

Improving the Kiosk Experience with Analytics

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By Richard Slawsky | Contributing writer,
KioskMarketplace.com

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The self-service kiosk has become an integral part of our lives over the past few decades. According to research by Williamstown, Massachusetts-based Markets and Markets, the global interactive kiosk market is expected to reach \$73.4 billion by 2020, growing at a compound annual rate of 9.2 percent from \$44.2 billion in 2014.

Falling equipment prices and developments in technology are helping to increase the spread of self-service kiosks. Their interactive nature and the services they provide are helping to drive their acceptance on the part of consumers.

For a kiosk deployer, though, it's not enough to simply place a kiosk and hope for the best. To get the maximum benefit and the quickest return on investment, it's important to know what works and what doesn't.

Analytics can help accomplish that task.

Using usage reports

For some insight into how quickly self-service kiosks have become an integral part of consumers' lives, one need only look at its relatively brief history.

The predecessor to the self-service kiosk, the ATM, originally hit the scene in the 1960s, but the first interactive kiosk was developed in 1977 at the University of Illinois, the kiosk, dubbed The Plato Hotline, allowed users to look up movie schedules, maps, directories, bus schedules, courses and other information.

One of the first widespread uses of interactive technology came at the airport via self-service ticketing and check-in kiosks. Today, it's difficult to imagine not printing out boarding passes at one of those devices before taking a trip.

And today, interactive kiosk technology is being used for everything from bill pay to photo development, with offerings such as patient check-in at the doctor's office and the printing of building permits at City Hall quickly gaining hold.

And while it seems as if incorporating kiosk technology into a business' service toolbox is a sure bet, that's not always the case. As with any operation, a poor location compounded by poor design can spell the death of a kiosk deployment.



Improvements to a kiosk deployment don't have to a hit-or-miss proposition, though.

Most who have investigated the potential of adding self-service kiosks are familiar with the concept of remote monitoring. With remote monitoring software, deployers can be notified if a kiosk is offline or in need of service. In addition, they can track how many transactions occur each day, with information typically accessible via an online portal.

But the capability of remote monitoring software can go far beyond the simple tracking of usage statistics. It can also help in tracking and optimizing the customer experience.

“When a company is beginning to consider the viability of deploying a self-service solution in any vertical, customer experience – also known as user experience – should always be the highest consideration,” said Chris Gilder, CEO of Aberdeen, North Carolina-based kiosk technology provider Meridian.

Meridian's Mzero software suite allows deployers to manage multiple kiosks, offering the ability to remotely monitor and control the on-kiosk application, providing configuration and control, status reporting and dashboards.

“Whatever the solution, whether it is ticketing, bill payment, way finding, license renewal or something else, it is vital to understand that customer experience is directly impacted

by whether or not a desired outcome has been achieved,” Gilder said. “This is true in any business or organizational transaction; but in the world of interactive self-service kiosk solutions, it is paramount.”

In addition to basic usage information, some remote monitoring solutions can provide information such as touches and transaction length, with that information then used to tweak the user interface for a smoother, quicker transaction flow. If a cash acceptor isn’t used a great deal, it might be worthwhile to consider dropping that feature. And if there are a significant number of abandoned transactions, knowing the details of those transactions may provide answers as to why and make the necessary changes.

“Once you have gone through the important task of mining the analysis, it is crucial that step be followed by actions that improve customer experience,” said Paul Burden, director of software for Meridian.

“Therefore, if the goal of mining analytical data is to ultimately improve and enhance customer experience, the data must correlate to a desired outcome,” Burden said. “If a self-service kiosk is in place so that users can buy tickets, for instance, the data you are after should be related to the outcome of purchasing a ticket. It is safe to assume that a customer’s experience is not good if an outcome is not achieved.”

Eyes on the prize

Although the concept of analytics in terms of kiosk usage typically refers to touches, transaction length and the like, there are additional aspects of the process that can be measured and acted upon to improve the customer experience.

Before and after someone physically engages with a kiosk, there are visual interactions that may offer clues to ways of improving the effectiveness of the device.

