7 TIPS FOR INCORPORATING SMS INTO YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS

When was the last time you looked at your mobile phone? If you’re anything like the 75 percent of the world’s population with mobile phone access — yep, that’s 5.25 billion people and rising — you keep it close by. According to a 2012 *Time* magazine poll, 84 percent of people can’t go a single day without their mobile device in hand, 20 percent said they check their mobile devices every 10 minutes, and 75 percent of those between 25 years old and 29 years old sleep with theirs.

That’s a lot of people scanning their phones while browsing at retail stores, relaxing in their homes, walking around trade shows, sitting at restaurant tables and doing a zillion other things. Savvy marketers have picked up on this mobile phone usage and started incorporating SMS into their messaging mix to better communicate with customers and prospects, a smart move given that 90 percent of text messages are read within three minutes of delivery.

But if all you’re doing — or thinking about doing at some point — is sending the same generic one-off text messages to all your mobile subscribers, you’re barely scratching the surface of what you can do with this dynamic communication channel. Here are seven advanced ways to use SMS to enhance your marketing efforts.

**Tip #1: Gather “explicit” data via SMS that you can leverage across other channels.**

Has your SMS data been relegated to its own lonely silo? Bust through those walls and start using SMS to gather key data you can use in other digital channels as well as traditional offline channels, such as contact centers and direct mail.

For example, promote email opt-in via SMS across key touch points, including POS signs, ads throughout stores or in mall locations, or on transaction receipts. Test incentives, such as “Text your email address to 46745 to sign up for our email program and get 10% off your next purchase.”

Don’t stop there. Encourage customers to provide other pieces of information via SMS, such as zip code (for promotions specific to their location), mailing address (for print catalogs) and phone number (for service assistance), which you can use to drive cross-channel communications and provide a more integrated and rewarding experience for customers.

To increase conversions, consider providing details on why contacts should share the information you’re requesting. For instance, instead of just asking for a person’s birthdate, say “Text your birthdate to 57892 to receive a special gift on your big day.”

**Tip #2: Drive dynamic content in your emails and on your website using SMS behaviors.**

Using behavior-driven dynamic content within emails and on your website is a potent way to build engagement, strengthen loyalty and boost revenue. Assuming you have a unified marketing database in place capable of capturing cross-channel behaviors and attributing them to a single person, there are countless customer actions you might use to fuel content in email and on your website. For example, a new SMS subscriber who visits your website within two months of opt-in might see a content block advertising your recently released mobile app. Or, all email subscribers who are actively engaged with you via SMS and whose device equals “iPhone” might see a content block inviting them to download your new iPhone app.

You could also use similar principals to drive SMS opt-ins. For example, mobile app downloaders might see dynamic content blocks on your website advertising your SMS program — or could be prompted to opt in upon opening your app.
Tip #3: Give contacts the ability to choose the channels through which they receive communications.

With endless information at their fingertips and a bevy of social networks a keystroke away, today's buyers have more control than ever over the customer-business relationship. In response to these shifting dynamics, many savvy companies are giving customers and prospects more control over how they communicate with them.

To improve the customer experience, consider enhancing your preference center and allowing contacts to choose what types of messages they want to receive through various channels. You will likely find that some customers prefer to receive certain messages via different channels, such as sales alerts via SMS and monthly newsletters via email.

You might, for example, set up a grid within your preference center listing different types of communications you send and enabling the contact to select "email," "SMS," "print" or a combination thereof for how they receive these messages. Providing this added flexibility—along with offering contacts additional control over the type of content they receive and the frequency with which they receive it—helps decrease list churn and boost engagement.

Tip #4: Integrate other channels into your automated email campaigns.

Today's on-the-go customers are weaving in and out of channels and hopping from one device to another throughout the day. To increase your chances of engaging these customers, get creative and build campaigns that reach across channels.

For example, let's say you're setting up a four-touch automated campaign geared toward getting customers to perform a certain action within a 10-day time frame. You start by sending an email at 10 days out, and then another seven days out. Instead of just sending non-responders emails again at three days out and one day out and hoping for the best, you might add an SMS message on these days. If there's still no response at the end of the 10-day period, you could then route the customer to a call center or have the contact's inaction trigger a print mailing.

Once set up, these campaigns run on their own—in this case, only sending follow-up reminder messages to those people who haven't responded. And not only do these multichannel automated programs free you up to focus on other tasks, but they allow you to rest easier knowing that you've pursued all available avenues to elicit a response.

Real-Life Success Story

Santander Consumer USA (SCUSA), which services more than 450,000 auto finance customers, sends out thousands of payment reminders as part of its messaging mix. With its customers showing a strong interest in having it communicate with them via SMS, Santander became an early adopter of Silverpop's SMS offering as part of its multichannel messaging strategy.

"We initially did not advertise SMS, instead only offering it as an option on our preference page," said Will Stacy, director of marketing for SCUSA. "We had thousands of customers sign up for SMS payment reminders as soon as we made it available. It's obvious that SMS is the next step in optimizing communications with our customers."

The results of incorporating a multichannel approach using both SMS and email reminders were positive. "Our initial results show that for those customers that receive a SMS reminder, 15 percent will post a payment immediately, ensuring that customers have a higher propensity to pay if they are reminded via SMS in conjunction with email," said Stacy.
Tip #5: Segment and target individuals based on a person’s cross-channel behaviors.

