

THE SMS MARKETING HANDBOOK



A step by step guide to SMS Marketing

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CHAPTERS

- 1. Why Sms Mobile Marketing?**
- 2. How To Use Sms In Your Business**
- 3. Getting Started With Your Sms Strategy**
- 4. How To Build Your Sms List**
- 5. Measuring Your Success**
- 6. Launched? Now What?**
- 7. Final Thoughts**

WHY SMS MOBILE MARKETING?

What makes SMS so powerful?

There are many reasons that SMS stands alone when it comes to effectiveness, but here are 9 reasons why SMS could—and should—be one of the most important tools in your business:

1) Immediacy

Over 95% of text messages are read within three minutes, versus 22% of email, 29% of tweets and 12% of Facebook posts.

2) Reach & Reliability:

About 98% of all SMS messages are opened and nearly all devices are SMS capable. This means you can trust your customer is going to receive your message at the right time and on the right device. If you work with a poor SMS provider, however, your deliverability may not be that reliable.

3) Engagement:

Engagement rates can be as much as 150 times that of email campaigns.

4) Conversational:

SMS enables you have to a two-way conversation with your customers.

5) Signal vs. Noise:

There is only one inbox for SMS messages, leaving the inbox uncluttered and with less competition when it comes to communications to the customer. Also, there is no spam folder.

6) Personal & Targeted:

The mobile device is very unique to each customer, giving you the ability to have a one-to-one (more personal and relevant) conversation. You can send messages to different segments of your audience based on interests and behaviours, giving you a highly targeted form of communication.

7) Urgency & Conversion:

When it comes to using mobile coupons, SMS messages see anywhere from 20% to 60% redemption rates.

8) Popular:

70% of people (US study) would like to receive offers on their mobile phones. But it is not just about the offer.

9) Green:

Sending messages via text is totally better for world and can save you money. Perhaps you spend a lot of money on direct mail— using SMS could help you cut down on those costs by getting your DM recipients over onto your SMS list. Think of the money and time you could save in your operations.

It's also important to understand there are limitations of SMS, which include:

- **Message Size:**

A standard SMS messages is limited to 160 characters. This requires you to be clear and to the point. Every character counts. The right copy for SMS is not easy and requires support from a specialist to get it right.

- **Immediacy:**

Yes, this was a reason for SMS's power, BUT immediacy also means SMS messages aren't likely to be revisited unless they are relevant and memorable. Give them a reason to re-engage. When you create your message's CTA, aim for immediate response.

SMS can be just the right nudge to keep your customer with you.

For most of us, we want our customers to continue shopping with us for the rest of their lives. Sounds magical right? Well, in order to achieve that your customer usually has any number of experiences that turn them from a first time buyer into a raving fan—marketers refer to it as “the customer journey.”

When executed correctly, SMS can be a key tool for you to help your customer through their journey to becoming a recurring customer and even raving fan. You'll soon learn that SMS, although not always the sexiest marketing channel that exists, can often be just the right ingredient to keep a customer coming back for more and more and more.

What SMS Is Not.

Lastly, it is important to mention that SMS isn't the end-all and be-all. It's not the only tool you need in your business; it should be part of your communication strategy and marketing mix.

Can it be one of the most powerful? Yes, when used correctly.

Is it all you need? No, but it can support most of your digital communication needs, based on your audience behaviours.

SMS is NOT email.

If you're sending the same content or offer to your email list that you are sending to your mobile list through SMS, you're doing it wrong.

SMS and email are for different types of messaging and different frequencies.

SMS is for:

- Time sensitive messaging, like appointment reminders
- Exclusive offers
- When you have a clear and short call-to-action
- When your content is very snackable
- Extending the customer journey through an optimized mobile experience

Email is for:

- Deeper, longer content
- Things that are not as urgent
- Longer sales pages
- Full meal content

The Workhorse Of Any Mobile Strategy: SMS

Immediacy. Reach. Reliability. Engagement. Conversational. Converting. Redemption. Personalized. Targeted. Signal. Wanted. Green.

