

COLUMNS

## Running an effective SMS campaign in this environment

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*Kalin Kassabov is co-founder/CEO of ProTexting*

By **Kalin Kassabov**

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SMS provides marketers with the most effective and efficient way to reach their audience. With text-message response rates of 98 percent unheard of with any other type of platform brands and retailers have the closest thing to a captive audience they can get anywhere.

Yet, as with any other type of promotion, you have to plan your campaigns carefully.

In the current competitive environment, you want to get the most out of your SMS marketing.

### Message to right audience

One of the most important principles of any type of marketing, SMS included, is doing a good job of targeting your audience.

One common mistake that will limit your results is sending the same messages to everyone. SMS marketing allows you to segment recipients into different lists.

You can separate people by age, gender, interests, geography and past purchases.

When you create specific lists that people can opt into, you can be sure that you are sending messages to consumers who really want this type of information.

### Short, timely and call to action

Because text messages have a built-in limit of 160 characters, you cannot send very long messages.

However, research shows that it is often beneficial to send even shorter messages.

A text message should have one simple subject. Often, you will want the recipient to take an action such as replying or making an appointment. Anything beyond this basic information only detracts from the message.

Some examples of brief and direct messages include:

"Thnx for your interest. Go to mywebsite.com to learn how to earn prizes and rewards.

"Please reply with your email address to enter our contest." Or:

"Please reply with ur birthdate in MM/DD/YYYY format to receive a birthday gift."

"Flash sale. Today only. Use promo code VIP for an instant 25% discount at mywebsite.com"

In addition to being short and simple, the above messages all include a call to action.

In most cases, you want the recipient to reply to the message or click on a link. Make sure you use language that makes this clear.

Time sensitivity is another feature that can make your messages more compelling.

Most text messages are opened within an hour of being sent, so SMS works very well for flash sales, one-day events and other time sensitive messages.

Integrate with other marketing

Most consumers use a variety of devices and platforms. To take advantage of this fact, make sure you integrate your various types of campaigns.

SMS has features that make it easy to do this.

You can, for one thing, use an email capture application to get people's email addresses. You can then send them your email newsletter as well as text messages.

SMS marketing can also be integrated with email marketing tools such as MailChimp, Constant Contact, Zapier and VerticalResponse.

You can include links to your Web site and social media sites in some of your text messages. You can use an app that automatically posts to Facebook and Twitter.

You should also do the reverse, invite visitors to your Web site, Facebook page or other social media pages to text you to get coupons or enter a contest.

Promoting across platforms helps you reach more people no matter where their attention is at the moment.

Contests and sweepstakes

Contests are a powerful way to engage your audience. They give people an incentive to participate and perhaps share news about the contest with others.

If you have a retail store, you can give away a product, service or gift certificate.

Restaurants can give away prizes in the form of free meals. Spas and salons can give away free treatments. You can come up with any prize that will appeal to your demographic.

Track results

It is crucial to analyze your results.

You want to keep track of metrics such as open rates and clicks and how people respond to different message styles, frequency of messages and keywords.

If you have multiple lists you may find that different demographics respond better to different approaches.

Consistently testing your results lets you improve the effectiveness of your campaigns over time.

THESE ARE SOME tips to keep in mind for successful SMS campaigns.

Because SMS marketing is so flexible, it can work with any type of business.

People actually like receiving text messages to get updates on special deals, events and new products.

Succeeding with your SMS campaigns is a matter of reaching the right audience with a relevant and compelling message.

*Kalin Kassabov is cofounder/CEO of [ProTexting](#), New York. Reach him at [kalin@prot texting.com](mailto:kalin@prot texting.com).*