

Skoop! Mobile Technology

By Sherrie Wilkolaski

Mobile phones are the final frontier, they can do virtually anything. The term “smart phone” is a misnomer because it’s not really the phone that is smart, it is the genius of developers behind the technology. The phone is the conduit for what is even more brilliant, the apps that run on these hand-held devices. Yes, you can make calls on it, or use it as a flashlight or a magnifying glass, those everyday tools we need to get through the day. They also keep us connected via social media and help us with applications to buy music or get discounts at our favorite retailers. If you think about how far cellphone technology has come over the years, it is quite remarkable. One man who has been at the forefront of cellular and mobile technology since its inception is Dan Giacomelli, the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Skoop! Inc., a Long Island based mobile marketing company.

Several months ago, I was introduced to Dan and was blown away by what he is doing with Skoop! I’m a bit of a technology junkie and spend my free-time researching software and applications to see what is out there that can help me better run my business. Up until now, I’ve been disappointed with the mobile technology I have been searching for, because it is either cost-prohibitive or there are so many different vendors needed to provide everything that I’m looking for, integration then becomes the challenge. Skoop! has everything a business will need, all under one umbrella, so integration is not a problem and the investment is very competitive. Dan took time to

talk with me, and I grilled him and did my best to poke holes in what he is doing. But he came back with solutions to all of my challenges.

My first order of business was to find out more about his credentials. As it turns out, he has more than 30 years of leadership experience in the wireless and telecommunications industries. Prior to Skoop!, he founded, built, and sold three successful entrepreneurial companies, the last of which was merged with Telular Corporation (NASDAQ: WRLS), for which Mr. Giacomelli served as Executive Vice President, Chief Technology Officer, and a Board member for 10 years. In all of his C-level assignments, Dan has played a lead role in positioning his companies for growth by

visualizing future market opportunities, expanding his companies’ technology portfolios to meet predicted need, and then aggressively penetrating those markets. Dan earned his Bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering from Stevens Institute of Technology and his Master of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from the Polytechnic Institute of New York. He has authored six technology patents and has a comprehensive knowledge of mobile markets and applications. Without a doubt, this gentleman has the pedigree to lead the mobile technology market.

“My personal history, and that of some in our engineering and business development teams, is one of engagement in the mobile phone arena since its inception. For a few of us, this dates back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, when we designed (at one of my previous companies called Wireless Domain) some of the first analog cellular “car phones” and “bag phones”. After Wireless Domain was merged into Telular Corporation, we were very early entrants into the design of what were then called “digital cellular” phones based on TDMA, CDMA, and GSM technology. That progressed and evolved over the years into the 4G mobile phones that we all carry today. Those early days were an exciting time, as the market was young and growing at triple digit rates, and staying ahead of the technology and market adoption curves was a real roller coaster for those of us designing and manufacturing mobile products.

“We also had a service at Telular which used the cellular system (in the form of text messages) to send

security alarm signals from homes and businesses in the event that the phone line was cut. This was a subscription-based business with a very high customer retention rate, which definitely whetted my appetite for that type of revenue model. So, when I started Skoop! in 2007, both my text message technology experience and my appetite for a recurring revenue model business led me to jump into the brand new arena of mobile marketing and offer a text marketing service. Of course, two years later the iPhone appeared and changed the world in then-unimaginable ways, enabling companies like Skoop! to first offer mobile websites (wow!), and then apps to our clients, creating an entirely new set of services and revenue streams to both us and our clients.”





What is Skoop!?

Let's talk about the Skoop! technology. Skoop! is a leading provider of customer engagement solutions for franchises. They provide a turn-key marketing platform specifically for franchise business that provides a seamless solution to integrate all of a franchise's consumer touch-points, such as rewards, loyalty program, gift card, social media, online ordering, CRM, appointment scheduling, coupons and deals – into a single platform. This provides customers engagement with the franchise brand via a powerful, integrated mobile app and messaging program.

For the consumer, they opt-in to their favorite restaurant, yoghurt shop or pet-sitting service. They decide what programs they want and get everything delivered via texts through the app.

What impressed me the most about Skoop! is the marketing data that is available to the franchisee owner. WOW! There is a reason for the exclamation point at the end of SKOOP! The business owner has access to so many levels of data. They are able to market to specific segments of their consumer base, easily and quickly. For example, if business is slow on a Tuesday, they can log into their Skoop! dashboard and send out a mobile marketing campaign to consumers who like to use the service on a Tuesday, giving them a gentle nudge. If they decide they want to send out a coupon or do a special offer, they can log into their Skoop! account, create the coupon and hit "send". It all can be done in a matter of minutes. As the campaign progresses, they have access to results and can track return on investment. The possibilities are endless.