These are many reasons SMS will be so important to your mobile strategy.

This is why Coca-Cola spends 70% of their mobile budget on SMS.

These are the reasons why a small one-person salon can build a list of 400+ customers and never has to worry about having a slow day again.

If the biggest brands and smallest businesses can get extraordinary results with SMS marketing, there is no reason SMS couldn't do the same for you.

HOW TO USE SMS IN YOUR BUSINESS

First, what business wouldn't be able to leverage a communication channel that offers immediacy, reach, personalization, and ROYOU that SMS can deliver?

Since SMS is more immediate than email and has higher open rates, you need to integrate it into your communication strategy with mobile-specific types of messages.

Here are few ways a retail business can use SMS:

Loyalty Clubs

This is the most common scenario. You create a group or multiple groups of SMS subscribers who want to receive regular communications from you. Offering an initial incentive is pretty common (but not required) to get people to subscribe, but once they are in, you have to keep them in.

Most retailers send about one to two message per month with updates on the latest promotions, sales, new products, events, and specials on specific products they are trying to sell.

Coupons

Mobile coupons are really popular and can even be included in your monthly messaging to your loyalty club. They can also be the incentive to get customers to opt-in, drive traffic, and commerce. Coupons allow retailers to offer discounts such as buy one, get one free or spend and get campaigns (ex: Get \$15 when you spend \$75+) that actually can increase the size of the shopping cart purchase very effectively.

Here's a quick example: Let's say a customer who walks into your store spends, on average, \$100. If you can offer them a coupon that gives them \$20 off when they spend \$150, or more guess what happens?

You have increased the average order value. If someone spends \$50 more than normal and you give them \$20 for that purchase, you have increased the basket size by \$30 for all customers who use that coupon.

The cost in discounts is actually self-funded by incremental lift of order value. Coupons can be a way to drive people to either your physical store or your online store.

VIP Customers

Every business has some sort of VIP customer. These are the customers who make more purchases. You can put your VIP customers into a special SMS group in which they will receive exclusive offers. Perhaps they even get better specials than your main loyalty group.

Think of this as an elite loyalty club. It's really just one way of segmenting your database, but it's one that could prove to be valuable for your business.

A great way to use SMS with your VIPs is to give them access to products or events before they are available to the general public. This is a great way to win the trust of these customers.

Reward VIPs for their interest and shopping frequency. This also makes them feel special—part of the elite. They'll even brag about it and others will want to "get into the group."

Contests, Sweepstakes & Trivia

Contests are another great way to spark engagement with customers. Everyone wants to win something.

Let people text in to have a chance to win a prize, a new product or experience.

Voting, Surveys & Feedback

Are you looking for your audience's feedback? Getting your customers involved in decisions can be very beneficial for your business.

It makes people feel a part of your business, which makes them invested in your success. SMS can be a great way to poll or survey your audience and get valuable feedback.

Imagine sending out an SMS message that says, "You decide! Should we make product A or B first? Reply A or B to place your vote."

Let your customers engage and tell you exactly what they want. It will make your job a lot easier.

Reminders

Have you ever asked your customers to show up somewhere, such as to an event?

Whether it's physical or virtual, SMS can help you get people there.

Does your business rely on appointments with customers? Lawyers, dentists, coaches, restaurants, salons, online trainers—so many businesses rely on getting people to a specific location at a specific time in order to generate a sale.

This is one way that SMS blows email out of the water. With over 95% of text messages being read within three minutes of receipt, there is no better way to remind someone to be somewhere.

Can you incorporate one of these above SMS programs into your business?

