

The power of SMS for SMEs

The majority of mobile users rarely leave home without their devices, meaning businesses are able to connect with their audience, wherever they may be.

"Over the years, SMS marketing has become extremely prevalent as it is valuable, cost effective, intimate and reaches a specific target audience at a particular time. Small businesses with a tight marketing budget can achieve a high return on investment using SMS technology, if they use it correctly," says Tony Smith, CEO of Oxygen8 SA, a global provider of integrated mobile solutions

Smith says that effective mobile engagement platforms are required to achieve optimum results with SMS marketing. "With the necessary tools to help enhance and improve interactions with customers, small businesses can fully embrace the power of mobile, ensuring personal and meaningful engagement every time."

Targetting is key

It is crucial that businesses ensure that they are speaking to the right target audience through the correct applications and platforms using accurate databases. This guarantees a well-received message and positive response.



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Smith advises that once the target audience is profiled, customised messages should be crafted taking such elements as language, style, interests, age and environment into consideration. This will result in relevant and familiar messages that resonate with the recipient. "There are many cost effective platforms available on the market that handle the targeting, delivery and analysis of text messages, which also allow you to design and undertake SMS campaigns through web-based applications."

Smith cites an example of a local laundry service, which uses SMS to remind customers to collect their dry cleaning. This reminder service assists with cash flow by shortening the time that cleaned items spend on the rack. Likewise a video rental store that sends reminders when rented items are due to be returned, again helping to improve inventory turnover.

"Looking at loyalty communications and promotions, some local restaurants send promotional messages for special events, in a very personal and warm tone that leaves one in no doubt that the proprietor wrote the message personally. Non-profit organisations can also benefit from premium tariff SMS as a tool for fundraising," he adds.

Make it interactive

With the competitive growth of smartphone usage, SMS, combined with voice and email, give businesses the perfect opportunity to engage with their audience using multiple touch points. This can also be supported by offering the recipient the option to respond at no charge. A message accompanied by a picture, link or video heightens interest and engagement.

Perfect your timing

It is very important for any business to know when and how many messages to send to their customers. Smith says that mobile campaigns shouldn't be an after-thought to a marketing campaign - they should be an integral part that are proactively created and scheduled. "This gives the business control over the campaign and gives the customer a more or less idea of when to receive messages from the brand, which builds anticipation.

"With a limited budget it's important that small businesses avoid sending out messages unnecessarily or at the wrong time which may encourage opt outs. Campaign calendars are a great tool to use in this regard as all messages and mobile target lists can be scheduled," says Smith.

Remember Opt In and Out options

Whether the business thinks that their message is unique and appropriate, SMS marketing relies on recipients to opt in. That means the target audience must first sign up to receive messages about deals and promotions before receiving them.

"When a recipient opts in, it is certain that they are interested in the brand, the product offering or service. On the other hand, opt in also gives the business a clear view of who is interested or not interested. This saves time for the recipient and saves money for the business. Messages must have a clear and visible opt out and when a recipient opts out, they should not be bothered again," concludes Smith.

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