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SMS: THE KING OF MOBILE MESSAGING

INTRODUCTION:

Today's media landscape is fragmented. A world saturated with invasive advertising like spam, popups, and commercials has overwhelmed consumers. Increasingly, people ignore messages broadcast to a wide audience, whether by using a TiVo or DVR to skip past commercials, or simply by ignoring the banner ads on their favorite website.

In addition to the clutter in traditional media, marketers are faced with multitasking consumers that rely on several channels and devices to gather product information, compare prices and check on product availability.

Businesses need to adapt to this new wave of shopper in the ever-changing media landscape. They must develop cross-channel campaigns and marketing techniques that will effectively reach consumers across all touch points.

As a result, we are seeing more marketers consider mobile as a pivotal touch point. "Texting" or mobile marketing should be part of every marketer's arsenal. SMS (Short Message Service) is a powerful technology that yields businesses the potential to connect with a mass audience and reap big rewards.

Mobile is emerging as a valuable channel to improve brand awareness and enhance relationships with both new and existing customers. Ultimately, it holds the power to influence consumer behavior.



Glossary of Terms

MOBILE MARKETING:

Set of practices that enables organizations to communicate and engage with their audience in an interactive and relevant manner through any mobile device or network.

SMS MARKETING:

Relatively new type of Mobile Marketing that uses SMS (Short Message Service) text messaging as a medium of direct advertising.

SMS CAMPAIGNS:

Involves collecting mobile phone numbers usually by customer opt-ins.

Once numbers are collected, the marketer can then prepare a special promotion or update and send a mass message to potential repeat customers. The SMS industry as a whole tends to be trending towards opt-in only systems in which subscribers give consent to receive messages from a desired organization.

There are two primary types of SMS campaigns:

- **Inbound** - prospect reads, hears or receives invitation to an event where they can text a short code for a discount
- **Outbound** - event reminders, shipping notifications, flight status, etc.

REACH:

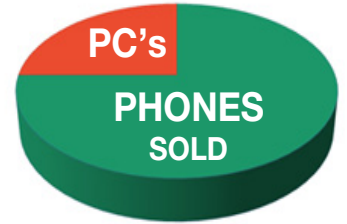
Virtually every mobile phone supports text messaging, thus a majority of consumers are familiar with SMS technology.

The proliferation of the cell phone and "texting" has been astronomical. Both quickly resonated with audiences.

Television was once the premium, sought-after channel to reach a mass audience. TV production costs made it an unattractive medium though. In addition, today's marketers have to deal with new technologies like TiVo and DVR that allow viewers to tune out their messages.

Due to television's waning influence, marketers shifted their focus to online. Like TV, the Internet has its shortcomings in terms of resonance and reach. In regards to creating brand awareness, the Internet is starting to be exhausted. People have setup spam folders and pop up blockers in an attempt to avoid the clutter and block any extraneous noise.

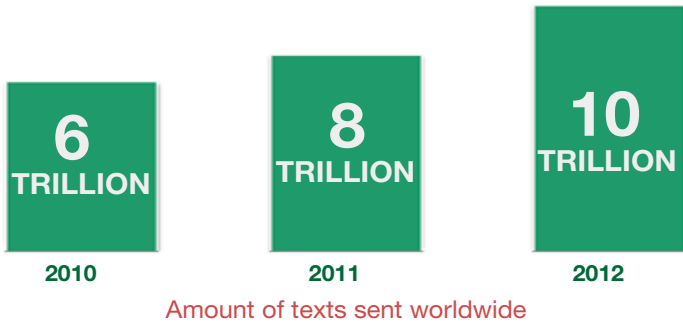
SMS is one of the last mediums in which a consumer actually reads all of their messages, as opposed to allowing irrelevant messages automatically directed to "spam" or "trash" folders.



According to the GSM Association, four mobile phones are sold for every one personal computer. Research also shows that there are more mobile phones on the planet than there are TVs. In short, the mobile phone has unparalleled reach.

Currently, there are 5.3 billion mobile subscribers . That's 78% of the world population! While growth is led by China and India, the U.S. has quickly caught up.

During the first half of 2011, the number of mobile devices in the U.S. rose 9%, causing wireless penetration to reach 104%. There are now more wireless devices being used in the U.S. than there are people.



SMS text messaging is the most widely used data application on the planet. The future of mobile will continue to be very bright. By 2012, an estimated 10 trillion text messages will be sent and delivered globally.

Essentially, SMS is the king of mobile messaging. It is a powerful technology that grants businesses the ability to connect with mass audiences/markets.

RELEVANCY / PERSONALIZATION:

While SMS messages offer mass appeal, they can still be intimate and personal. They can be tailored specifically to your customer base.



SMS allows businesses to communicate with their customers, when and how they want. Texts can reach people wherever they are at any time of day or night. There is a sense of intimate communication, since the message can be accessed “right here in my pocket.”

Texts are further enhanced with a targeted campaign that appeals directly to the consumer. Savvy marketers can use SMS at times when the odds of conversion are at their highest. A restaurant can send out a coupon for lunchtime at 12:05 p.m., just as most people have left the building and are on their way to get something to eat.

When SMS messages are sent at just the right time and contain the exact information the recipient is seeking, there’s a sense of relevancy that consumers appreciate. Beyond appreciation, customers are likely to make a purchase intent.

