



# Push Notifications

What They Are, How They Work,  
and Why They Matter

*braze*

The buzzing in your pocket when there's breaking news. The message that pops up on your smartphone screen about a one-day sale (whether that app's open or not). The haptic hum on your wrist alerting you to dial into your next meeting. We've been sending and receiving push notifications since 2009, and there's no slowdown in sight.



Now more than a decade old, push is no longer a new messaging channel. But what this maturing channel lacks in novelty, it makes up for in innovation and versatility. Since first arriving on the scene as a way for brands to engage with customers via mobile devices, push notifications have expanded to work on smartwatches and desktop and mobile web browsers and to include advanced features such as support for rich content, Push Stories, push action buttons, geofence capabilities, frequency capping, and more.

And, importantly, as a key pillar of cross-channel campaigns, push notifications have been shown to drive engagement, helping brands develop, sustain, and retain customer relationships over time.

# Push Notifications 101

## What are push notifications anyway?

Push notifications tend to be short, catchy messages that can be sent to anyone who is opted into receiving updates from your company's app or website, even when they aren't currently active there.

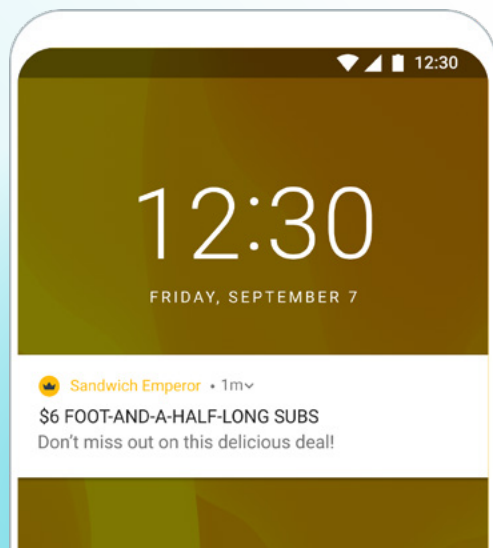
As the first mobile-native messaging channel, push notifications have grown into a powerful engagement tool for cementing customer relationships and boosting revenue. When you think "push," you may think of [smartphones and tablets](#). Innovative marketers, though, are already using [web push notifications](#) to reach customers through

browsers and sending push notifications to wearable devices like the Apple Watch. As the popularity of wearables grows and more websites begin supporting push, these emerging platforms will give you new ways to keep the lines of communication open between your brand and your customers.

**Let's get to know the three most popular types of push notifications.**

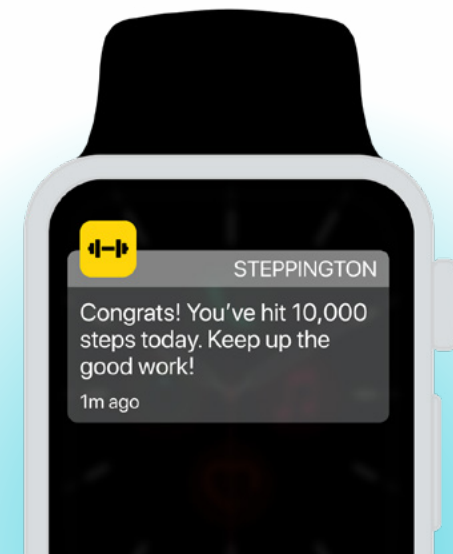
# Popular Push Channels

## Mobile Push Notifications



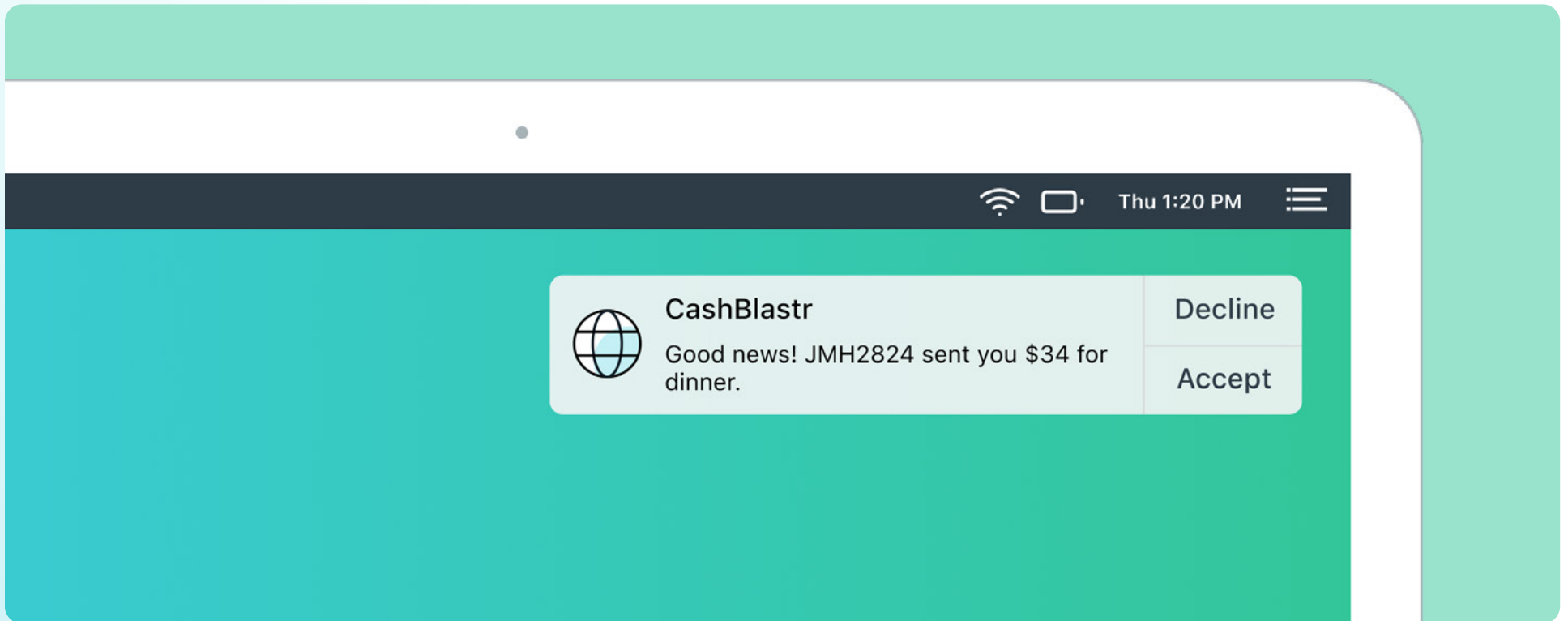
The mother of all push. These messages make the most of the intimate nature of mobile devices, allowing brands to reach people no matter where they are or what they're doing. That makes mobile push very effective in the right circumstances, but very annoying in the wrong ones. Like all push notifications, these should be used with care.