Do many people walk by without a glance? Maybe the attract screen needs to be improved. Are most of the people passing by the kiosk teenagers while your target customers are senior citizens? Maybe it’s time to consider a move. Does one ad on the screen attract a user’s gaze, while another causes them to look away? Maybe it’s time to switch out the one that’s performing poorly.

“When people are near the kiosk, and in addition to potential and actual visitor counts, video analytics software can anonymously detect the presence of potential users



and collect demographic group data in order to facilitate more relevant engagement and targeted delivery of brand messaging,” said Meridian CEO Chris Gilder.

With video analytics, a camera attached to the kiosk sends data to face detection software, capturing information such as how long the individual viewed the device and classifies viewer by age, gender, and so forth. Meridian’s Mzero software suite, for example, features the Mzero Metrics camera analytics engine that makes visual analytics available for kiosks and interactive digital signage.

“The more targeted messaging and advertising generated by visual analytics results in higher likelihood of people approaching the digital signage and higher usage and conversion versus a ‘one size fits all’ mass message,” Gilder said. “As people approach the digital signage, video and audio cues can combine to incentivize people to touch the screen and engage. An attract screen, with the more personalized experience based on the visual analytics and tools such as engaging animation, draws the user in more effectively and ideally has a clear call to action.”

While the idea of video analytics, often referred to as facial recognition, can create the idea of privacy invasion and Big Brother, that couldn’t be further from the truth. Video analyt-

Delivering ROI with Kiosk Analytics

Big Data gets all the headlines these days; but it can easily lead to information overload unless deployers utilize these three proven steps to manage and harness the data from a kiosk deployment.

Collection: This is the simplest step but is also a fundamentally critical one. In order to collect data, your kiosk must have software tools in place that will gather the different types of key information. There must be a mechanism where important data points are collected; these are primarily going to include usage stats – touches, length of transaction, usage of specific components, etc. The collection of this data is a vital first step. Choosing software that is equipped to handle and gather this information is crucial when planning your self-service kiosk deployment. But simply storing this information would be meaningless. It is what you learn from the data that matters.

Reporting: When it comes to answering the question of what to do with your data, there is a sequence of necessary responses. The first is that the data must be compiled; this is reporting. Re-

porting is the process of organizing data into informational summaries in order to monitor how various aspects of a self-service kiosk deployment are performing. If you have multiple kiosks in the field, whether it is 10 units or 10,000, there has to be a mechanism by which this reporting is done that is not tied to each local machine. The best solution for this is remote monitoring software. A good cloud-based remote monitoring solution will give anyone tasked with managing a fleet of kiosks the access to dashboards with a variety of customizable reporting tools.

Analytics: Once data have been collected and then compiled into useful reports, there must be a final step of looking at the data in order to gain knowledge. Analytics is the process of exploring data to see patterns and extract meaningful insights, which can then be used to better understand and improve the performance of a kiosk deployment. When it comes to delivering ROI, collecting data and then organizing it are not enough. The true tip of the spear is analytics that leads to action.

Source: Meridian

ics is completely anonymous. No images are recorded and no information is collected that could identify an individual.

Instead, the software only logs statistical audience data, tracking the user and the user's eyes to learn what content was on the screen when eye contact occurred and if eye contact was made with specific ads. Using that information, deployers can learn which content and ads were viewed or not viewed, capturing dwell and attention time for specific types of content.

“The visual analytics lead to dynamic learning and an adaptive advertising process in which companies learn which messages and ads work and what needs to be changed,” Gilder said. “The ongoing measurement of ads and targeting of groups and individuals results in superior customer experiences, higher conversion rates and higher ROI.”



About the sponsor:

Meridian is the Customer Experience Leader in self-service solutions, a fully integrated manufacturer of kiosks and interactive digital signage and developer of the Mzero software suite. Leveraging over 25 years of industry experience, Meridian specializes in the design, engineering, fabrication, assembly, integration, deployment and support of products and custom solutions. Meridian delivers high quality self-service experiences at scale for industry-leading companies, partners and their customers. Find out more at <http://meridiankiosks.com>.