



Putting Texting to the Test: 50 Fantastic Uses of SMS Text Messaging

The people have texted: Text messaging is the most widely used data application on the planet, with 2.4 billion active users. Nearly three-quarters of all mobile phone users send and receive text messages on their phones. In fact, the typical U.S. mobile subscriber sends or receives 357 text messages per month, compared to placing or receiving 204 monthly phone calls (Nielsen Media); which makes opportunities for text messaging marketing all the more ripe.

Consider this: In the early morning hours of Saturday, August 23, 2008, 2.9 million people received a 26-word text that revealed Barack Obama's choice for a vice presidential running mate. They were the first to know the news. It was just part of a sweeping text messaging effort that helped propel Obama to the White House.

Food & Beverage

1. A **local coffee shop** had a booming business Monday-Friday with the work crowd, but they were looking to boost their much slower Saturday morning sales. A text campaign offered \$1 off a large gourmet coffee. They advertised the offer in a newspaper ad, a coupon magazine, on their website and in their shop. By the second week of the campaign they had an incredible 26% response rate. By the fifth week they had 300 customers in their database. Saturday sales increased by an average of 60%.

2. **McDonald's Italy** made everyone an instant winner in a holiday campaign to send an SMS to Santa. The company printed unique codes on cups for consumers to text in—right in the restaurant. Every code was a winner. Presents ranged from mobile content such as personal calls from Santa, sending postcards to friends, personal photos with Santa to attractive physical prizes like prepaid credit cards, 150 mobile phones and free airtime. The campaign drew a stunning 25% response rate - with more than 1.5 million participations in five weeks.

3. Beverage company **Snapple** used printed contest numbers on the backs of 225 million bottle caps, which could then be matched with winning Snaffle numbers. The winning numbers were announced on TV, on the Internet and delivered via text messages to handsets. The SMS alerts were timed during the lunch hour, a peak purchase time for Snapple. Result: 90 percent of all



consumers who received the alerts opened them and one-third of those who participated bought additional Snapple products.

4. Busy **restaurants in malls** can keep waiting customers happy by allowing them to keep shopping while waiting for a table. A quick text message informs them when their table is ready.

Events

5. **DMG World Media** is an international exhibition and publishing company that produces more than 300 market-leading trade exhibitions, consumer shows and fairs, including the popular Surf Expo. Deciding it was time to raise the bar for communication with Expo attendees and exhibitors, they turned to a text messaging solution, creating an effective, cost-efficient text program to offer their 16,000+ attendees and 1,000 exhibitors.

Emergency SMS Alert Systems

6. Hundreds of **colleges and universities** across the U.S. are adopting text-messaging services for notification of weather-related cancellations and emergency alerts. In the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings in April 2008, campus security alerts are top of mind for education institutions. Instantaneous messages can be sent to an entire student body with warnings and updates.

7. Because of its proximity to tornado alley, local **LSI Corporation** employees set up a text-messaging alert system to ensure that residents of Greenburg, Kansas could get urgent information quickly. A secondary goal was to comfort victims whose lives had been torn apart by letting them know there were people working to make things better.

Entertainment

8. **TAO** is one of Las Vegas' premier nightclubs. Traditional print and email marketing were not providing enough return for their regular and special club night events. The club implemented a text messaging marketing strategy to promote their weekly parties as well as their big DJ nights. Within two weeks,



TAO had a database of 2,000 customers who opted in to regular texts from the club. Attendance at special events has increased exponentially.

9. In late 2006, to promote the release of their debut album, rock band **Boys Like Girls** went on the road with The All-American Rejects on The Tornado Tour. Hoping to build a database of loyal fans, and to enhance the fan relationship, the band and their record company, Sony BMG, launched a mobile marketing campaign. At the concerts, public address shout-outs and on-screen messages invited fans to text the keyword BLG to 25827. They received in return a message inviting them to pick up a free lithograph of the band at the merchandise tables.

Financial Services

10. **HSBC** uses text for product promotions, sending text messages asking for a customer's email address to send more detailed information on their offerings. The bank also uses mobile short codes within their offline advertising, encouraging those who read ads in newspapers about a product for example, to follow-up on them immediately.

11. **Financial Resources Federal Credit Union** sends regular text messages to its customers, who can opt in to receive three choices of messages: account balances; the last three transactions; or a combination of the first two.

12. In **Kenya**, mobile subscribers to Safaricom can send cash to other mobile phone users with text. With more than 80% of the population excluded from formal banking, the system is expected to change people's lives significantly.

Government

13. The **Greater London Authority** (GLA) has used mobile marketing for a number of initiatives targeting London residents, as part of an overall goal to make local authority services available to the public online. One initiative: the "Know what you're getting into" campaign was designed to warn Londoners of the dangers of using unlicensed cabs. By texting to the GLA. Londoners received the numbers of two licensed cab companies and were able to have a cab sent to their location through a GPS feature.



