

Business Application using SMS.

SMS for the Competitive Advantage.

This document looks at 21 applications that use SMS to gain the competitive advantage

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Sales, Products and Marketing

1. Sales Promotions

Urban Outfitters (<http://www.urbanoutfitters.com>), which sells clothing, shoes and furnishings, launched UO TXT via (<https://www.shoptext.com/main/index.action>) in June to alert regular customers to pre-sales and new items.

2. 'Text & Win' competitions

- In a European first, Ford Fiesta launched a new ad campaign in July 2004 in Belgium, combining interactive billboards with SMS. Passers-by could try their hand at winning a Ford Fiesta by sending an SMS with their first name to a short code and indicating the code on the billboard. The billboard then responded to this SMS, and sent another SMS with a question. If answered correctly, the billboard reacted like a winning pinball machine and the sender was entitled to an "extra ball" meaning they would be included in the draw for a winner. For every incorrect answer sent by text message, the pinball machine displayed a "tilt". (<http://www.textually.org/textually/archives/2004/07/004640.htm>)

- When Peugeot launched the 207 in the summer of 2006, it launched a TV, print, outdoor and online ad campaign encouraging readers to text '24' to 60222 in order to get a 24-hour test drive.

3. Auction Bidding

EBay (<http://pages.ebay.co.uk/mobile>) offers a bidding service by SMS. Users are able to monitor and participate in the online bidding process by tracking bids through "outbid" alerts and to react quickly from their mobile should they need to increase a bid.

4. Product Verification

- Sceptics after purchasing labelled water can rest their worries by text messaging the bureau or visiting the official website of Product Identification, Authenticating and Tracking System. If the code on the product turns out to be a fraud, the consumer will be able to instantly log a complaint with the bureau.
- Russians can send text messages to ensure that the Vodka they are drinking is legit. By sending the serial number of the bottle to a designated short code, they will get a response by SMS certifying (or not) the product. The project is an initiative by State run Rosspirtprom, the company responsible for the sale of 60% of strong alcohol in the country and distributor of the top brands. The sale of counterfeit vodka is a huge problem in Russia, not just because it hurts the major brands sales, but because the counterfeit drinks are filled with cologne water, antifreeze liquids or pure alcohol and are responsible for 40,000 deaths each year.

Customer Services and Relationship Management

5. Mobile Q & A

- ChaCha (www.chacha.com) is a human-powered search service which allows users to SMS questions of any kind to a designated short code and receive answers back by SMS.

6. Greetings

Remind4u offers their corporate customers a fully managed service. Whether they want to send Birthday or Christmas cards to their staff or to their customers They even digitally print signatures into the cards for that personal touch. (<http://www.remind4u.com/corporate/default.aspx>) The British Heart

Foundation (http://www.bhf.org.uk/shop_with_bhf/buy_online/remind4u_cards.aspx) teamed up with Remind4U and offered greeting cards to help support their fund.

Business Process Management and Internal Administration

7. Debt collection

icLiverpool reports that a debt collection agency has seen a fourfold increase in responses from debtors after using text messages to contact them. Agilisys Contact Services substituted stern letters and curt phone calls to people who had fallen behind on repayments with friendly text messages asking them to call and discuss an issue with their account. Within two hours of texting 1,000 people, 40% of them had responded to the message and contacted the group. This compared with a 9% success rate from spending two hours telephoning people, or a 35% success rate if the whole day was spent making face-to-face calls.

8. Appointment Notifications and Reminder

The Patient Care Messaging system developed by iplato (<http://www.iplato.net/>) sends automated text messages to patients' mobile phones, reminding them of their doctor's appointments. The patients can subsequently choose to respond to the reminder by confirming, rescheduling or cancelling the appointment. The system can be integrated to the clinical systems of the healthcare centres, leading to minimum or reduced workload for both administrative and medical staff.

9. Incentives

The mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg, has turned to

the cellphone as a means of combating school failures among disadvantaged African-American and Latino youths. In some 20 public New York schools, students will be offered a cell phone and those who get good grades will receive, via text messages, rewards such as concert and sporting events tickets and ringtones that are sponsored by businesses. The program, was expected to start in January 2008 with between 10,000 to 15,000 students.

Information Technology

10. Email Alerts

Yahoo Mail launched an SMS alert service for its email users based in the UK and Ireland. The service sends an SMS alert to a mobile user when an urgent or selected email comes into his Yahoo Mail In-box, according to Web User.