The following types of businesses can and already are using SMS:

- Retail
- Restaurants
- Salons
- Bike Shops
- Coffee Shops
- Car Service Centers

- Plumbers
- Real Estate Agents
- Brands
- Agencies
- Car Washes
- Doctors
- Dentists
- Lawyers
- Online Marketers
- Bloggers
- Podcasters
- Radio hosts
- Life coaches
- Fitness professionals
- Entertainment venues
- Bars
- Night clubs
- Casinos
- Banks
- Airlines
- Financial institutions
- Dry cleaners
- Pharmaceutical companies

The list can go on.

What results you can expect from using SMS

Increased Traffic

You can increase both physical traffic and online traffic using SMS.

Using SMS alerts or coupons, you can drive people to your site to read an article/blog post, purchase a product, or sign up for an event.

The same message could also promote an in-store only offer to get people to walk through your door.

Capture Leads

SMS is a great way to build your list—either your mobile list or your email list.

Remember that when people text your keyword to your phone number, you capture their number. This means that every time someone texts into your program, you're building a mobile database of people to connect with.

Ask subscribers to reply with their email address—and boom—you are using SMS to build your email database as well.

Adding a call-to-action to your other marketing outlets makes those channels trackable.

Engagement

With the immediacy of SMS you can expect your customers to respond faster and with a higher response rate. As long as you include a clear call-to-action, and the full customer journey is mobile-friendly, you'll have a powerful new tool available to you.

Increased Sales

With the right offer, driving your customer to take action, you can expect more sales. Whether that's online or in-store, time sensitive messaging creates urgency for your customer to move. Use that to your advantage to increase their spending.

Loyalty

The best customers are repeat customers. With your SMS list, you'll be able to drive repeat visits and sales as long as you deliver consistent value and on a consistent schedule.

Reward them for their loyalty to your business. Reward them for welcoming you onto their mobile device.

GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR SMS STRATEGY

The biggest mistake people make with mobile—specifically SMS—is to dive in tactically without focusing on the consumers’ needs or behaviours.

If you approach SMS tactically and implement one of the methods from the last chapter without making sure it aligns with your business or marketing goals, you’re likely to fail.

Aligning your SMS strategy with your business goals, objectives, and strategy will set you up for success in your own business. The emphasis is on “your” because what works for you may not work for someone else—or even your competition with a similar business.

The Four Pillars of Mobile Marketing & Planning

As you get started with mobile beyond SMS, we recommend you leverage the Four Pillar approach to ensure you’re implementing programs that will help you achieve your goals.

Let’s break down each of the 4 Pillars:

1. Strategy
2. Tactics
3. Integration
4. Connected CRM (Customer Relationship Management)

Bonus Pillar: Quality products and services.

This should go without saying, but if your business offers poor products or service, the best mobile strategy and execution won’t do much for you. They will help, but at the end of the day, you need to have a great product or service offering. The best marketing won’t make a bad product or service better.

Strategy

Successful SMS programs tie directly to business and marketing objectives. What are you trying to accomplish with your business marketing? Are you looking to drive sales, to generate more leads, increase engagement with your customers, to build awareness, to strength your brand, to drive innovation, and/or to offer more utility?

Look at your marketing strategy and business goals as they relate to your customers.

Your SMS program should have a value proposition that resonates with your target audience, so that when your consumers join, they understand the benefits are and the value they will receive.

Developing a roadmap and content calendar will help as you develop a messaging strategy that speaks directly to your target customer on a consistent basis. This messaging should tie to the business goals you’re looking to achieve.

Tactics

In this handbook we're focusing on SMS as our tactic, but it should be clear that SMS will often be just one part of your overall mobile strategy, where you will likely employ a variety of other mobile tactics.

Integration

One of the most amazing things is just how easy it is to incorporate your SMS call-to-action into your other marketing channels—and for that reason it is amazing that most brands still do not make SMS a priority.

On top of that, if you add SMS to your traditionally non-interactive media, such as TV, radio, print and out-of-home signage, SMS can turn those messages into interactive experiences. Now, when someone sees your ad in the paper or a magazine, they can engage by texting a keyword.

That media is now more trackable. Historically, you would have little insight into how that ad performed, but now you can see if your audience has engaged through their interactions with your SMS program.

