

# Make Customer Care Rewarding Using Text Messaging



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**According to CTIA: 1.5 trillion SMS text messages were sent in 2009.**

Given its rising popularity, companies are not surprisingly looking at ways to leverage this mobile tool in their communications with customers and prospects. To date, many companies have focused on SMS text messaging mainly for polling and surveys, discounts and coupons, and travel or event-based promotions. While extremely valuable in generating short-term sales and other results, often overlooked are the service-related communications that could significantly enhance the customer experience, build brand loyalty and foster greater lifetime value.

In considering the customer-care uses of SMS, it is important to recognize that customers take a total view of the companies with which they do business. Customers do not differentiate between your business segments, like marketing or service messages and the channels of communication used. All become part of that composite view of your company known as brand perception.

This makes every interaction, regardless of touch-point, important as an opportunity to add value and enhance the customer experience. In a very real sense, it makes every interaction a marketing interaction. Because even if not a direct sales opportunity, it certainly influences how customers see your company and their willingness to act on that perception in buying product.

With this in mind, let us examine the uses of SMS text messaging for customer care. Typically, your customer care communications are the type of important, time-sensitive transactional messages that customers want and expect to receive. These communications could be issued in response to actions that customers have initiated, such as notices about product purchase, shipping or back-order and service inquiries.

Or they could be triggered by important changes or risks that you have spotted, such as alerts on potential identify theft or fraud, overdraft avoidance on bank accounts, critical product bug fixes or updates to travel itineraries involving flight, hotel or rental car arrangements. Additionally, the communications could be prompted by other information that customers would want to hear about right away, such as notices on investment portfolio buy or sell opportunities or the chance to secure a desired product on better terms.

The point is that all of these customer-care circumstances and many more are well suited for SMS text communication. All companies have them in one form or another. And all represent untapped potential to enrich the customer experience, enhance loyalty to your company and set-up revenue opportunities.

## **Why is SMS so well suited for customer care messages?**

1. Mobile devices have become a necessity – all of your customers have one.
2. The nature of the medium is a perfect match for messages that tend to be short and time-sensitive. SMS messages arrive in minutes, if not seconds, after being sent, and on a device that customers typically carry with them all the time and check frequently.
3. SMS texting is an interactive medium. It enables companies to take customer care to whole new level – to not just inform but resolve issues through a two-way dialogue.
4. SMS for customer care is the perfect bridge to other uses, such as marketing. In fact, carefully paired marketing messages can be incorporated into a text message directly or via a link to a landing page just as is done with email today.

**Provide for a fulfilling, interactive customer experience.** In using SMS for customer care notices, bear in mind two factors as you build your program.

First, it is inherently a two-way medium, so customers are likely to respond. Second, it is also real time, so customers are expecting real time responsiveness in any follow-on communications. How you handle this dual nature of SMS will determine whether you are simply using it to inform customers more efficiently or actually leveraging its potential to resolve problems or realize opportunities in ways that add value to the relationship.

Therefore, think through how the communications you initiate on SMS will play out. Automated, scripted responses may work in some cases. Offering to follow-up with more detailed information via email or directing customers to a landing page may work in others. But give serious consideration to options for interacting with a real person via SMS, instant messaging or phone chat. These are not only more consistent with texting but likely to return the highest dividends in terms of an improved customer experience.

To explore how to set-up your SMS customer care program or to see if this is a valuable option for your company contact Ted Fabis of SMS Message Pros. 800 580-1448 or [www.smsmessagepros.com](http://www.smsmessagepros.com).