

Curious about SMS marketing and the benefits it can bring to your business? Always seeing press about how businesses are using mobile to develop their brand, but unsure of where to start? Sign-Up.to is here to help!

We make SMS marketing easy and provide a range of tools to help you create great SMS campaigns. To help get you started we've put together this brief guide to the key things you need to know.

There's lots to learn so we've focussed on what we consider the most important tips to help you make the most of SMS marketing and the opportunities it can bring.

Before we begin, let's demonstrate one of the programmes you can set up with SMS marketing - a text-to-subscribe service.



*Text **TRY** followed by your **email address** to **61211** and we'll send you back an SMS and an email* response automatically.*

This neatly demonstrates some of the key tools you can use to craft your own SMS marketing - text-in, auto-reply SMS messages and email address parsing.

**UK only - SMS sent charged at your standard network rate.*

Why use SMS marketing - in a nutshell

- SMS has become one of the most popular methods of communication and the mobile phone is the world's most ubiquitous consumer device, so if you want to engage with people when they're not by their computer, it's the ideal choice.
- While you might think Apps are the big trend, in fact they only represent 8% of the market, compared to 87% of people using SMS messaging. SMS has the widest reach of any mobile technology by a long way. *(Statistics - mBlox)*
- 62% of UK retailers don't use SMS, yet 44% of retailers expect mobile revenues to overtake online sales in the coming years – so there's a huge gap in the market for SMS promotions, for all kinds of businesses. *(Statistics - mBlox)*
- SMS is the ideal way to reach out to contacts with short time-sensitive messages. Whether it's a reminder or a special offer, targeted SMS messages will get straight to your audience and are practically guaranteed to be read.

The opportunities are endless!

Looking for ideas of how you can apply SMS marketing to your business? Here are some easy ways to get started:

- Set up a text-in service to let visitors to your restaurant register at their table.
- Send out SMS alerts to remind customers of appointments they have with you.
- Reward your best customers with SMS vouchers that they can redeem in store.
- Ask customers to text and vote for their favourite product, location, menu item etc.
- Use a text-to-subscribe service to email interested people more information about your products, directly from your adverts.
- Place different text-in keywords on your adverts to track response rates.
- Send guests directions and a reminder on the day of your event.

Shortcodes, long numbers and keywords

There are two different ways that you can receive SMS messages for your mobile marketing programme.

A **shortcode** is a short (5 digit) number. These are easy to remember and quick to type in, but are country specific so can't be used internationally. Dedicated shortcodes are also expensive to run, so they are normally used on a 'shared' basis.

In the example we provided at the beginning of this guide the shortcode is 61211 - use of a keyword with this number in your Sign-Up.to account is free.

A **long number** (also called an MSISDN) is a standard length number (like a normal mobile number) which people can respond to. Unlike a shortcode, these work internationally, however it's not as easy to remember.

Keywords are used with shared numbers, or when you're running multiple campaigns on the same number. A keyword is the first word in the message the user sends and is used to determine what happens next. A sub-keyword (the second word in the message) can also be used to further refine the actions.



The anatomy of an SMS message

SMS messages are composed of two parts, the sender information - either a shortcode or mobile number, or a text string up to 11 characters long; and the body of the message, which is up to 160 characters of text. Longer messages can be sent using a process called 'concatenation' which links multiple messages together.

If the sender information is set to text rather than a number then the recipient will not be able to reply to the message directly.

Building your SMS contact lists

The first step in SMS marketing is to get people to 'raise their hands' and opt-in to hear from you. As with email marketing, permission is essential and you'll need to ensure that every person you contact has asked you to. Your contact list should be composed of people you have had contact with previously – e.g. customers, people who have enquired about your company or people who have explicitly requested to hear from you.

You may already be familiar with email marketing but feel that SMS marketing is the next step. Why not create an email encouraging current subscribers to also sign up to your SMS campaigns? This way you're already contacting people that you have a relationship with and the likelihood is that you'll get people interested who would rather hear from you via their mobile, especially if you have something good to say!