Using different keywords in different cities and/or different advertising channels can help you measure your engagement across channels as well.

When it comes to integration with the rest of your business you can make a list of all the possible places you could insert their call-to-action. This is your Asset List.

Here are just a few places you might be able to incorporate your next SMS call-to-action:

- TV commercials
- Print ads
- Billboards
- Out-of-home signage
- In-store signage
- Radio spots
- Your website
- Social media pages and comments

Adding a different keyword to each of these other marketing vehicles will not only help measure their effectiveness, but allow you to target your customers based on their specific interests.

The real question: What are your goals?

You might even ask, what are your challenges?

We have seen business get a lot of results using SMS in the following ways:

Inventory Management

Many businesses offer products that come and go. Perhaps it's a seasonal product, or it's a limited offering, etc.

SMS can help you accomplish one of two things when it comes to inventory:

- Announce and drive sales to new products
- Drive sales of products that you need to get off the shelves

If you're in the retail business, these tend to be the two major challenges owners face. It's possible to incorporate SMS to aid in either of these situations.

Slow Days

Retail and service-based businesses typically have a slow day each week, or perhaps even a slow time of the year. If this happens with your business, are you doing anything about it, or have you accepted defeat?

As a business owner, you have expenses to pay—rent, utilities, insurance—for being open that day. Your SMS program can be aimed at offsetting these costs and driving your business on your slow days.

Take, for example, a restaurant that is always slow on Tuesdays. A targeted SMS campaign can be a great tool for driving visits on Tuesdays, and will help to increase revenue on a day when you were already paying your employees to be there.

Using SMS to focus on slower periods can help eliminate slow days all together.

No Shows

You may find SMS reminders appealing because your business has the problem of customers not showing up to their reservations or appointments. This is a huge problem in service-based industries, especially if you don't charge late fees for missing an appointment.

Your SMS efforts can be aimed at lowering your no-show rates, which will raise your overall bottom line.

SMS doesn't need to be focused on new customers. Why not start with the customers who have already expressed interest?

Loyalty

Speaking of starting with customers that have already shown interest—why not focus on building more loyalty? Previously we discussed that a common use of SMS is to build loyalty programs. Building a loyal database of customers is something even big brands focus their efforts on.

Implementing an SMS program that drives repeat business through ongoing value can help create loyalty with your customers, so that you're top-of-mind and to guarantee they will shop with you again.

As you can see, understanding your goals may not always be about growing a new part of your business; rather, SMS may be used to solve an existing problem or obstacle that is hurting your business. Just make sure that when you're defining your SMS strategy, it aligns with your overall business objectives.

HOW TO BUILD YOUR SMS LIST

Building a list starts with promoting your mobile value proposition, keyword, and call-to-action.

Essentially, you're going to be promoting your new SMS call-to-action in a lot of places (discussed below). Remember the ingredients to a good keyword:

- Make it easy for users to understand what to do
- Keep it short
- Make it easy
- Avoid special characters
- Avoid multiple words
- Always use CAPS
- Don't be too clever
- Plan for auto-correct

Your keyword should resonant both with your brand and the specific campaign you're executing.

If you're building a mobile loyalty program, perhaps the keyword is your brand name, or something simple like JOIN.

If you're doing a text-to-win program to entice customers to opt-in, have fun—your keyword could be WIN, GIFT, PRIZE, or the name of your sweepstakes. Don't over think it or complicate it. KISS—Keep It Simple Stupid—and remember that we are trying to engage consumers while they are on the go! Put yourself in their shoes.

How To Create Your Call-To-Action

Put it everywhere.

Getting your customers to opt-in or engage with your new SMS program has a lot to do with your call-to-action (CTA).

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Can they see it clearly?
- Does it capture their attention?
- Will it make them take action?
- Does it offer value and or benefits?
- Is it compliant?

These are all things you should be asking as you create your call-to-actions.

