messenger?

Long: No. In the longer-term, we are platform-agnostic. We would like to help brands reach their consumers wherever they want to be reached -- which especially varies by each consumer's geographic location or other demographics. Today, non-SMS mobile messaging platforms are still very nascent, so we are assessing the capabilities of each platform as they become available, and building product solutions accordingly.

Mobile Insider: Can you give me a good example of a client using Attentive to maximum effect?

Long: Attentive has been very effective for our customers. On average, Attentive mobile messages have a 30%+ click-through rate. Attentive customers have seen 10x+ higher revenue per message than email. In 2017, Attentive drove more revenue on Black Friday and Cyber Monday than any other marketing channel for select customers. Boll & Branch, a leading luxury home goods retailer, has seen fantastic results with personalized mobile messaging.

Mobile Insider: What are you going to do with this new financing?

Long: The new capital will be used to accelerate Attentive's operations at a faster rate so that we can continue to launch exciting new capabilities for existing and new customers. We're also very focused on building out our team in new locations.

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