

# V is for value as mobile customers seek out best deals

by David Powell

AS the chill recessionary winds continue to buffet these shores, it's worth asking – even tentatively – if Ireland's love affair with the mobile phone may just be on the wane.

In the boom years, mobiles were like jobs – everybody had one. With money to burn we went phone crazy, talking and texting our way to a mobile penetration rate of 100% by the end of 2005.

Now, though, as people

look to tighten their belts by any means necessary, the question is: can we still afford to be the chattiest nation on earth? Will our need to save overcome our need to speak?

Happily for companies like Vodafone – Ireland's leading mobile operator – the Irish are not laying down their phones. Indeed, far from it.

According to Carolan Lennon, Vodafone Ireland's Consumer Director, business may be tough – but it's still going strong.

"We're actually finding that people are using their phones more rather than less," she says. "Mobile phones are a core part of people's lives and that's not going to change.

"However, while our customers are making more calls and sending more texts than ever, they are now looking for more value," she adds. "So the type of calls they're making and texts they're sending are different than before."

The v-word again. Whether they're shopping for family cars or family meals, Irish customers have a new, hard-edged expectation that they will, they must, get more value.

"That's a challenge for us," agrees Lennon, "and we are working harder than ever to keep coming up with the offers and packages that satisfy that core demand for value.

"For example, our new 'Simply' price plan is aimed at customers who are looking for great value with no handset and no longer term commitment.

"We also have a 'Super IOU' package – this is essentially a short-term overdraft facility that allows pre-pay customers get €4 worth of credit instantly, which can tide them over until they are able to top-up again," she says. "Our customers tell us time and again that they really value Super IOU. These are the kind of deals and offers that people are seeking out."

Talking of seeking out, in the changed landscape that is Ireland Inc., how do companies like Vodafone seek out their customers? In marketing terms, is it a case of trying to do more

with less?

"Not with us, no, we have not reduced our [marketing] spend to any great extent," says Vodafone's Carolan Lennon.

## Keep getting messages out

"I'm a firm believer that the companies that will come out of this recession in the best shape are the ones that keep promoting their brand and keep getting their messages out there," she says.

"People are looking for brands with confidence, and for a market-leader like Vodafone that means developing messages that inspire confidence."

If you're any sort of media consumer, indeed if you so much as step outside your front door for any length of time, the chances are you will have spotted some of these messages recently.

"We're a big brand so we need a big presence," Lennon acknowledges. "Channel-wise we have to go where our customers go, so we have a very strong online presence. We run a lot of banner ads and we use a lot of social media and networking sites like Facebook and Twitter.

"We also aim to make our presence felt across the traditional media of TV, press and outdoor," she says.

"Newspapers are an integral part of our marketing activity; in fact press is the largest single medium that we use," says Vodafone's Consumer Director. "We're spending more on press advertising than any other

medium this year, and that trend will probably continue.

"We find that press is extremely useful for tactical marketing," she adds. "It's working well for our current 'Show eircom the door' campaign, which we used to dominate the front page of a national newspaper recently, and also to highlight our sponsorship of the GAA football championship."

## Visuality of newspapers

So what's so powerful about press? "Well, the visuality of the newspaper format gives us the space to go into detail about things like price and value," Lennon says. "Also at a very basic level, a press ad allows us to show our range of handsets and that's very important.

"In addition to conventional [newspaper] advertising, we also use inserts and advertorials as well as 'domination' campaigns where we show the full range of our advertising in a single edition.

"As a big brand, we have a lot of messages to transmit and newspapers give us the scope to target different sections of our customer base with different messages," she says.

The targeting potential of newspapers is well-established in media circles, with research like the Joint National Readership Survey (JNRS) providing agencies and advertisers with valuable demographic and lifestyle information about newspaper readers.

With the latest JNRS



Tactical advertising, such as the current Vodafone campaign, is one of the strengths of newspapers.

showing that a record 3.1 million people are now regular newspaper readers, it's clear that the medium offers companies like Vodafone a means of connecting with their audience.

"For advertisers, one of the other key advantages of the press medium is the relationship that people have with their newspaper," says Carolan Lennon.

"It's a uniquely active

media in that people choose a certain title, pay for it, carry it around for the day and really engage with it," she says. "The ritual of the Sunday papers is another example of that active choice.

"So you know that when people read their newspaper, they really read it," she adds. "That's a powerful thing for advertisers to tap into."

## In Brief

### New standards for Irish press industry

For the first time ever, Ireland's publishers, wholesalers and retailers have joined forces to agree a new set of environmental standards and a new code of practice.

The two new documents, designed to bring greater cooperation and efficiency to the Irish newspaper and magazine industry, were presented to the Minister for the Environment at a launch in Dublin recently.

The launch of the two new sets of protocols commits Irish publishers, wholesalers and retailers to a series of environmental and management standards and targets.

In addition to improving the environmental performance of those with a stake in Ireland's 'paper chain', the new standards are also designed to help to ensure the continued free flow of information in this country.

### Newspaper readership on the up

A record 3.1 million people or 88% of the adult population are now regular newspaper readers, according to the influential JNRS report for 2008/09.

The new Joint National Readership Survey also shows that newspapers attracted an impressive 64,000 new readers in the past 12 months alone.

Frank Cullen of National Newspapers of Ireland (NNI) said the research highlighted "an unprecedented hunger for in-depth news coverage and analysis".

"First of all we're delighted with these figures, they're a good news story for newspapers at a tough time," he said.

"Clearly, when it comes to news coverage people are looking for more than soundbites," Cullen went on. "They want the insight that only newspapers can provide, in a setting they are comfortable with."