## Wearable Push Notifications



Out of the pocket and onto the wrist. Push notifications sent to wearables are more intimate than mobile push, making them even harder for customers to ignore—but also increasing the chances that they will be irritated by irrelevant or too-frequent messages. If your organization isn't thoughtful about the messages you send to these devices, increased opt-outs and uninstalls are likely.

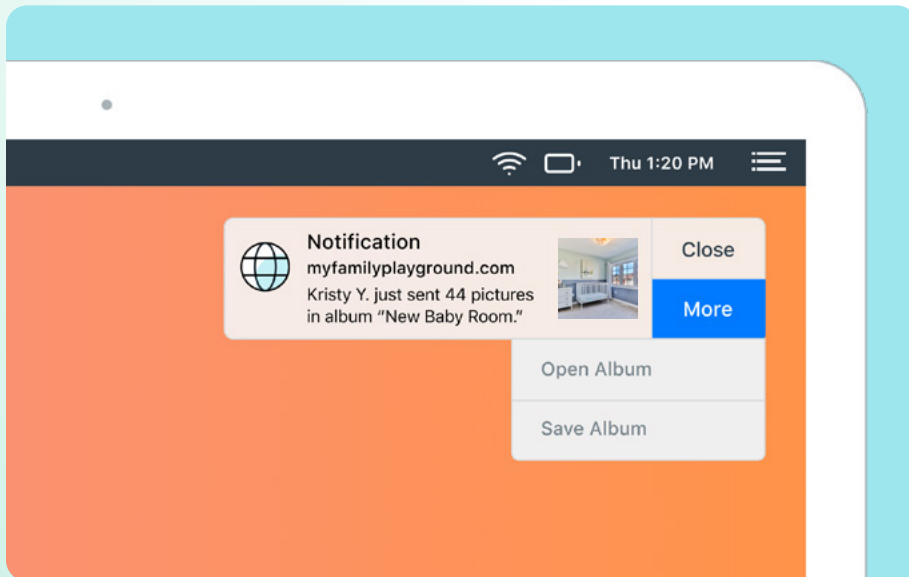
## Web Push Notifications



This newest breed of push notifications mean marketers can broaden their communication strategy to online visitors through urgent messages delivered via web browsers. This is still an emerging channel, so tread carefully—you'll likely need to educate users about the value of this channel before they agree to opt in.

# Popular Push Features

## Rich Push Notifications



If your vision of push notifications consists entirely of simple plain text and a smattering of emojis, think again. Current operating systems on mobile devices and laptops enable rich push notification capabilities, empowering brands to surprise and delight customers. With rich push, you can pair short text with an arresting image, or even a gallery of products to pick from right within the push notification itself.

Adding images and other rich content to push notifications can increase conversions by 57%, successfully encouraging recipients to take action\*.