Can They See Your CTA Clearly?

One of the main reasons businesses have trouble building their list is that they don't commit to their SMS program. By this, I mean that the business hasn't exposed it to their available channels. Since the businesses aren't "all in," they end up adding their CTA somewhere at the bottom of signage, or

buried in a bunch of text where it's hard to see. Instead, it ought to be presented as, "Hey, I am mobile, hear me roar!" You need a message with power, one that engages with your customer and says, "You will be surprised and delighted by what we are going to send you!" But instead, many companies are afraid to give their new SMS call-to-action priority in their marketing and are afraid to put it in front of their audience. This is by far the biggest mistake we see in SMS campaigns.

Does Your CTA Grab Attention?

Once you've made sure that your call-to-action is clear, you need to make sure it grabs attention. The two go hand-in-hand.

Make your keyword and phone number stand out. The keyword and phone number should be in all caps and a different colour to capture the user's attention. Do not use quotes. You may think you're being helpful by telling your customer to text "JOIN" but many people will then actually type the quotations too. Don't use quotes to separate your keyword. Make the text bold and use a different colour.

Will Your CTA Drive Action?

You want your CTA to inspire the consumer to move. Specifically, to grab their phone and text. In today's connected, multi-device world, you're competing with more than just other businesses; as soon as they've picked up their phone, you're competing against distractions like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and all of the other things that demand and receive our attention.

Offering an incentive helps push people to move, but one is not required. It all depends on your business and what you are providing. It's important to know that your incentive doesn't always need to be a discount. Many people immediately think that incentive has to be monetary, but this is not the case.

Get creative. Remember, these are some of your most loyal customers. You can offer your mobile subscribers something special, something experiential, or access to a product or information before anyone else. Why not make product availability, services, or event registration available earlier to them?

Don't always focus on the coupon—although that works extremely well when used correctly. Try to do some A/B testing to learn from your consumer base; you may learn a thing or two about what they want and what drives to take action.

Does It Offer Value?

Just because you offer an incentive doesn't mean it's going to be a slam-dunk opt-in. You need to make sure that the value is relevant at a level that will make someone say, "I can't live without this." Your CTA should offer something so unquestioningly valuable that your customer won't think twice about opting in. That "value" will be different for every business, and you'll need to try some things to see what resonates with your customer best.

A common formula for your call-to-action is: Text (KEYWORD) to (PHONE NUMBER) to (your call-to-action here)

Is It Compliant?

You must include instructions on how users can opt-out, usually by texting STOP to your phone number to unsubscribe at any time. Example: Reply STOP to opt-out. This should actually be **bold** within your copy below your call-to-action.

You should also notify consumers of the cost of the service. Any call-to-action and opt-in confirmation messages should include the phrase “your standard SMS rates may apply.”

Confirmation

With an awesome call-to-action, your customer will opt-in. When they do, you need to provide a confirmation of that action. Your confirmation message is very important, as it sets the expectation for your future communications.

Promote and Integrate Your CTA Into Other Marketing Channels

SMS marketing can be one of the most powerful tools for your business, but it’s also very dependent upon your other channels. How else do you market your business?

Make a list of all the places you market your business. Some might include:

- Email
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, etc)
- Local print advertising
- Radio or TV broadcast
- Podcasting
- Banner ads
- Search
- In-store signage
- Event signage
- Your website
- Your app (if you have one)

Email

This should be one of the first places you introduce your new SMS program. Your email list members are already loyal subscribers and customers. By comparing open rates between email and SMS, you can begin to identify customers by their preferred channel. When you announce your SMS campaign, make sure the CTA is above the fold of the email.

How do you get existing email subscribers to sign up for SMS? Offer SMS as a new way for them to connect with you and introduce it as a new opportunity that contains special deals, exclusive company information, etc.

Also, this doesn’t need to be a one-time promotion to your email list, as you constantly want to grow your SMS community. We recommend sending a dedicated email announcing the program, and then follow up a few weeks later with a reminder email.