11. Password Confirmations

Sending web access passwords via SMS can provide your customer with peace of mind when forgetting this sensitive information. Payment and order confirmations can also be automated in order to keep customers up to date with their account status. Sending an SMS is also an easy way to confirm the activation of a purchased service or changes in activation date. By making use of API integration, passwords can automatically be sent upon request of the user.

Transport & Logistics

12. Container Tracking

Shipping in Nigeria is gradually being repositioned to face modern challenges in international trade. A new technology of tracking containers through text messages was introduced

to world renowned cargo carriers, in collaboration with Telecommunication giant, MTN. With the technology, Nigerian importers and other shipping operators can conveniently locate their containers in any part of the world.

13. Goods Delivery updates on-the-go

Ray & Sons has stayed in business for over 100 years and now today, mobile technology plays an important part. The company started in 1904 as an ice delivery service. Harvesting ice from the Hudson River and making deliveries with horse-drawn wagons. Customers would leave a sign in their window to let the “ice man” know how many pounds to deliver. The company has changed with the times and has delivered not only ice but coal, wood, kerosene, gasoline, diesel fuel and heating oil to residential and commercial customers. Ray & Sons now uses a Global Positioning System on its fleet for faster customer response and text messaging technology to get information to the drivers.”

Travel & Tourism

14. Arrivals and Check-ins

Singapore Airlines has introduced check-in by SMS for frequent flyers and users of its website, from most cities in its global network, reports PC Authority. Passengers can check in and confirm their seat allocation by a mobile phone text message from 12 Singapore Airlines destinations.

15. SMS Reservations / Bookings

HotelZone is one of the largest hotel booking agencies in Europe and has a staff of 75 in four countries. They opted to use an SMTP (email to SMS) API for all its SMS traffic around the world. The booking confirmation alerts enable HotelZone’s

customers to receive reservation codes, hotel names & addresses and arrival and departure dates.

16. Managing Travelling Preference

The Fairmont Dubai adopted to use Clickatell's Communicator product to keep in touch with their customers on a regular basis with short, direct messages. These were particularly effective for special events, as well as for food and beverage specials that needed to be promoted quickly.

17. Travel Information

London's Underground provides free text messages to mobile phone with real-time travel news and details of delays before you reach the station. An SMS service is also available for Airport Express trains to Gatwick, Heathrow and Stansted.

Travel & Tourism

18. Credit Checks

Creditgate (www.creditgate.com/sms_credit_reports.aspx) offers instant and live mobile access to credit and director information on all UK limited companies. To retrieve information: mobile users type the company name or the company number or the director's name (prefixed with the words "director") and send as a text message to a designated phone number. An SMS report can then be selected by simply replying 1 or 2 or 3 or 4, etc., to the subsequent SMS messages.

19. Banking

- Bank of America (www.bankofamerica.com) offers a selection of SMS alerts to their customers so that they can stay informed about important activity in their checking, savings, and credit card accounts. They can be delivered to both a customer's email

address or as a text message.

- FNB are able to notify customers immediately of account transactions via an SMS message to their mobile phones. Enabling clients to keep up-to-the-minute with all activity taking place in their accounts, and to monitor and detect any fraudulent activity.

Social Networking

20. Application promotion

Businesses can develop and promote their own applications geared around the businesses products or services to encourage user interaction. Applications can leverage the services of social networking sites such as Facebook's SMS service to "directly interact with users via text messaging". Users will be able to interact with applications that they have installed as well as add new applications from both the XHTML site and via SMS." (<http://wiki.developers.facebook.com/index.php/Mobile>).

21. Communicating and content sharing via social networking sites

- My Space (<http://www.myspace.com>), the popular social networking site, added support for receiving MySpace alerts on Cingular subscribers cell phones via text messaging. "The alerts are to let users know when they have received things such as messages, comments, picture comments, friend requests, and event invitations."
- Text Me by Mozes (<http://www.mozes.com/>) allows users to send SMS, photos, and mobile gifts from their Facebook profile's for free. Text messages, photos, and gifts sent from users pages

are delivered directly to the selected recipient's mobile phone.

- Carpoolmumbai.com is a social networking initiative in Mumbai, which is currently providing online car pooling service to city motorists. Members can, through an email, a phone call or an SMS, locate a car pooler near his location who is ready to accommodate him and take him to his desired destination.

- Twitter (<http://twitter.com>) is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that uses text messaging as one of the ways to keep in touch.

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