

Mobile Text Marketing – Tapping into Profits

As an adult, you may be warming up to texting in your personal life – a domain once dominated by teens with fast fingers. Beyond sending 160-character missives to friends and family, text messaging for business is now wide open as a potential source for revenue. Text messaging is also commonly called SMS (short message service) messaging or bulk texting or bulk SMS messaging.

In a recent report, CTIA research showed that last year over 193 billion text messages are sent each month for a total of 2.3 trillion texts sent last year. A growing number of these missives are from businesses reaching out to consumers.

Text messages have a 99% open and read rate compared to emails which, if they are not clogged in a spam filter, can hope for a 9%-23% open rate but only if they are extremely well-written, relevant and requested.

Mobile text marketing is used by small businesses to send mobile coupons, announce special events, sales, new inventory or programs announcements and special offers. In order to implement mobile text marketing for your business, you first need a set-up for mobile texting. You can try to do it yourself by downloading free text messaging software (just do a Google search for the latest versions.)

Otherwise, there are many companies that can send out text marketing messages for you for around 1 penny each while others charge a flat rate for a certain number of texts sent each month. Some of the current small business SMS marketing firms include:

- www.Trumpia.com
- www.mobivity.com
- www.txt180.com

It doesn't matter what firm you use, so long as they aren't likely to go out of business tomorrow and that you own your text database and NOT the firm. If you ever come to a parting of the ways with your text service provider, you should be able to take your list with you when you go. Read the fine print and make sure you won't lose your database of cell numbers if you walk away at any point.

Once you've got the software or consultant set up and are ready to start receiving opt-ins to build your database, you must encourage people to sign up. The best and fastest way is to offer something free or at a great discount to encourage enrollments – here are some high opt-in strategies that have worked to build a customer text list rapidly:

- Redbox offers a free rental or cents off code to get people to text a keyword and be signed up for their mobile text list
- Ed Hardy clothing chain offered a 10% coupon that could be reused for a certain number of days to drive opt-ins

- Belle Tires got a huge opt-in rate by offering \$20 off coupon on future purchases in exchange for opt-ins to their list

After you build a list of a couple of hundred numbers, you're ready to send out your first offer! The key is to only tap your list when you have a high-value, relevant offer they are likely to be interested in and not too often. Depending on the nature of your business, once a week may be plenty, for others, twice a month may be more appropriate.

For restaurants, video rentals, dry cleaners, movie theaters or other entertainment, weekly texting may be appropriate since these are high-use industries. Spas, salons, landscapers and other occasional-use services may prefer once or twice per month texting. Clothing stores, tire shops, jewelry stores and other higher-dollar establishments may want to limit their offers to monthly or special event/special occasion texts.

Once you start texting out offers, redemption rates will help you analyze your customer preferences and tweak your text marketing efforts to maximize revenue while not treading on your customers' patience for excessive texting.

No matter what strategy you implement, mobile text marketing will be a boon to any small business – people appreciate relevant mobile offers and respond at double digit rates to interesting offers!