Dan had this to say about what makes Skoop! different from other mobile technology companies. "Skoop! is much more than a mobile marketing company (although that is our roots). We provide a broad array of powerful customer engagement platforms that are seamlessly integrated with each other, enabling our clients to quickly and easily create, run, manage, and measure complex and powerful marketing programs.

"For example, using our dashboard, a client can create a Precision Marketing campaign that will send

text messages, picture messages, or email (depending on customer preference) to a highly targeted subset of their rewards member base, i.e., based on: what they buy, when they buy, how much they buy, the last time they made a purchase, their favorite products/flavors, their gender, age, zip/post code, present location (based on GPS and/or Beacon), and much more. The message sent can contain an offer, coupon, daily deal to purchase, or percentage discount, and have a redemption window of minutes to months. The offer/message may also

Skoop! is a leading provider of customer engagement solutions for franchises

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be simultaneously promoted via social media, amplifying its reach and effect.

“Such offers may easily be tied into our online ordering and mobile payment platforms. For example: ‘Place an order via our Mobile Online Ordering App today from 3pm to 7pm and get double rewards points.’ Or ‘Get 5 extra rewards points every time you pay at one of our retail locations using the mobile payment app and spend more than \$10.00.’”

“Additionally, rewards cash, e-coupons, and e-gift cards issued by the Skoop! platform may be used by rewards members to pay for online orders, without any additional effort or action by the member.

“Then, when a transaction is made, or a reward is redeemed, or a daily deal is purchased, the Skoop! platform can post (with permission, of course) to the customer’s Facebook page or Twitter feed and tell all of their friends/followers about their experience, etc.

“So when asked, ‘what’s special about Skoop!,’ I always answer, ‘Integration and ease of use. Our clients are very busy running their franchises. They don’t have the time or technical expertise to manage multiple vendors for multiple marketing services, in an attempt to cobble together a multi-channel campaign that wouldn’t be as effective as a Skoop! integrated campaign in any case.’ With Skoop!, it’s one vendor, one platform, integrated results reporting, and a measurable ROI across all of the channels and programs.

“The company services are not supplied to the market under the Skoop! brand, but under the ‘private label’ brand of one of our channel partners. We are primarily a technology company with a deep knowledge of the franchise market ecosystem, and we work with channel partners and resellers

who bring their products into the market verticals where they have significant access. Such channel partners may be advertising agencies, direct marketers, payment processors, and the like. Though we have many clients in the franchise market vertical, none of them are direct clients of Skoop!. That being said, a good cross section of brands who are using our services via channel partners include: Planet Beach Contempo Spa, East Coast Wings, Forever Yogurt, Le Macaron, The Lash Lounge, and 16 Handles. They range from spa, to casual dining, to bakery/pastries, to an eyelash salon.”

Economical and Simple Integration

Skoop!’s services are very economical and very fast to deploy. “We typically can on-board a new franchise system in two weeks, which includes importing their store location database, customizing our iOS/Android app and Admin Portal platforms for the client’s brand, and importing their entire food menu

(for Online Ordering clients). For small franchise systems, we can do this in one day. Our revenue model is a subscription-based one where every participating location of a franchise pays a small monthly fee for the services it uses. The services come as ‘modules’ that layer on top of the basic Rewards/Loyalty program. For instance, a franchise can add Mobile Payment or Online Ordering or Customer Survey or Appointment Scheduling to the Rewards/Loyalty program, and pay an additional monthly fee for those additional services. The pricing for our services scales with the number of locations, so larger systems get a lower price. Also, the client pays only for those text messages, picture messages, and emails that they actually send. This allows them to control their spending and not be subject to monthly minimums, ‘use them or lose them’ message buckets, etc. that many competitors impose on their clients.”

We discussed Skoop!’s scalability. As a franchise owner, I would want to be sure they had the framework to grow with my business, while taking on other clients. Dan has that all covered. “Skoop!’s infrastructure is all cloud-based, as is ‘best practice’ these days for businesses such as ours. This gives us the bandwidth-on-demand, redundancy, hot-standby, and location-sensitive content delivery capabilities that we need in order to supply our clients with the security, scalability and reliability that they expect. This is especially important as Skoop! both expands into non-US markets and on-boards bigger clients.”