IMMEDIACY:

It takes 90 minutes for the average person to respond to an email. It takes 90 seconds for the average person to respond to a text message. SMS campaigns are successful and popular because of immediacy.

Why do people read and respond to texts so quickly? The phone has become a possession with great importance in our lives. People are never without their cell phones. 91% of all U.S. citizens have their mobile device within reach 24/7. This means businesses can interact with customers during any time of day or night.

A text message is an immediate form of communication that is almost guaranteed to be read. Like social media and instant messaging, SMS is blazingly fast. Text messaging enables businesses to communicate with customers as speedily as they are now accustomed to living.

Mobile marketing’s ability to quickly reach a consumer or prospect is very powerful. It enables businesses to have **proactive** and **reactive** communications.

The **proactive** approach is important for creating brand awareness and purchase intent. “*The traditional marketing funnel of: become aware, learn, engage, buy, support is becoming non-linear thanks to mobile,*” said Michael Becker, North American Director of the Mobile Marketing Association. “*With mobile, customers might see an ad and immediately buy the product. Or, if they’re not interested, they might share the ad with a friend.*”

Thus, there is a strong advantage to companies proactively placing promotions and updates in the pockets of potential customers. Text messages can be received and interacted with in the moment – even while the customer is having a brand experience in another channel.

Reactive messages are beneficial as well. Quick communication is vital for crisis management and time-specific events. For instance, if you own a winter wear shop then you’d probably want to react to a snowstorm. In an instant you can react to the storm by sending a text message to your customers containing a special offer on hats and gloves. Timing is of the essence when you want to capture conversions off particular events.

INTERACTIVE:

Mobile marketing allows for a meaningful, personal, and long-lasting conversation with customers. SMS facilitates interactivity, since businesses can create a two-way dialogue. The end-result is engagement with brands and enhanced affinity for them.

Mobile messages are so popular because they are so highly engaging and interactive. 21st century marketing is about having a conversation with your customers, rather than shouting at them. Customers expect you to speak to them, and text messaging allows you to reach them individually, whenever, wherever, in the palm of their hands. With a few taps of their thumbs, customers can respond to whatever message that you have sent them.

With text messaging you can build relationships with your customers. Relationship building means transforming consumers into brand evangelists. To do this you must truly understand customers' wants and needs.

Many consumers prefer the immediacy, brevity and ease of SMS communications. Research shows that increasingly people prefer texting over other forms of communication, including talking. Today's multichannel marketing means reaching and engaging with customers in the channel they prefer.

Odds are your customer base is texting, and they are texting often. If your customers are immersed in mobile, shouldn't you be where your customers are as well?

Think of mobile marketing as a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool. SMS not only allows engagement, but it gives companies a chance to collect data on their customers. By gathering an active phone number and demographic information, companies can build databases now and use them in the future.



TRACKABILITY:

Another benefit of SMS marketing is its precision and tracking power. When you send out text messages to your customers you can see in real-time who has responded to your message. You can see how many people act upon a mobile coupon or offer. It is easy to track what mobile initiatives resonated with audiences. Do your customers like contests? Do they want coupons? Mobile quickly answers these questions.

SMS Marketing is one of the hottest and fastest-growing types of marketing because it offers low cost, high return on investment (ROI). ROI is easy to calculate and optimize because SMS campaigns are less expensive to produce, personalize and test.

YOUR COMPETITORS ARE DOING IT....

Lastly, if you aren't utilizing SMS as part of your marketing mix then you'll soon get left behind. Mobile has been predicted to be a hot trend for years. It is just now starting to fully takeoff.

Marketers believe mobile will become increasingly effective in upcoming years, far outpacing the effectiveness of traditional tactics.

A recent survey by Shop.org found that 48% of respondents said they have already implemented some form of mobile marketing. This means companies still have room to get ahead of the curve.

Mobile marketing is here and savvy firms, from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses, are already running successful mobile campaigns. Although thousands of companies large and small are already marketing to their customers via text message, the medium is still in its infancy. If you act now, you are letting your customers know that you are a forward-thinking firm.

CONCLUSION:

While some may think mobile marketing is a fad, it is clear that SMS marketing offers big potential to companies wanting to reap revenue and resonate with customers. While thousands of companies have implemented mobile initiatives, more marketers will follow suit while SMS marketing is still in its infancy.

It is clear that mobile is the key to today's marketing problems due to its unparalleled reach, relevancy and trackability. SMS campaigns have become the most immediate and personal way to connect with consumers. They allow us to engage and build relationships with customers in a medium they prefer.

To get started with SMS campaigns, you should select a trusted vendor such as Strikelron, which offers a turn-key mobile marketing solution. Strikelron's SMS web service is fast and easy to integrate. See how you can start implementing SMS campaigns today.

ABOUT STRIKEIRON:

Strikelron is the cloud leader with the most mature and reliable Data-as-a-Service (DaaS) platform on the market. We are passionate about innovation in data quality and data communications. Strikelron's cloud solutions enable businesses to communicate with consumers in the medium of their choice. Strikelron offers a Mobile Messaging Solution tailored specifically to meet all business needs. This solution allows you to communicate and engage with customers anytime and anywhere. We take the complexity out of managing carrier relationships, since our solution can easily and instantly send text messages to virtually any cell phone in the world.

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