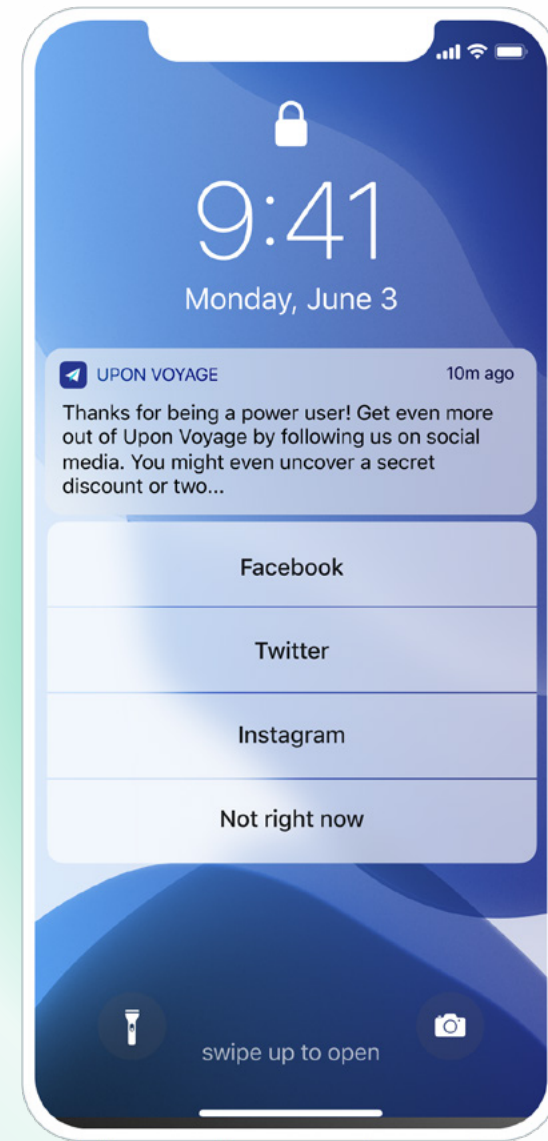
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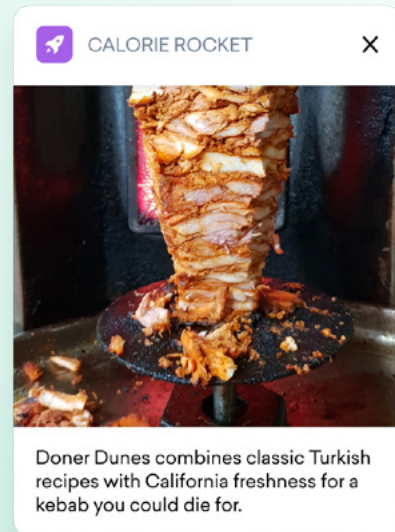
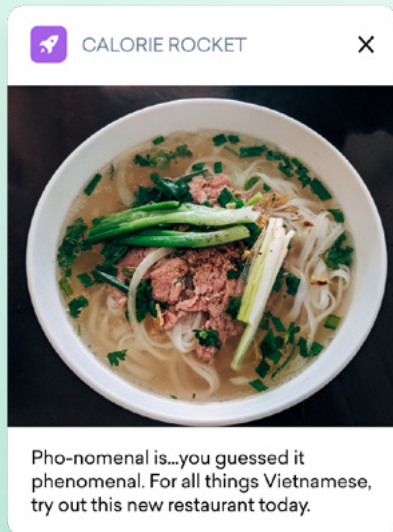
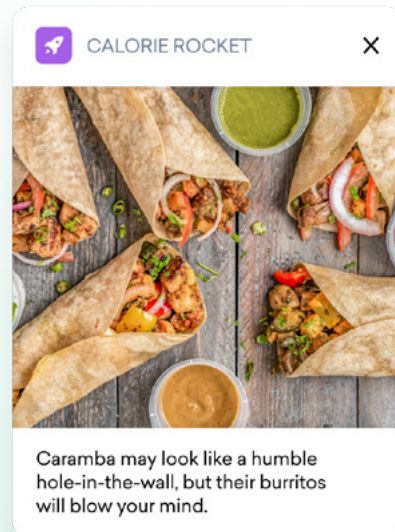
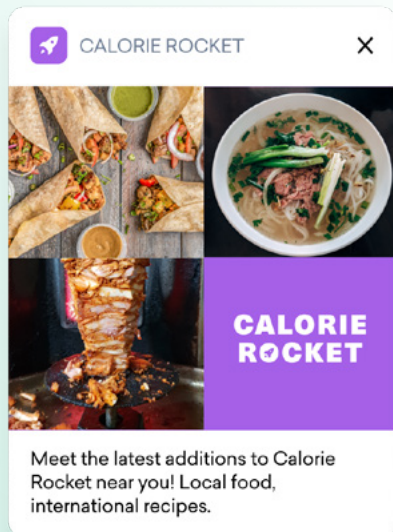
## Push Action Buttons

One of the most impactful innovations for this channel, push action buttons (which are literal buttons that can be added to the push notifications you send) allow brands to put customers in the driver seat by giving them the option to take action—from snoozing a message to ordering a ride—in connection with the messages they receive.

Now it's even easier for users to engage with your brand directly within push notifications, without having to even open your app. Push notification action buttons make it possible for customers to interact with up to four distinct buttons, creating a more seamless, more interactive messaging experience.