Remember:

- Make sure the people you are contacting have asked to be contacted.
- Never purchase lists of mobile data.

Quick ways to build your list:

- Email current subscribers with details of how to opt-in to your SMS marketing.
- Place a subscription form prominently on your website, including a field for their mobile number.
- Place your text-in details on your website and on promotional materials.
- Ensure that every form you use to collect mobile data asks people if they'd like to receive updates from you via their mobile phone.



Planning your campaign

It's important to view SMS marketing as developing an ongoing relationship with your contacts. It's a two-way thing and you have to give your contacts something in order to get back what you're looking for (be it sales, donations, referrals or even loyalty).

Key planning pointers:

- Have a specific goal that you would like to achieve from SMS marketing – even if it's not directly quantifiable.
- Make a plan of action for specific communications you're going to send out and what the reason is for them.
- Ensure each message has a real benefit for the recipient. They're opening a text and it needs to be worthwhile, so things like discount vouchers and useful information could be beneficial.
- Discover when the best time of day and day of week is to send your messages. While this may be trial and error, if you are for example promoting a club night then a text message a few days beforehand may be suitable.
- If you have a number of different target audiences spend the time creating a campaign for each group. This will help you start building the best possible relationship, as messages will be seen as more thoughtful and relevant.
- Give your mobile subscribers a reason to anticipate your next message. Relevant content and sending at the optimum time will help achieve this.

Building your campaign

So you've got a list, a plan and you're ready to start. Here are a few key points to remember when you're building your SMS message.

- Size is important. Short is sweet. Within your Sign-Up.to account you can send a text up to three messages long (called concatenated SMS), but if it's going to be that long the content needs to be good. If you can make it short and to the point, the response is likely to be better.
- Include personalisation. You'll need to know more about your subscribers but if you can address the recipient by their first name you can increase your response rates.
- Check, and double-check your spelling and grammar – no one wants to see mistakes!
- Include a clear call-to-action for your recipients.



- If you want subscribers to be able to respond to you, make sure you include a response number. However, if you want subscribers to recognise it's you, make sure to include your company name.
- Make sure your content is truthful and not full of 'ifs' and 'buts'. Make sure your message is concise and clear.
- Include an option for people to unsubscribe. While it may not be what you want, giving people the option is better than having angry subscribers who can't figure out how to unsubscribe from your messages. Recipients will be able to unsubscribe by texting STOP to your shortcode. This is a legal requirement and something we handle automatically. Don't worry about including unsubscription information in every message but try and include it regularly.
- Test, test, test! Send previews to your mobile phone so you can be confident that the message is what you want to send.

Sending your campaign

Now your message is ready to go there are a final couple of points to remember:

- Timing is everything. If you've sent an SMS campaign before, check to see when people are actually opening and reading them. You may find that altering the time improves your result so have a think about the optimum time to send.
- Make sure you can measure your results and gauge success. Delivery rate, responses and unsubscription information is available for you to examine.

Tracking and learning

Once you've sent a campaign things don't stop there – you need to make sure that you learn from every interaction with your audience. If you've got access to statistics you can ensure that every campaign you send is better than the last.

Things to watch out for:

- Delivery rate. This will tell you how accurate your subscriber information is – and tell you who you aren't able to reach.
- What response did you get? If you're sending campaigns that are dependent on responses assess how much of a response you got. Was it what you expected?



Time to get started!

That's it for our quick guide. Now it's time to get started with your first campaign. You'll find everything you need to set up your campaigns at <http://www.signup-onlinemarketing.co.uk/mobile-marketing/> and even better, it's free to set up.

These tips should help you get more from your SMS marketing but there's plenty more advice that can be applied as well.

Check out <http://www.signup-onlinemarketing.co.uk> if you're hungry for more! Or get in touch with us at solutions@sign-up.to or on 0845 644 4184

