5 SMS Marketing Best Practices to Help You Sell More Stuff



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SMS marketing is one of the most profitable and effective channels for getting customers' attention. Eighty-four percent of customers want texts from businesses — they read those messages instantly, and they take immediate action.

This form of marketing can be a game-changer for your business, but you've got to follow these SMS marketing best practices.

1. No cold SMS outreach

Rule #1 of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) and

clarifications made by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) over the years is this: Contacts must opt into receiving communications from your business. You need to follow rule #1 – but doing so also creates better customer experiences and leads to more profit for your business.

Let's say I'm a consumer, and I receive a text from you out of the blue. This text is the first experience I'm having with your company. I'm immediately upset that you texted me without permission, I'll report you as spam, and I'll probably never work with you. That's bad. But getting people to opt into texts is actually rather easy, and it sets customers up to have a better experience.

How to get contacts to opt in:

On your website contact forms, or wherever you collect contact information, be sure to do two things:

- Ask (or require) people to enter their cell phone number
- Add "opt-in language" to your contact form, something like *"By submitting this form, you give us permission to contact you through the information provided. You may opt out at any time."*

You can also use other marketing to get contacts to opt in. For instance, you might promote a keyword, like "Text DEAL to get exclusive weekly discounts!" You might also add texting to your current business phone line, and then begin prompting people to "Text or call us at [this number.]" If someone texts you first, you're good to go.

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2. Use an SMS marketing platform

You can do a lot of great marketing without spending any money, but for both compliance and functionality, you're going to need to spend a few dollars on an SMS marketing platform so you can do things like:

- Tell every contact how to opt out of SMS, should they wish to
- Text from your existing business phone number
- Mass text messages to entire lists of contacts
- Manage and segment your contact lists for different offerings or updates
- Automatically handle opt-outs
- Track message delivery and engagement
- Give multiple team members access to view performance

Too many entrepreneurs – especially solopreneurs – will try to hack it by using their personal smartphone. Don't do this. That will lead to ineffective marketing and also open you up to regulation trouble that an SMS marketing platform would prevent.

3. Craft messages you would want to receive

One marketing best practice is to put yourself in your customer's shoes. That applies just as well to SMS marketing. If you had previously worked with or bought from this company, what kinds of messages would you like getting? That might include:

- Updates about the business or store hours
- Promotions on discounts for items you've bought before or have been thinking about buying
- Announcements and reminders about upcoming events
- Notices about customer milestones, anniversaries and renewals
- Requests for feedback and sharing your experience

Think about what you'd want to receive, and then start creating text message campaigns to match.

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4. Provide clear instructions for effective engagement

You don't have to be an expert copywriter to send effective SMS promotions. The best ads all have these things in common:

- Build excitement → NEW!
- Give an offer → Buy one, get one
- Provide a call-to-action → Follow this link to buy
- Create urgency → Deal ends at midnight!

There's a lot of flexibility in what you can say, even in text messages, but you've got to be clear about what you're offering, why they should buy it and how they can get it. Otherwise, people will see your message, but they won't do anything with it (and that would be a shame).

Pro tip: Adding an image to your SMS campaign can be powerful.

Perhaps it’s a flier for an event, a product image or something else that’s worth 1,000 words and enhances your promotion. This way, you can keep your texts shorter and still pack a punch with your campaign.

5. Measure, improve, celebrate

Most businesses that start using SMS marketing see near-immediate returns, but you’re not going to be an expert right out of the gate. That’s okay! There’s a clear path to becoming one.

Put your best effort into sending your first SMS marketing campaign. Watch its performance — how many people click your link or complete the action, and how quickly? Pay attention to your metrics to see what’s working and what’s not. Ask friends and colleagues for feedback. Make adjustments, send your next campaign, and repeat the process. Pretty soon, you’ll be an SMS marketing master, and your bottom line will give you something to celebrate.

Related: How to Use Business Text Messaging to Reduce Customer Acquisition Costs

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