The Future of Mobile Technology

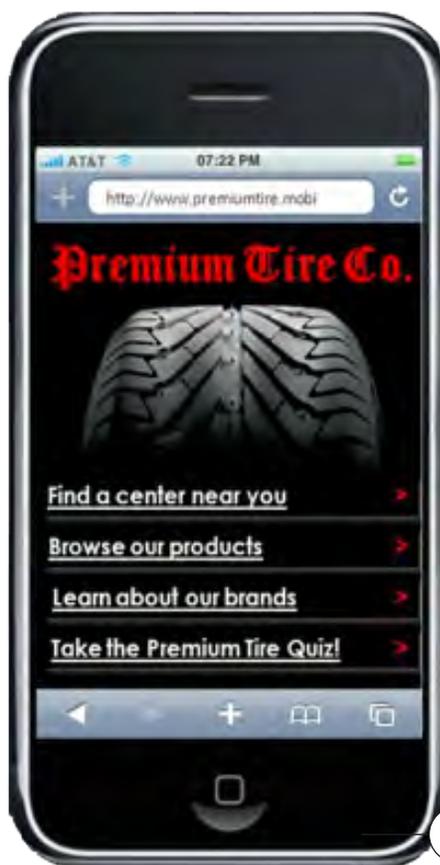
The man with a crystal ball when it comes to the future of mobile technology is sitting right in front of me. So I couldn’t help but ask him where he sees the mobile business going in the next year and where he thinks the market will be five years from now. He said, “Wow, it’s difficult enough predicting what will happen next year! I’ll only address mobile marketing, as opposed to the general case of ‘mobile’. All the trends point to a world in which marketing messages will get much more targeted, personal, and location/time/context-sensitive. Data from many sources will be combined, practically in real-time, to create a living profile of every customer or prospect, so that she/he can be presented with the most appropriate message for that exact

time/place (i.e., down to a few feet of where she/he is standing). The platform will know what you want, when you want it, where you want it, and what you will be willing to pay for it. This is very much in alignment with the past few years of evolution in the non-mobile internet world, except the mobile world adds the important element of ‘location’. This will require a new framework of laws and privacy policies to ensure that opted-in consumers are protected against abuse, at the same time allowing them to control the level of messaging they want.

“I also believe there will be a huge uptake in the use of mobile wallet technologies, rendering the use of plastic credit cards (and cash) obsolete for many consumers. There is obviously no need to carry around a wallet full of cards when your mobile device can satisfy that need. Of course, there are many very powerful vested interests in that battle, and a large installed base of plastic cards and card readers (including the coming ‘chip and pin’ cards), so this will be a rather bloody battle for years to come. But the major success of programs like the Starbucks mobile payment card and Skoop!’s new Mobile Payment platform point to the fact that consumers very much embrace the convenience and security of such systems.”

So what is on the horizon for Skoop!? “I can’t talk about specific prospects by name, but suffice it to say that we currently have a large pizza franchise in development, a major network of pubs in the UK that will be in pilot in January, a large frozen yoghurt franchise currently in a pilot program, a large retailer in the UK, and a large US-based hair salon in development. I expect all of these to be in production by mid-2015, which will add more than 6000 locations to our platform. Of course, we will probably also pick up an estimated 100+ new small, regional franchise clients in 2015, with a few thousand locations in aggregate.”

To learn more about Skoop!, go to www.skoop.com.





Skoop! Highlights

The Skoop! Franchise Platform contains

A Precision Marketing Platform, allowing franchises to precisely target text, email and picture messages to their customers based on past buying behavior and demographic and psychographic profiles

A powerful and comprehensive mobile application

A myriad of text, social media, and picture messaging applications

Best-of-class Loyalty/Rewards platform, Gift Card and e-Gift Card platform, Mobile Payment platform, Online Ordering platform, Customer Survey platform, Daily Deals platform, and Social Media platform

Administration Portal to manage it all in one place

With the Skoop! Franchise Platform, a franchise will

Capture new customers

Drive repeat business from existing customers

Increase the average ticket of rewards members

Increase brand awareness and reach

Enhance and amplify the effectiveness of traditional marketing programs

Measure marketing program results instantaneously and accurately

Increase customer satisfaction and loyalty with anytime, anywhere engagement with the brand

Skoop! transforms a franchise's traditional one-way marketing into an interactive, two-way relationship with each of its customers.