From then on, you can add, as secondary call-to-action within your email, a section that always mentions your SMS program.

With a great CTA that resonates with your audience you can expect 10%-30% conversion from email subscribers to your mobile program.

Social Media

This is a channel where you can mention your SMS program frequently. With only about 5% of your Facebook fans ever seeing any one of your posts, you'll want to increase the frequency of your SMS integration here by adding a Facebook app tab that collects additional consumer data beyond only the phone number.

Ask for the customer's name, email, etc. Use the same approach with Twitter. Your tweet has about an hour to be seen by your audience (and some will even say that number is too high). Use your social media frequently to drive people from your social communities to your mobile list.

Local Print Advertising

Some small businesses still find that local advertising works for them. By adding your SMS call-to-action into your print advertising, you not only turn your non-interactive media into an interactive channel, but you can also measure just how effective those print advertising sources are.

Using different keywords, you can start tracking your different channels for engagement.

TV And Radio

As with print, you can add SMS CTAs into these marketing channels and measure their effectiveness. We hear radio stations using SMS all the time to give away prizes and connect with their audience. Using the DJ live read commercials is always an effective way to gain the attention of a captive audience.

If you use TV or Radio, use SMS to start measuring its reach and effectiveness.

In-Store Signage

If you has a physical location, your keyword should be integrated throughout the store as much as possible. The entrance and point-of-sale are to common places for placement. All staff should know what the program is, how it works, and be encouraged to promote it.

Let's say that again: your staff—all of them—should know exactly what the program entails, how customers can opt-in, and what the value proposition is. It does not matter how much signage you have, if your own staff has no idea of its existence, your customers won't believe in it.

As a small business, it should be much easier to communicate through your organization. Regardless of your company size, the success of your program starts within your team.

You can get creative to tailor the program to your establishment. Do you own a bar or a restaurant? Why not place some signage in the bathroom?

You know your location best, but remember that one sign is usually not enough. Go all-in and make your call-to-action stand out so it can't be missed.

Event Signage

Similar to in-store signage, event signage should be fully integrated at your event. Because it's an event, you haven't got long—maybe even a single day only.

Don't miss opportunities—promote your SMS CTA everywhere. It can and should be integrated into all of your conference collateral, goodies, grab bags, signs, and event notifications.

By communicating your program with all of your event staff, you'll help to elevate its importance to your program. Make it a talking point for your staff when they are speaking with attendees.

Your Website

This is your home base—why wouldn't you promote it here? In fact, this is your opportunity to capture more than just your customers' phone numbers.

When you build your list from your own website, you have a prime opportunity to learn more about your audience. What do they want messages on? Which topics? How frequently? What part of the country are they in?

It's always best to send targeted messages. When you capture your customer's interests, you can take your messaging to the next level with personalization.

Start capturing that data on your website.

MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Now that you're up and running, you want to make sure you're frequently measuring the success of your SMS efforts. One of the favourite things about SMS is that it's very easy to track and measure your progress.

Here are the seven metrics to monitor as you build and grow your SMS programs.

Subscriber Growth

This is very easy to track, but you will need to set goals for your list size, particularly how fast you want to grow it and to what size. Watch your growth each week and identify which activities makes that list grow.

Understanding your growth rate and the things that affect that will help you identify ways to grow it faster. You can measure growth by looking at your list size each week, month, and quarter. Take the current list size, subtract last month's list size, and divide that by the last month's list size.

Cross Channel Engagement (by keyword)

By using differing keywords across multiple channels you can measure the effectiveness of your CTA in different media outlets. This practice helps measure how much SMS resonates with that particular audience. When it comes to measuring this, look to see which keywords are performing better, meaning which platforms have been the most responsive to the SMS CTA and which channels are generating the most opt-ins.

Subscriber Churn Rate

Just as with email list growth, you'll want to measure the frequency at which people opt-out of your SMS list. The rate at which this happens over time is your churn rate.

