

## **The Many Uses of Text Message Marketing**

The use of SMS or text messages for marketing and informational purposes is growing rapidly. Text messages have already replaced phone calls as the most often used feature of phones, and businesses as well as organizations are realizing the advantages of using this medium for selected communications. It is also important to remember that text messages can be used on both feature phones and smartphones, as 60% of cell phone users have feature phones according to a recent Interactive Advertising Bureau study released July 2011. Campaigns directed to smartphone users only will miss more than 6 in 10 mobile users at this point, so SMS marketing reaches the broadest audience.

Text messages have a much higher open rate than emails (90% vs. 40%). In addition, recipients of these messages are more likely to respond to a call to action than they are to similar requests delivered by email. 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. (Source: CTIA.org). This is not to say that email is dead by any means, simply that the proper use of SMS messages to those who have opted in to receive them has tremendous advantages for certain applications.

Who can most benefit from using SMS messages and what types of applications are they best used for? First, local businesses can use these messages to alert customers about promotions and offer coupons. Mobile coupons get 10 times the redemption rate of traditional coupons. (Source: Borrell Associates)

They can use a promotional offer to induce customers to opt-in to receive mobile messages in order to build their marketing database. They can also offer specials for customers on their mobile marketing list, and alert their mobile customers of any regular promotions and specials that may be occurring.

When mobile users do a search from their mobile device, it is often to find a business or product that they are looking for at that particular moment. A mobile optimized website that is easily found through services like Yelp or Google Places, positions you to take advantage of this growing trend.

Second, any business or organization needing to confirm meetings, appointments or send reminders can use text messages to do this effectively. Most people will not object to giving permission for these types of notifications to be sent given their relationship with service providers such as their physician, tax preparer, hair salon or auto repair shop for example. Given the cost of missed appointments in lost revenue, an SMS service that reminds client of appointments and enables them to confirm or reschedule appointments will provide an excellent return on investment.

Text messages can also be used as part of print or online ads by providing a short code in ads. Consumers can instantaneously respond to a call to action via SMS. A growing number of consumers prefer texting to making a phone call or following a web link.

Offering interactivity is a powerful way to attract today's consumer and text messaging is easily integrated with other media to provide this capability. Everyone has seen how TV

shows like American Idol have used SMS as a tool to poll audience response and encourage interactivity, whether or not we agree with their choice of who goes and who stays. Other uses of SMS include text to win sweepstakes and campaigns, surveys and collecting customer feedback.