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SMS Text Messaging

Keeping It Short

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SMS Text Messaging

Keeping It Short

SMS (Short Message Service), or text messaging, has been around for the past 18 years. Many of us send text messages to our friends and family on a daily basis. More and more businesses are starting to realize that these short messages can be effective tools for communicating information to dealers and customers about new products, discounts and upcoming events all at once with one simple text message.

Texting Stats

- In 2000, just **17 billion** SMS messages were sent.
- In 2001, the number jumped to **250 billion**.
- In 2004, more than **500 billion** SMS messages were sent. This represents close to 100 text messages for every person in the world.
- In 2009, **4.1 billion** messages were sent **daily**.

Choosing A Service

The first step to starting your SMS text messaging program is to choose an online service company that can keep all of your contacts' information safe and provide you with an easy way to send messages. They also have the ability to make sure that your short messages and keywords work properly. These services will cost around \$24 per month for 500 messages.

Three Steps To Sending Your Message

1. Type your text message
2. Select the groups you wish to send it to
3. Send your message

Creating Group Contact Lists

In order to send your first message, you will need to have a contact list available that contains cell phone numbers. The process of gathering contacts is a little different than direct mail or e-mail campaigns. In most cases, purchased and existing lists do not contain cell phone numbers.

In order to build your contact list for SMS text messaging, you must send out information that provides an easy way to sign up or opt-in to your program. You can use advertising, direct mail, e-mail and websites to convey this information. Your target audience will see information that instructs them to text a **keyword** to a specific number called a **short code**. For example, they may see “Text BMG4AD to 123456 to be entered in our drawing” in an advertisement. Once a person texts the keyword to the given short code, they are will signed up for your SMS text-messaging program.



Keyword: a unique term (letters and/or numbers) that people can use to communicate with you via a short code.

(Example: BMG4AD)

Short Code: a 5-digit or 6-digit number to which text messages can be sent from a mobile phone. (Example: 123456)



Creating Your First Message

Once you have your contact list, you are ready to start sending information to your dealers and customers. Each message can be personalized with the name of your contact from your list. For example, you may want to invite your contacts to your trade show event. The message may look like the example to the left.

It is also important to note that a standard text message is limited to 160 characters. Characters include letters, numbers, spaces, symbols and punctuation. Some online services support only 130 characters based on the delivery method.

Example of 160 characters



Sending Your Message

Once you have chosen a group of contacts and created your message, you are ready to send it. Text messages are usually delivered to mobile phones in a few seconds. During peak hours, there could be a short delay. Please note that additional delays may occur if a recipient's phone is turned off or out of the coverage area. When this happens, a carrier will attempt to deliver your message for up to 72 hours.

Are There Rules For How I Can Promote My Keyword Online Or In Print?

According to carrier guidelines, you must include the following:

- Message and data rates may apply
- Frequency (Example: Max 2 messages per week)
- Opt-out instructions (Example: To unsubscribe text STOP {KEYWORD} to 313131)

As you can see, the most difficult part of starting an SMS text messaging program is gathering contacts. Once you have this portion set up, creating and sending a text message is very easy to do and provides you with another effective way to communicate with your dealers and customers.