It's good to monitor which of your outbound messages spark higher opt-out rates, so that you can dial in your messaging to your audience's needs.

You can measure churn rate by dividing the number of opt-outs into the total list size.

Redemption Rate

Redemption rate is something you'll measure more on a campaign-by-campaign basis or a message-by-message basis. If you send a message with an offer code or coupon, you'll want to measure the number of customers who redeem your offer, compared to the number that received it. You'll measure this by dividing the number of redemptions into the number of messages delivered.

Cost Per Redeeming Subscriber

Once you have your redemption rate, you can determine your cost per redeeming subscriber. This is the cost of communicating with someone who has utilized the offer you've sent. To determine this, you'll divide your cost to send that particular customer a message by the redemption rate.

Message Engagement Rate (Click Through, Video, Audio)

You can measure engagement in a number of ways; either through a clicked link, video view, audio play, or URL that be tracked and measured. You can measure this by dividing the number of actions taken (clicks, views, etc.) by the number of messages sent.

Call Tracking

You have the ability to track phone calls, which could be considered an engagement, just like a click or view as described above, but I wanted to discuss this action separately.

If you're sending out a phone number that you want your subscribers to call, you should use a unique phone number so you can easily track the number of calls that you receive. These unique numbers are easily obtainable and can redirect to your main number. You'll measure this by number of calls to the unique number divided by total messages sent.

How Often Should You Measure

You'll want to look at these metrics regularly, but some require a bit more attention. Here are our recommendations on how frequently you should review these metrics.

- List Growth: Monthly
- Cross Channel Engagement: Monthly and by campaign
- Churn Rate: Monthly, also identify which messages spark opt-out
- Delivery Rate: Bi-Monthly
- Redemption Rate: Every message and monthly average
- Cost Per Redeeming Subscriber: Every message and monthly average
- Engagement By message and monthly average
- Call Tracking: By message and monthly average

If you're committed to SMS, you'll have to monitor these metrics to continually improve your results. Set your goals and monitor.

LAUNCHED? NOW WHAT?

Congratulations! You're live with your SMS program and building your list. Do you want to know the secret to your success with SMS? Keep going!

SMS isn't a one-off marketing channel or tactic. In order to see success with SMS, it requires commitment...and a few other things.

Here are those other things.

Align Your Messaging To A Marketing/Promotional Calendar

Remember how we talked about SMS not being a one-off thing? If you align your SMS messaging to your businesses marketing and promotional calendar you'll create a powerful alignment with the rest of your marketing goals and objectives.

You can also schedule a lot of your messaging based on this calendar, which assures your subscribers will be getting messages throughout the year.

There will be times that you're going to get busy, and knowing that you have messages queued up for delivery will make you a bit less stressed.

Now you're probably asking, "When should I send my messages?"

The most effective time for you to send your messages depends on your particular business or industry. Restaurants may want to send messages later in the day, to engage people as they are thinking about happy hour or dinner—unless lunch visits are something you're working on. Use SMS to drive off-peak times—test and drive.

When sending messages, ask yourself: "At what time am I likely to catch my customers as they are making a purchase decision about my product"?

Please don't send messages when your subscribers are asleep!! It's best practice to send messages between 9am and 9pm—and that really depends on your customers. And if you have a huge list, be careful to select an SMS provider that can handle the volume in the time requires. Sending out 1 million messages within a morning or an afternoon should be possible.

Measure With Trackable URLs And Promo Codes

When you're sending messages out to your customers, it's best to do everything in your power to track engagement, beyond the simple act of sending the message. Linking to mobile-optimized pages and using promo codes is a great way to track this.

If you're sending coupons for example, you could do one of two things:

1. Make the coupon web-based and link to it from your message using a trackable link.
2. Include a promo code in your message that can be used online or in-store. For example,

“Save \$10 when you use code: “ABC123” at the store or online today.” ABC123 can be tracked either manually or in your Point of Sale (POS) system to see how many times it was used. Ideally, you’ll want your POS to track this.