## Push Stories



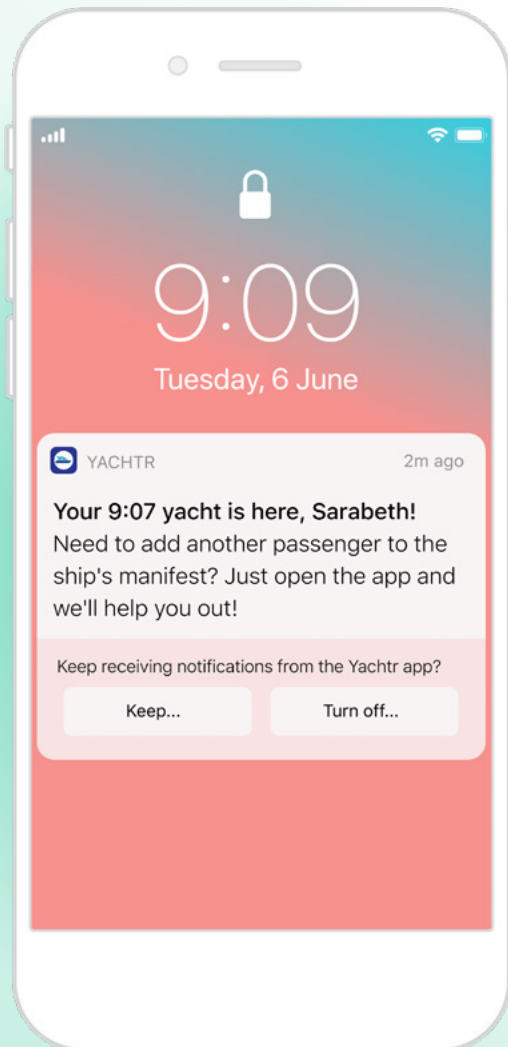
If a picture is worth a thousand words, then imagine what a carousel of images can do for your messaging. That's what you get with Push Stories. This powerful new tool makes it possible for brands to package a series of images into a carousel-like interactive gallery within an individual push notification. Even better? Use Push Stories in conjunction with interaction- and action-based buttons for a fully interactive experience.

Showcase multiple items that are currently on sale. Provide a richer picture of the situation with your breaking news alerts. Even highlight different possible matches for dating app users. It's all possible with Push Stories.

**Delivery Hero** reconnected with lapsed users by sending personalized, highly-visual Push Stories notifications to customers who hadn't interacted with the brand in the past seven days. By creating fun, engaging stories, the delivery platform made the case for those users to re-engage.



## Provisional Push



Let's say your company sends the best push notifications out there. Now picture the work that's involved in convincing people to opt in to receive messages from you before they ever get the chance to see your notification masterpieces in action. Once you add the barrier of opting in, you're most likely going to lose some portion of your audience right from the start. Fortunately, there's now a workaround of sorts for that.

Introduced by Apple in 2018, provisional push allows apps to [send push notifications to iOS users](#) without their explicit opt-in, giving companies a chance to prove to audiences just how valuable their notifications really are.

Provisional push notifications get delivered directly to recipients, and users are given the option to "Keep" or "Turn Off" future notifications from the brand sending them. If a user taps the "Keep" button, they can decide whether they want your app's notifications delivered more prominently (e.g. opting-in fully for push) or if they'd rather continue receiving them quietly. If they tap "Turn Off," then they won't see any more provisional messages from you, so it's important to be thoughtful about the messages sent using this functionality.



## Notification Channels

First introduced by Google in 2017 as a way to encourage brands to provide Android users with positive, relevant user experiences, notification channels allow messages to be separated into different groups (think “transactional” vs. “promotional” or “breaking news” vs. “human interest”). Consumers get control over their push message preferences, so that they can be alerted to the types of messages they want most, while opting out of the ones that don’t interest them. For example, instead of opting out of all of the notifications your brand sends, a user might choose to opt out of promotional messages only, or activity messages only, or some other subset as opposed to all of your pushes all at once. This gives you the opportunity to let users opt down instead of out.

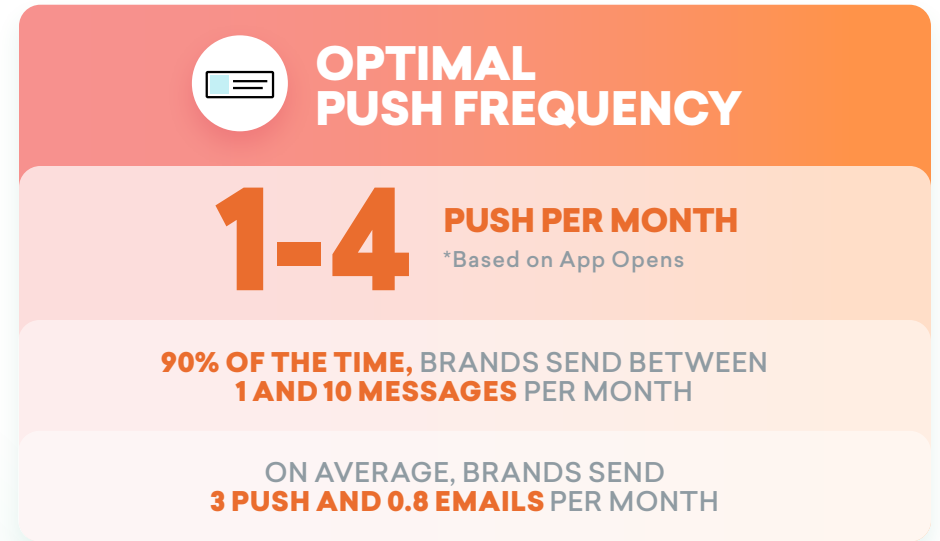
While this means that some members of your audience may not see every push you send them, it also means that they’re likely seeing the push notifications that they’re actually interested in receiving—and that they’ll have less reason to opt out entirely of push or uninstall your app. It’s a win-win for brands and consumers alike. It’s worth noting that on Android, notification channels are mandatory, but the specific categories of channels are set by the individual app, allowing brands a great deal of control over how this tool is used.