14. The **Boston Police Department** launched a text-message based tip line. The new Crime Stoppers tip line enables Boston residents to anonymously provide information about crimes that may help police make their communities safer. Citizens simply text the word "tip" to the short code C-R-I-M-E.

Healthcare/Pharma

15. For **healthcare providers**, "no shows" mean lost revenue. Direct mail or phone reminders can be costly and time consuming. Doctors are now using SMS to remind patients of their upcoming appointments. A two-way text service allows patients to either confirm or cancel. Doctors are also sending texts to parents reminding them of upcoming inoculations for their kids.

16. Global pharma leader **Pfizer** uses text messaging to keep its global sales force of 5,000 notified of server problems on its computer system, avoiding wasted time and calls; reminding them of key sales messages to clients, and new target sales goals.

17. Britain's **National Health Service** embarked on a national awareness campaign across the North East of England in conjunction with a radio network. Using text messaging to tap into their target youth market, listeners who might be worried about sexually transmitted infections could discreetly text to a mobile short code in order to receive home testing kits.

18. Pharmaceutical company **Novartis** launched a "Pollen Count" text alert service to promote the launch of a new allergy nasal spray for hay fever sufferers, during National Allergy Week. The Pollen-Count Alert service enables sufferers to receive personalized, up-to-date, regular pollen count information by SMS with special alerts on days when the pollen count is particularly high in their geographic location - together with tips to help manage hay fever.

Media

19. As publishers migrate toward digital products and services, text messaging is fast becoming part of the mix. In addition to promotions, newspapers and magazines are offering mobile classifieds, mobile dating services and breaking news alerts. **The New York Times** launched a text messaging service to distribute news, features and columns from its newspaper and Sunday



magazine. Readers can text to NYTNYT (698-698) and choose their favorite sections to receive the latest news, or their favorite columnists.

20. Text messaging is a no-brainer for **radio broadcasters**. Since much of radio listening is done in the car, on the beach, or at the office, there's practically no competition from television or Internet. Hence, radio and the cell phone are meant for each other from promotional and advertising standpoints.

21. **USA Today** sends targeted ads via text messages that readers can request on their cell phones, in addition to updated information on sports, stocks, weather and other news.

22. When **Philadelphia Style Magazine** decided it was time to build a deeper relationship with their customers, they turned to text messaging. To better reach their target affluent 25 - 45 year-old readers, Philly Style offered the first 50 text subscribers a gift certificate for a free appetizer and cocktail at the restaurant of their choice. They reinforced the campaign launch in subscriber email newsletter.

Real Estate

23. **Real estate agencies** across the country are using SMS to quickly inform their clients with personal messages on new listings or information on closing deals.

24. The days of checking the newspaper, or online for that matter, are over. For instant **property listings information**, house hunters can text in a unique code that can be customized according to their criteria.

25. Using **for-sale signs**, prospective buyers can learn more about a specific real estate listing by texting a specific ID number on the sign to a short code, allowing the buyer to receive instant information on that property.

Religious, Social and Advocacy Groups

26. **Elevate** is a youth-focused, community-driven organization with outreach efforts that extend beyond the confines of the church. Because most community members are on the go, Elevate decided that a text messaging solution would allow them to quickly, effectively reach their members. Elevate promotes its



special events, church campaigns and church services through several texts per week.

27. **City Year Corps**, a non-profit organization with 16 communities across the country, unites young people from diverse economic, racial, and geographical backgrounds. Through texting, the organization notifies new applicants of deadlines and information; current students receive real-time announcements about cancellations or changes to their meetings and events; and City Year alumni are able to get the latest news.

28. In building support for The Forest Law, Argentina's first federal forest protection act passed in 2007, **Greenpeace** collected some 350,000 mobile phone numbers via a petition signed by supporters, then used the mobile network to send urgent alerts and the latest news on the legislation. The campaign was critical in saving Argentinean forests.

29. **AIDS Walk Los Angeles**, one of the largest fundraising events for AIDS in the United States, brings attention to the undeniable epidemic of AIDS occurring in the US and the world. Busses, posters, table tents and more include instruction to text into a short code for registration information.

30. In **Spain** on the eve of Election Day in 2004, demonstrations were banned 24 hours prior to an election. Instead, protesters rallied via text messaging, utilizing the country's 94% mobile phone penetration rate in Spain. Some messages urged supporters of the Socialists, the eventual victors, to vote. Others tried to rally supporters of the Popular Party, defending against the accusations that it had tried to cover up evidence of Al Qaeda's apparent responsibility for the Madrid bombings.

Retail

31. Stores large to small, online to brick and mortar are using text messaging for **improved customer service**. Many offer customer support and problem resolution via text. Customers are also able to check order status, track their packages and receive back order notification alerts. When coupled with in-store promotions and coupons, texting becomes a strong vehicle for retail establishments.