A/B Test Different CTAs Based On Previous Engagement and Redemption

As you see that certain CTAs or offers receive more engagement and or have higher redemption rates than others, you can segment your list to test varying offers to smaller subsets of your audience, testing to see which offers work better than others.

You can test % off offers vs. \$ off offers, for example. You can test varying language such as “Buy One, Get One Free” vs. “Buy Two For The Price Of One”.

By segmenting and running A/B tests, you can start to understand how your customers respond to different types of messaging, in order to optimize across your larger list moving forward.

Collect Data To Create A Complete Customer Record

Using SMS is a great way to collect additional data about your subscribers. You can collect their email, address, postcode, interests, preferences, etc.

Creating complete customer profiles is important so that you can see which forms of communications work with each customer. Some customers may respond better to an email with your offer, versus an SMS, and vice versa.

You can start monitoring this response over time to deliver the right message to the right customer in the right channel. This is a bit more of an advanced technique, and if you’re just getting started, it is something to work towards later on. It must be noted that building your customer records is an ongoing process and takes time accomplish.

As mentioned earlier, you have to commit to your SMS program and be consistent. Using SMS as a tool to build that complete customer record will happen over the lifetime of your program, not overnight. Remember that it’s a journey.

Poll Your Audience To Get Preferences

Sending your customer a survey or poll will help you better understand their needs.

You can find out which types of offers they want, which types of content they want moving forward, and you can even let them help you make a decision in your business — it can be a powerful tactic to involve your customer, while learning more about what they want.

Be Nimble. Update Your Messaging Calendar Every 60-90 Days

We all know things can change quickly. Sometimes it’s because you’ve identified elements that aren’t working and have to change course, or you have a new idea that needs some love and attention.

By reviewing your messaging calendar every 60-90 days, you can make the necessary updates to your SMS messaging schedule so that your messaging remains in alignment with the rest of your business.

Track Opt-Ins And Opt-Outs With Keywords Through Each Channel

This something you'll want to review frequently. If a particular channel isn't performing well, you can either make adjustments, pull out completely from that channel, or at least shift your budget to better performing channels.

Using different keywords can help you track the success of different entry points. You always want to monitor your opt-out rate to identify which messages lead to your subscribers leaving.

Make Sure All Destinations Are Mobile-Friendly

If you use a link within your SMS message, please, please, please make sure you're taking you customer to a mobile-friendly website or landing page.

If you tell your customer to take an action by clicking a link you provided, they should be able to complete that experience from their phone easily, which means mobile optimized and navigable web destinations.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It's going to be super easy to get caught up in the latest and greatest technologies.

Listen, we know that SMS is not that sexy. SMS is not the knight in shining armour, but it's the knight that busts his ass, delivers tremendous results, and even makes the rest of your team look better.

SMS is the tip of the arrow, it is the one mobile messaging that reaches the largest audience & can take them to any destination to maximize the journey.

There is a reason the largest brands in the world rely on SMS as the workhorse in their mobile strategy. If it can be for them, it can be for you.

Give It A Real Chance

We have seen many businesses dive into SMS with no real plan and no real help. They get busy, forget about it, and give up. SMS is not going to change your business overnight, but it can become a key part of your marketing, if you give it some time and commit to using it in your business.

One of the worst things businesses can do is adopt SMS and then not use it consistently, which makes customers not want to remain a part of the program.

Commit to using it and leverage the strategies that you learned in this handbook to deliver a consistent program.

Start Before You're Ready

Many of us seem to find ways to procrastinate and never take action.

The secret is to just start. Giving yourself a deadline helps too. Pick a date on your calendar that you'll announce your SMS program to your customers and actually announce it. It will make you accountable and then you'll have to take action.

It's a little bit of a mind game with yourself but you'll find ways to try and delay launch. This is a great way around that.

Get started. Stay committed. You'll be happy you did.