## Geofence Push Campaigns



As many as [83% of app users](#) view location data as critical to their mobile experience, but too many brands fail to leverage this information. By asking members of your audience to share their location data with you, you can send powerful geofence campaigns—that is messages, such as location-based promotions or news updates, based on their address or current locale. These geo-triggered push notifications can be sent when a user enters, leaves, or dwells within a defined “geofence”—AKA, a predetermined location tracked using GPS, RFID, Wi-Fi, or cellular data.

## Push with Frequency Capping



Nobody wants to be overwhelmed with messages, so knowing how often you should send can do a lot to improve customer relationships. Braze research has found that the optimal push frequency for brands looking to drive app opens is 1-4 push messages per user per month; however, that ideal frequency can vary by industry, so consult our [look at send frequency](#) to get the full picture. Looking to manage send frequency? Use frequency caps. You can ensure users see no more than X number of messages by channel or in total during a given period or cap messages based on tags, allowing marketers to set a more restrictive promotional message cap while allowing more welcome messages, for example.

# What Time Is it?

## Time to Talk About 4 Common Push Notification Scheduling Types

**1**

### **Time-based scheduling**

Send campaigns immediately or at a pre-chosen time (whether once or on a recurring schedule, such as sending every Monday), perfect for breaking news notifications or messages letting people know that their favorite show is about to come on.

**2**

### **Action-based scheduling**

Automatically trigger push notifications the moment someone takes a specific action (such as the confirmation of a purchase or appointment) to support highly responsive, relevant messaging on an individualized basis.

**3**

### **Send-time optimized scheduling**

Automatically send messages during each individual's unique high-engagement windows (say 8 am for early risers or 2 am for night owls), ensuring that they see them when they're most likely to take action.

**4**

### **API-triggered scheduling**

Trigger messages not just based on customer actions on your app or website, but also in connection to information in your own proprietary servers or systems, or from an external API (like a weather information or location data platform).

## **Some of Your Customers Prefer Receiving Push—Make Sure That's What You're Sending**

Great customer engagement comes with understanding your users' preferences and leveraging data, technology, and effective cross-team collaboration to honor them. By using the Braze platform's [Intelligent Channel](#) tool, it's now possible to ensure that your brand is contacting each customer via their preferred engagement channel (e.g. push, email, etc.), as determined by their past engagement behavior.

With Intelligent Channel, brands can automatically leverage the channel that has the best engagement track record with each user, removing marketer bias for or against particular channels from the equation and ensuring that channel selection is being informed by the available data. What does that look like? Imagine a bank that's looking to send a monthly credit score update. With Intelligent Channel, they can send that message as a push to those who prefer that channel and as an email to users who'd rather get the communication in their inbox.

# Push Notifications: Strengths & Weaknesses

Grab your customers' attention. Reach them no matter what they're doing. And deliver personalized messages that inspire action. Push notifications sound like an all-powerful messaging channel, right? So why not just use push as much as you possibly can? The answer is that while well-designed push campaigns can improve overall

engagement, poorly deployed ones can have the direct opposite effect, sending customers running.

**Let's go over the pros and cons of push, and how to maintain an appealing balance of messaging for customers on the receiving end.**



# Pros and Cons of Push



## Pros

### You Can Reach Customers, Even When They're Not Directly Engaging

Since push is highly visible on phones, watches, and computers, the odds are good that a message sent in this channel will be seen. So when you absolutely, positively need to reach a customer, push may well be the best way.

### Push Is Great at Prompting Customers to Engage (and Lapsing Audience Members to Re-Engage)

Use push well, and you can drive up engagement, conversions, and ROI, and hold onto customers who might otherwise slip away. Push is especially powerful when it comes to re-engagement, giving your outreach a second chance to resonate.

### Push Helps Overall Cross-Channel Support

While some brands only send push, this channel performs best as part of a comprehensive cross-channel strategy. Pair push's ability to reach customers beyond the app or website with in-app messages's power to engage active users and you'll see engagement results beyond what any one channel can achieve on its own.



## Cons

### But... Not Everyone Opt's Into Receiving Push

You can't send push to users who haven't opted in—and that's a decent number of people. That means a significant chunk of your audience may never see the push you send.

### But... Not Everyone Who Opt's into Push Will Engage with Your Notifications

Some people don't check their email often, some click past in-app messages...and some ignore push. To engage your customers, you need to find the channels that speak to each user and use them to communicate effectively.

### But... Sending Too Many Push Notifications Can Trigger Uninstalls

Push works best in moderation—and 78% of customers will opt out of push notifications or uninstall an app entirely if they get notifications they're unhappy with. Show customers you get it with a custom push opt-in that tells them what to expect if they enable push and reduce the risk that they'll opt out.

# Push Notifications: Benefits for Customer Engagement



Increase in customer engagement associated with sending push notifications, compared to customers that receive no messages—underscoring the positive impact that this channel can have on your customer engagement strategy.

