

COLUMNS

How brands can make their SMS list exclusive

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Exclusive ground

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Whether you are growing an existing SMS marketing list or building one entirely from scratch, use every traditional marketing channel to inform customers of the benefits that opting-in to your text messages can deliver.

The key to SMS marketing list growth is a combination of a well-thought plan, great offers, simplified signup and using all available methods to get the word out.

Making it worthwhile

Becoming a member of your SMS list needs to be presented as something exclusive.

Giving your SMS list a name and sharing the special value in the call to action conveys a kind of promise making consumers feel that they are receiving preferential treatment.

For example, naming it "ACME Special Offers" tells the consumer that they will receive offers that they might not otherwise get from other channels, creating added incentive to join.

Rewards for signup

Even with a great name, experience has shown that delivering a welcome incentive dramatically increases uptake.

As a result, before you kick off your SMS signup program, you need to make a few decisions.

The first decision is whether to provide an incentive to join the program.

If you provide a welcome incentive, what is your goal for the offer?

Do you want to promote a follow-on visit by delivering your coupon 24 hours after signup?

Do you want to try to increase basket size by providing a coupon to be used immediately at checkout if the basket size exceeds a certain value?

Does the coupon need to be one-time-use so that you can accurately track redemptions and ensure that it does not go viral?

Or, do you simply want to provide a quick reward as a thank you for signup?

The form

Nope. You are not done making decisions.

Your list signup form significantly affects your signup rate.

You should also think about how much, if any, data you want to gather at signup.

Is SMS list opt-in enough or do you want to collect demographic data and create a CRM record or have the customer join your loyalty program?

If you are going to collect demographic data, you need to ensure that minimal customers drop out of the process before sharing their information.

Spreading the word

Now you need to spread the word about your exclusive and rewarding SMS list. You need to take advantage of every possible channel.

Associates: If you have the ability to leverage store associates, this is a great way to encourage signup. Sometimes associates can use the welcome coupons as a way to close business that they might otherwise lose.

Point of sale: Another effective way to reach customers is to have them sign up via the pin pad during the payment process.

It is also easy to add a simple placard at the register directing shoppers to text a keyword such as "JOIN" to your short code. The associate is there to lend help with users unfamiliar with signing up for SMS alerts.

Store signage: Do not just leave the signs for checkout. Banners, in-aisle signage or other in-store signage can be used to attract attention to your text marketing list.

Create a sense of urgency by including a short-term expiration. Using a time frame as the expiration makes the signs reusable. "Receive 10% off your entire purchase when you sign up for our exclusive list by texting SALE to CODE 78527. Hurry! This offer expires in 48 hours."

Do not forget to mention the offer that you have created.

Social: For social media channels such as Twitter or Facebook, encourage visitors to text your keyword to your short code to opt into your contact list.

Your application: To leverage signups in your app, let customers sign up via the preference center. And make sure to promote a great incentive.

Broadcast: Do not forget to add your call to action (CTA) to television and radio commercials, given their reach.

Stick with a simple keyword: "Opt in to SMS alerts to join our list and receive a buy-one-get-one-free coupon as a welcome gift. Just text SIGNUP to CODE 78527."

A similar program can work on the radio, keeping the process simple and the incentive clear.

Everywhere: Take advantage of every marketing channel you have. Make sure the SMS signup call-to-action is on your Web site, printed materials in store and anywhere else.

Security matters

Answering questions and taking advantage of all your promotional media helps you build the most effective methods for signup to meet your goals.

Your decisions about your program can impact your choice of SMS partner, as not all partners can deliver the more sophisticated customer experiences.

Consider the security of those incentive offers.

With some solutions it can be easy to abuse those discounts or allow them to go viral.

If your SMS provider can offer a one-time-use coupon, no matter how a shopper signs up, you can present shoppers with one great offer while ensuring that the customer does not get multiple welcome offers even if she tries to sign up multiple times.

INCREASING OPT-IN to your SMS list can be a simple affair.

Presenting a mystery offer can prove to be a winner. Industry-wide, the redemption rate for coupons is better than 50 percent a boon to your ROI.

Once you are set up on a secure platform that abides by all the rules, the rest is gravy.



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