Experienced digital marketers know that delivering emails based on a contact's actions, preferences or demographics delivers more ROI than just sending general broadcast messages. The same principal applies to SMS, yet many marketers take a “one size fits all” approach to texting.

Instead, increase relevance by setting up rules so contacts receive certain messages when they meet specific criteria. You might start by setting up triggered text messages based exclusively on actions within the channel — if a contact opts in for your SMS programs and sends “SpringContest” and “SummerPromotions” texts, for example, that might trigger a text message offering a sneak peek at your new fall product lineup.

To drive even more ROI, consider setting up increasingly sophisticated rules that take cross-channel criteria into account. You might run a query of all your SMS subscribers who have visited your website in the last week, and send them an exclusive presale offer for their local store via text. Or, maybe an SMS subscriber who retweets your blog post gets a “thank you” text message with an invitation to follow you on Twitter. Inactivity can also be the trigger — someone who’s signed up for your SMS program but hasn’t opened your email in the last two weeks, visited your website in the past month or made a purchase in the last 60 days might receive a text message aimed at driving him or her back to your website.

Tip #6: Enhance your loyalty program through SMS gamification.

Today’s sophisticated marketing technology platforms enable you to take advantage of the advances in mobile and marketing automation to create personalized loyalty programs that build affinity for your brands.

Setting up an individualized SMS rewards program is a creative way to build your database, gather information and extend message reach. And as an added bonus, it’s also a lot of fun for your customers. Imagine setting up a “loyalty” scoring model in your marketing automation platform and then rewarding participants with points for actions both within the SMS channel (e.g., texting you their birthdate) and in other channels (e.g., making a purchase or retweeting content).

You could then build an SMS campaign in which participants receive different texts based on their loyalty points, with

Real-Life Success Story

One of the largest U.S. retail chains wanted to set itself apart from the competition by building a strategic loyalty program that would increase its customer database, promote events and sales through SMS, and drive in-store traffic.

Silverpop’s mobile messaging partner was selected to deliver an opt-in campaign coordinated across various marketing channels, including email, Web, mobile app and social networks, as well as in-store sign-ups.

Using the advanced mobile messaging platform, the retailer sent coupons varying from $10 to $20 (depending on shopper spending levels) to consumers’ mobiles to promote opt-ins. A sweepstakes offer was also run through brand name partners to drive opt-ins for alerts. The platform tracked each individual opt-in and provided reporting for each touch point, proving greater insight into the success level of each channel.

More than 1.5 million people participated in the retailer’s loyalty campaign, with the ratio of alerts to users trending at 3:1, showing customers were engaged with the offers. In addition, the analytics provided allowed the chain to tailor future campaigns for greater success.
These messages containing URLs that direct recipients to personalized landing pages with individualized content and calls to action. Texts might include:

- **Message #1**: Welcome to the club! Stay tuned for details on exclusive badges, special offers & VIP info. Max 8 msg/month. Rply STOP to quit. Msg&Data rates may apply.
- **Message #2**: Here’s UR 1st chance to get an exclusive offer & earn your 1st badge - Rewards Insider. Go to http://bit.ly/PRG9dk for details. Rply STOP to quit.

Bottom line? You’re limited only by your creativity. And if you already have a loyalty program in place that incorporates mobile in some way—a loyalty app or a check-in rewards program, for instance—it’s a natural progression to use SMS in conjunction with these programs to better connect with customers.

**Tip #7**: Use geofences in conjunction with SMS to connect in real time, on location.

Businesses with physical locations know that few pieces of data are more powerful than knowing when a customer is at or near your store. Now, location detection technology, used within a permission-based framework, can tell you when your customers cross a “geofence”—a virtual perimeter wrapped around a real-world geographic area—that’s set up near your store, restaurant or other physical locations.

And when you combine this location data with a digital marketing engine that can harness this information and use it to trigger text messages in real time, it opens up exciting new opportunities to connect in real time when a customer enters (or exits) your stores.

Let’s say “John” needs some new running shoes. He hasn’t been back to XYZ running shoe company since he bought a pair of Nike shoes a year ago. Driving by one day, he notices the store and decides to stop in. When he enters, his phone vibrates and he gets a text message: “Hey John, glad to have you back. Don’t forget to check out our new line of Nike running shoes.”

A few minutes later, “Sarah” enters the store. She’s visited a few times in the last six months, in addition to downloading XYZ’s mobile app and visiting the company website, where she left a pair of New Balance running shoes in her shopping cart a week ago. As she walks through the door, she gets a text message that reads, “Sarah, we’d love for you to complete your New Balance shoe purchase. Here’s a ‘10% off’ coupon to use in the store today.”

Two different customers, two completely different communications—delivered in real time and based on the individual’s unique past interactions with that company. That’s the power of combining location technology with SMS.

For more digital marketing tips, visit Silverpop’s Expert Library.

---

**Footnotes**

1 – World Bank, “Mobile Phone Access Reaches Three Quarters of Planet’s Population,” July ‘12
2 - Time, “10 Ways Your Phone Is Changing the World,” Aug. ‘12
3 – SinglePoint research, 2010

Silverpop’s digital marketing automation platform was designed to make it simple to build hyper-personalized campaigns, creating individualized experiences for every relationship. Watch our demo to see our product in action, and contact Silverpop to see how we can help you accomplish your marketing goals for 2013.