32. A small **grocery store chain** spent thousands of dollars each month in newspaper advertising and was looking for a way to reduce that expense without

losing sales. They launched a text campaign that sent customers exclusive weekly grocery specials. The program was promoted in print ads and in all four of their locations. Within weeks the chain had 2,500 customers in their database. The response rate reached 21% in 10 weeks. Within six months, they had reduced their newspaper ad budget by 40% and saved a total of \$5,800 per month in advertising costs.

33. Outdoor outfitter **Moosejaw** used text messaging for promotions and special offers, but for customer service it reverted back to more traditional phone and email methods. The company set up an SMS infrastructure that allows its customers track orders and easily connect with customer service for questions or comments. The result: Moosejaw now has a 360-degree mobile experience for its customers.

34. **Super Stop USA** is a full-service gas station, car wash and detail center located near St. Paul, Minn. The station goes beyond the customer service call using text messaging: alerting customers when gas prices are scheduled to go up. To sign up, customers simply text GAS to 25827. When the time-sensitive alerts go out, the station sees a rush at the pumps for the lower price, with an average 20% response rate each time.

Sports & Leisure

35. **Watchman Racing**, a betting advisory service for horse racing and other sports, is using SMS marketing to send daily tips on the ponies to subscribers of its tipster service. Watchman sends out thousands of text messages a week, helping customers decide who the daily winners will be.

36. Text messaging has become a routine part of the college sports **recruiting process**, providing instant access to prospects with just a few short lines. Coaches have found that potential recruits are more apt to carry a cell phone and respond to their messages, and they don't have to worry about them being home to answer the phone. One major college coach sends messages to 10 prospects per day.

37. **Gyms** worldwide are using mobile marketing to generate leads through stronger databases, send out new membership promotions and offer updates on new classes and class cancellations.

38. The use of technology at new **sports venues** is growing rapidly. Fans sitting courtside can now text food orders or ask for other assistance from team representatives.

39. Many professional sports teams are using text for special promotions, available tickets, and advertising. But what about text messaging for the **kids' teams**? Local leagues and individual coaches are using text messaging to alert parents about schedule changes, weather updates and are even sending out the kids' stats after the games.

Technology

40. Voice and data networking infrastructure company **VeriSign** uses text messaging as a powerful internal communications tool. In corporate meetings, SMS powers text-to-vote polls. Using real time charts and graphs, VeriSign is able to quickly gather the opinions of its employees.

41. Customers can be sent **web access passwords** via SMS, giving them instant access to this sensitive information. Text messaging is also an easy way to confirm the activation of a purchased service or changes in activation date.

42. Anti-virus company **Symantec** keeps customers aware of computer viruses with the ability to track the outbreaks on the Internet. An Alert Service will send alerts via email, fax, voice call or SMS.

Transportation

43. **CaseStack**, a logistics outsourcing company to mid-sized consumer packaged goods firms, needed to promote a biodiesel-fueled transport service. The company offered the Green Rebate Program, whereby truckers/carriers could fill up with biodiesel and get cash by turning in the receipt along with the CaseStack load number. Participating truckers and carriers could haul the details of the program with them in their mobile phones by texting in, instantly receiving all details on how to participate.

44. With portable navigation devices a key part of in-vehicle fleet monitoring solutions, device makers such as **Garmin** have integrated text messaging capabilities directly into monitoring systems. Drivers can send and receive text



messages from dispatch directly through the portable devices, which let's the concentrate fully on getting to their next destination.

45. Companies such as **UPS** and **FedEx** alert customers via text messaging as to where their packages are and if they have reached their destinations.

Travel

46. Finding that emails are not the best method for reaching passengers and crew members on flight cancellations and changes with less than 48 hours notice, **British Airways** developed an instantaneous communication channel for alerting passengers, logistics firms and staff of last minute flight update information. Passengers are invited to sign up to the service via the British Airways website. The service was also promoted in trade publications and via direct communication with British Airway agents.

47. **Travel agents** are using texts to their customer databases to highlight special offers and promotions, which can be tailored to individual preferences. Looking for a budget Caribbean vacation during the holidays? Only those offers are sent to you.

48. To spike enrollment in its points program, **US Airways** printed an ad with a short code on its cocktail napkins that enabled passengers to sign up using just their name and email address. A follow-up email included a digital membership card, program information, special offers, and the ability to register for a full text message service.

49. **Hotels** are upping their customer service levels by sending "Thank You" texts to customers just after checking out. They can also be informed if they may have left items in their rooms.

50. Looking to fill hundreds of thousands of hotel rooms and millions of square feet of convention space, the **Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority** launches a number of text messaging contest and campaigns to an extensive database, including a "text-to-win" campaign featuring a free trip to Las Vegas.