# 3 Ways to Get More Out of Push

**1****Use push alongside a cross-channel strategy:**

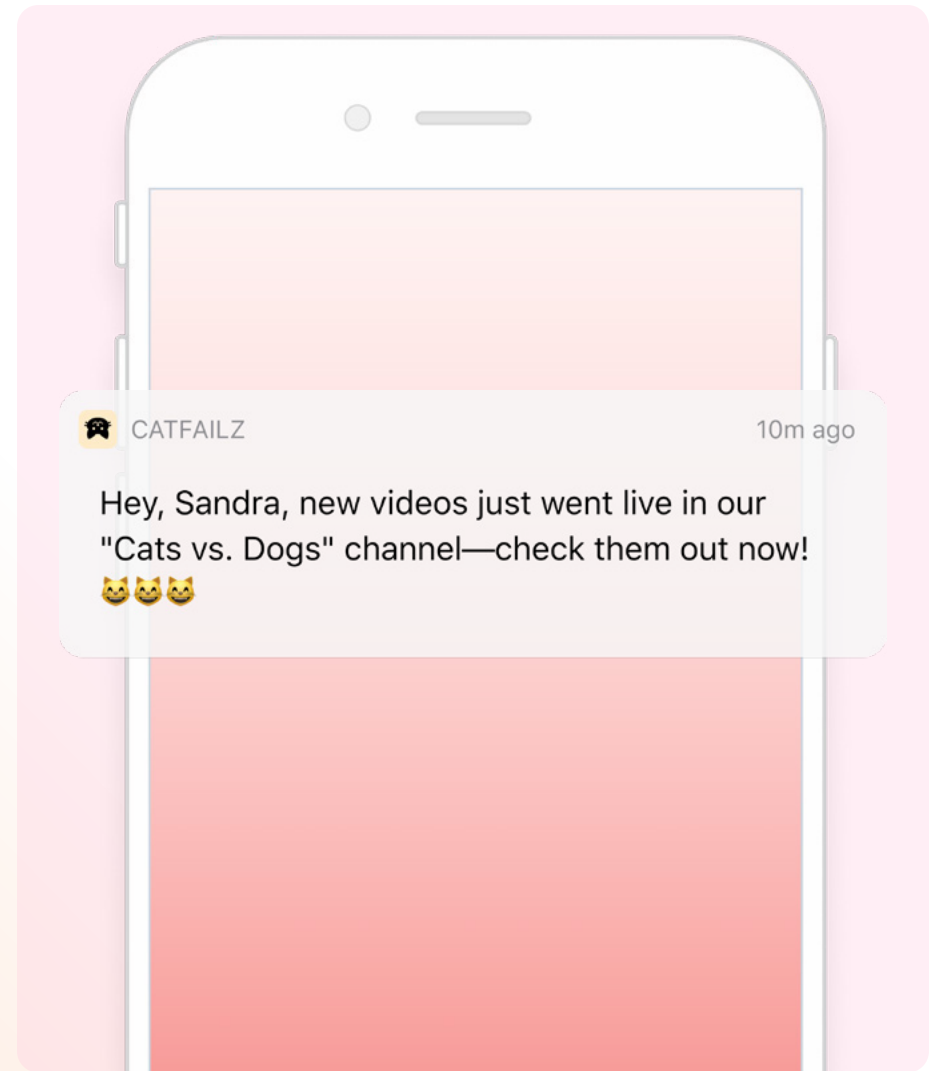
Brands that deploy push notification campaigns as part of a larger cross-channel approach, see even greater increases in engagement rates—as high as [844%](#) higher than brands that send no mobile messages.

**2****Get the timing of sending push notifications right:**

Brands that trigger timely push notifications in response to specific customer actions see a [boost in message open rates by as much as 5.5x](#).

**3****Leverage personalization:**

Reaching out to customers by name (“Hi Monica!” instead of “Hi”) or using other forms of message personalization can lead to at least a [1.3x increase in open rates](#).



# 4 Effective Push Notification Campaigns to Add to Your Messaging Mix



## Welcome Campaigns

Want to make sure that new customers continue to engage with your app after that first session? Supplement your [in-app messaging](#) that walks individuals through app-specific details with push notifications that target those customers who bail before finishing the onboarding process. Use push to point out enticing content that will encourage on-the-fence folks to get fully onboard with your brand—and celebrate early milestones to empower new users who do complete the process on schedule.



## Promotions

Have a big sale coming up? Put together a [cross-channel campaign](#) that alerts active customers with [in-app messages](#) and leverages email to highlight specific items to pique the interest of less engaged users. Follow up with push for a sense of urgency as your promotion comes to a close, encouraging last-minute purchases.



## Win-Back Campaigns

Want to win back people who've stopped opening your app or visiting your website? A cross-channel campaign leveraging both email and push notifications ensures that you'll reach the largest group of your inactive customers in distinctly different ways, engaging both the ones who respond to push's direct approach and those won over by email's rich content. And, of course, [reviving abandoned carts](#) with push is the kind of re-engagement that goes right to your brand's bottom line.



## Time-Sensitive Alerts

Looking to message around something that's [immediately relevant](#), like a heat wave or major holiday? Sending a push notification places your timely message in front of them when it matters. Add a [deep link](#) to send customers directly to a related in-app message or Content Card, and you'll impress them with your real-time prowess.

