

MACRO

out of the box

BY BECKY EBENKAMP

Brandweek's consumer magazine for marketers: Insights into what consumers are thinking, how they're acting and why.

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The Six Faces of Wireless

▶ AND YOU THOUGHT YOUR JOB WAS TOUGH

Looking to hire someone for the New York office? Then make sure you're offering a diverse workplace. As the job market begins to loosen up, a *New York Times* Job Market survey finds that the majority of job seekers in the New York area would prefer to work in a diverse environment. Of those job seekers surveyed:

- 94% would rather work in a diverse workplace, while only 6% would rather not;
- 77% are looking for a diverse workplace in their next job;
- 76% say diversity improves the work environment, while only 7% say it worsens the environment; and,
- 55% say a diverse workplace is extremely or very important to them in their job search.

The survey noted that African American (68%) and Hispanic (67%) job seekers were more likely than Caucasian job seekers (46%) to respond in the above manner. Both hiring managers and job seekers agree that workplace diversity leads to better business performance. The percentages of those who think workplace diversity helps performance were as follows:

- 71% of job seekers;
- 66% of hiring managers from mid- to large-sized companies (100+ employees);
- 54% of hiring managers from small companies (fewer than 100 employees).

▶ CAN'T WE ALL GET ALONG?

Out of the Box seeks story ideas with a consumer slant. Send materials to Becky Ebenkamp at bebenkamp@brandweek.com or fax to (646) 654-5375.

By Lili Weigert

To understand the nature of the wireless service customer one needs to go beyond pure appearances. Heavy users tend to stand out for their tendencies to talk, talk, talk—on crowded street corners, trains or at airports—with little care to those around them. Light users, on the other hand, may forget to turn on their phone. Do they have differing needs? You bet.

With wireless technology changing our world, from the way we manage our time to the way we relate to one another, we decided to investigate the market to understand users' motivations. What we found was a disconnect between wireless products and consumers.

The manner in which wireless has made its way into our lives isn't really reflected in advertising messages, new wireless products or services. It's as if the technology is evolving in a vacuum, independent of the people using it.

For example, a recent Motorola print ad asks us to imagine using our cell phone to water the lawn, while another defines intelligence as "a phone with an FM radio." A third paired Motorola with MasterCard to make the claim, "No card is more accepted when shopping with your mobile phone." Truth be told, consumers in Japan are experimenting with a system that incorporates cell phone use into a debit payment option at vending machines, but the practice is still a long way from what drives current usage in this country.

For the most part, American consumers are still learning about cell phone basics; they want to be educated on usage, vastly divergent rate plans, safety and functionality.

Understanding how consumers really use wireless technology was an obvious starting point in our

process, so our "field research" consisted of talking to hundreds of people and studying their everyday habits. While most subjects admitted to having a cell phone, why they got it and how they use it varied widely. There were enough consistencies, though, to identify six distinct groups:

Super Connectors are the easiest to spot—they're the ones whose phones are always ringing. They'll happily admit to being joined at the hip to their mobiles, and they never, ever miss a call. "My phone is like my baby," said a classic Connector.

These people tend to be the hub of their social circles, the one to call for the latest scoop or party plans. Their phone allows them to stay on top of things; without them, they're lost.

Fashionistas are the folks whose phones are always cooler than yours. Like the clothes they wear or the cars they drive, Fashionistas' phones

reflect their sense of style. They spend as much customizing their phones with blinking lights and color-coordinated face plates as they do on the gadget itself. Their motto: My cell phone is a tool to enhance my lifestyle—it enables me to get in touch with friends and match my outfit.

Balanced Achievers like to work hard and play hard—but on his or her own schedule. Ask a Balanced Achiever what's the best thing about wireless technology and you'll hear how it has freed them from the leash of a 9-to-5 workday. By providing a virtual home base, wireless technology allows them to be anywhere, yet still accountable.

"My client always pictures me sitting in my office," says a typical Balanced Achiever, "even if I'm actually talking to her from the beach."

Nurturers value their cell phones because they offer peace of mind. If there's an emergency and someone needs to reach them immediately, this person is on standby.

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Nurturers also tend to have lots of scheduling needs—daycare, carpools, doctors' appointments—and the cell phone helps things work smoothly.

"My wife and I share one," said one Nurturer. "Whoever's turn it is to pick up the kids takes it to work."

Then there's the *"It's just a phone!"* segment. To them, a cell is simply a regular phone without wires. It's not something that will ever have much importance in their life. They are not concerned with the latest features or models, or looking for a phone to replace their PDA or computer. All they ask is for the mobile to work when and where they want to use it.

The Technophobe: Although hard to find, there are still people out there who choose not to have cell phones. Technophobes are generally anti-technology, and consider cell phones a nuisance rather than a convenience. These Luddites don't want to be reachable at all times, in fact that concept seems invasive and a violation of privacy. "It's yet another way for people to find and bother me," is a typical Technophobe reaction.

While they may concede that a cell phone is useful in case of emergency, a Technophobe is quick to point out that he can't remember a time when someone needed to reach him and couldn't.

Looking at wireless technology in an everyday context gave us a new perspective on the Wireless Revolution. We learned that despite all the hype, the reality is that consumers have very specific wireless expectations and needs. Understanding these needs must be an integral part of a company's process, from product development to advertising messages.

Otherwise, if companies keep promising the moon when consumers are still trying to get good reception, it will take longer for wireless technology to fill the spot it merits. ■

Lili Weigert is an account planner at Butler, Shine and Stern in Sausalito, Calif. She can be contacted at 415-331-6049 or lweigert@bsands.com.