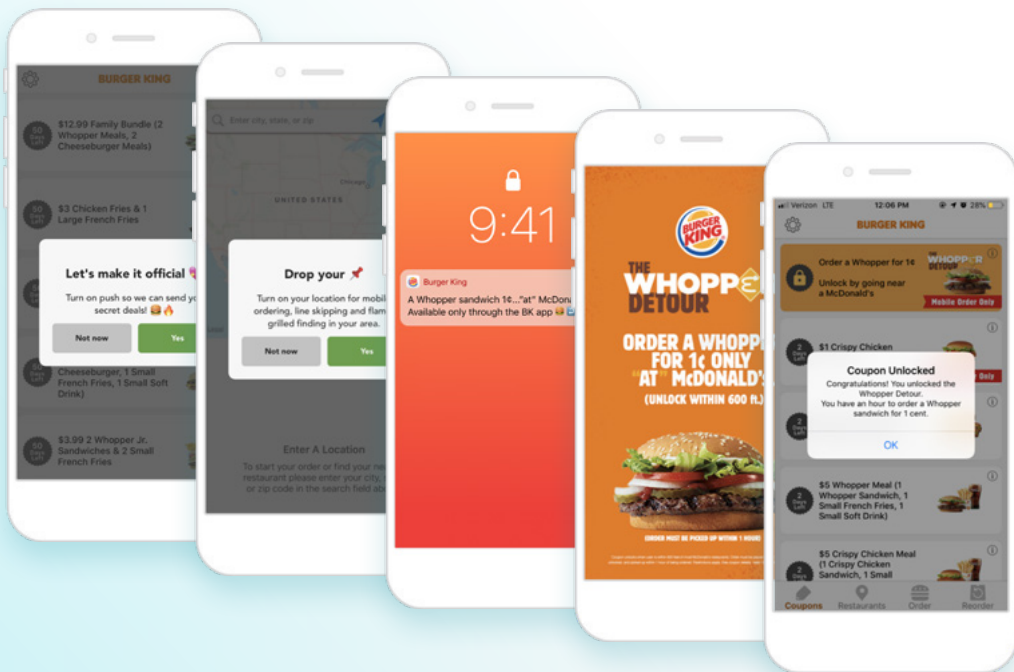
# Push Notifications: **Use Cases & Customer Stories**

Today's top global brands are using Braze to send billions of messages per month to more than 1 billion monthly active users. Here are some of their push notification success stories.



# Burger King Case Study

Leveraging Geofence Push Notifications to Increase Monthly Active Users by 50+%



In its Cannes Lions Festival [award-winning](#) campaign, dubbed the “The Whopper Detour,” Burger King took advantage of [geofencing](#) and smart [cross-channel lifecycle messaging](#), including push notifications, to convert 14,000 of Burger King’s number-one competitor’s locations into traffic-building promotional venues. The pitch: Customers could get one-cent Whoppers, but only if they opened the Burger King app within 600 feet of a McDonald’s.

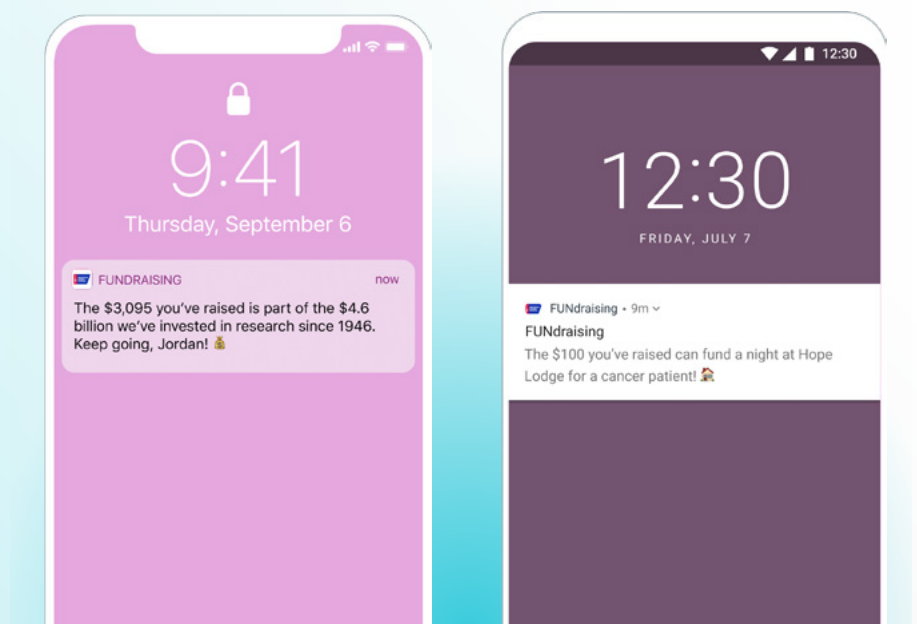
As the campaign kicked off, Burger King invited new users to opt in for notifications and unlock this unique, creative deal. Next, an in-app message was sent to users to prime them for permissions, inviting them to enable both push and location services. Then a push notification was sent to alert users of this deal, and drive them to the app.

The wildly successful idea delivered the following [major results](#):

- **3.2 million new users** installed the Burger King app
- Burger King’s app landed in the **#1 spot on Google Play and the Apple App Store**
- Burger King saw a **53.7% increase in monthly active users** (MAUs) for its mobile app
- The number of users sharing their location data with Burger King **jumped 143%**
- And, overall, the total ROI from the Whopper Detour campaign came in at [an incredible 37-1](#)

# American Cancer Society Case Study

## How This Nonprofit Used Push to Increase In-App Fundraising by 34%



To create a deeper connection and awareness around its fundraising work, the American Cancer Society (ACS) sent impactful and inspiring content via mobile app [push notifications](#) around its signature events, including around National Cancer Survivors Day and its Relay for Life fundraisers.

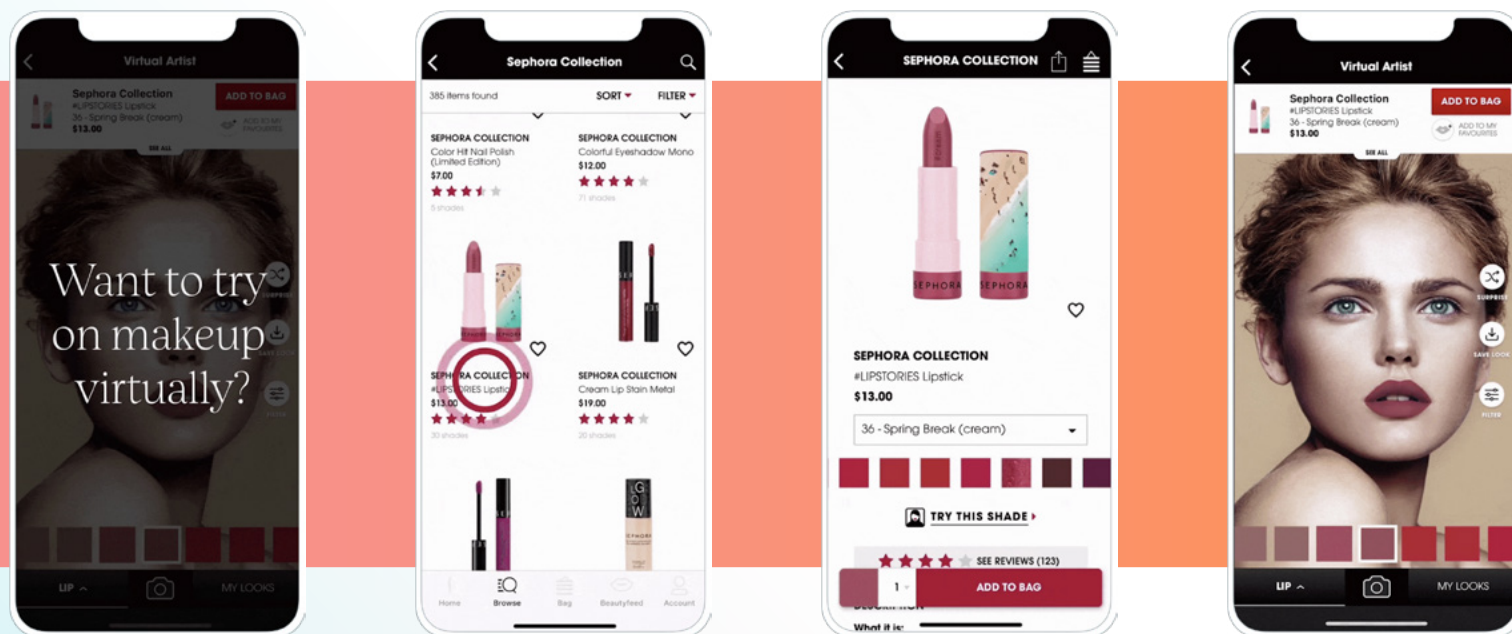
ACS's targeted messaging took full advantage of audience segmentation and personalization. In one instance, when participants raised over \$100, that action triggered a push notification showing how this money paid for one night in a Hope Lodge for a patient who needed care.

ACS also segmented the audience by OS platform, writing shorter messages that were optimized for display on Android and longer ones for iOS. Other messages dynamically displayed the amount of money each participant had raised and featured their first name to increase the number of messages opened and inspire additional donations.

Switching to more mission-aligned, personalized, timely messages paid off big-time for ACS. **Tens of thousands of additional dollars** of in-app funds were raised—an estimated **34% increase**. Overall, **50% of recipients started a session within three days**, and **new messages were opened at a rate of 30%**.

# Sephora SEA Case Study

## How This Beauty Brand Boosted Engagement with a New AR Feature by 28%



When Sephora SEA, the South East Asia arm of the multinational makeup giant, debuted an augmented reality (AR) feature in its app that would allow customers to “apply” beauty products virtually, the team partnered with Braze to increase adoption of the experience.

To attract more customers to try out the AR offering, the brand identified users who had viewed a makeup product page within the past 30 days but hadn’t used the AR tool. Within that segment, they

kept 20% of users as the control group to better assess campaign performance. Targeted users were then sent a push notification highlighting a step-by-step video that explained how to use the new AR feature, followed by messaging inside the app designed to drive engaged users to check it out for themselves.

Overall, the entire workflow resulted in a **28% uplift in user adoption** in their AR makeup feature, as well as a **48% increase in overall traffic to the feature**.

# Conclusion

While the right push notification strategy can take your customer outreach from 0 to nearly 2X, the right cross-channel strategy can take engagement from 0 to more than 8X.

If you're ready to reach customers where they're most likely to respond, take action, and keep coming back for more, we're here to help. Check out our [Cross-Channel Data Report](#) to learn more about the impact of using multiple channels in concert.

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Get in touch to learn more  
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