Build Texting into Your Business

Answers to all your questions about adding texting to your business

You're ready to dive into business texting, but you have a few questions first. Here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions companies have as they're implementing business texting.

How does business texting actually work?

It's pretty simple: Contact center agents can both send and receive text messages to and from consumers. You can use these SMS capabilities to converse with individual consumers or to send messages to entire distribution lists for marketing/information blasts. These interactions are typically performed on a computer via a desktop or web application.

Can I implement business texting on my own or do I need a vendor/partner?

You'll want to work with a vendor for three reasons:

1. Most existing CRMs can't be text-enabled without outside help, such as a text messaging vendor that can provide you with either a complete service/partnership or a CRM plugin.

2. If you want to use business texting for mass campaigns, which is very likely and very encouraged, you will need a vendor service to implement these capabilities in your CRM.

3. Mass campaigns—for which your business sends text messages to entire distribution lists—require the sender of the messages to have a relationship with mobile carriers. Vendors and aggregators have business relationships with these carriers, which allow sent messages to reach intended recipients without being blocked.

Do I need to buy or install anything new?

No. Your vendor will give your contact center team access to the vendor's web app and desktop app (which your team may need to download). Many vendors also offer mobile apps from which contact support professionals can conduct text conversations, and some include an option to forward incoming text messages to an email address.

Can I integrate text messaging into my existing CRM/internal system?

Yes. Most vendor solutions can incorporate with your CRM data so agents can see customer histories and personalize messages and interactions as needed. This helps ensure omnichannel connectivity with consumers.

Do I need to hire new staff?

No. You may need to train current team members on the nuances of texting versus email or voice conversations, and many texting vendors offer support for that training. But because texting fits into your contact center fluidly—and because, unlike with voice conversations, one agent can conduct multiple texting conversations at once—you will not need to hire new staff.

Should I implement policies around texting?

Yes. Just as you have policies around how your contact center professionals interact with consumers on the phone or via email, you should have policies around texting. This is true for agents who are engaging in one-on-one conversations with customers, as well as for marketers who are conducting campaigns via SMS. For instance, you may want to set policies around texting shorthand ("msg 4 u," etc.) so you can maintain the exact balance of professionalism and casualness that you prefer.

Can I text multiple users at once?

Yes. You can text an entire distribution list. In fact, with some vendors, you may be able to send tens of thousands of texts per minute.

Are there analytics and reporting tools for business texting?

Yes. Many vendors offer analytics and reporting information related to your texting campaigns and interactions. When integrated into your existing CRM, this information can be extremely valuable in building consumer profiles.

How much does it cost to implement business texting?

This is going to depend on your vendor, the package you choose, and the contract you're able to secure. Basic texting plans can cost as little as $10 a month for starter packages, while more intensive, high-volume and customized plans can cost several hundred dollars per month.

How should I use business texting?

You can and should use business texting for marketing, sales, customer service, HR, and recruiting purposes. Each of these uses is unique and will require a strategy and a team, but with texting as prevalent as it is today, businesses should meet consumers, leads, employees, and recruits where they prefer to be—on their smartphones.

Are there best practices around business texts?

Yes. There are some best practices you should adhere to when sending business texts. A good rule to keep in mind: People want to be treated like people, not a bottom line. To that end:

- *Be courteous.* Only send two to four texts per month; anything more risks annoying your customers. And only send messages during business hours.
- *Keep it readable.* Text-ese ("Reply 2 this b4 u r 2 late") can be tough to decipher, so avoid it as much as possible. And try to keep your messages brief—if it takes more than 160 characters to say, consider breaking it up into two separate texts.

What number should I text-enable?

Texting opens your business up to new opportunities, consumers and efficiencies—and Toll-Free Numbers are by far the best numbers to support person-to-person text messaging.

Toll-Free Numbers are a trusted and recognizable symbol for your brand; they also offer greater versatility when it comes to customer connection. Toll-Free Numbers are designed as business numbers, and can handle the texting volume of a national brand—unlike a simple local office or a single sales representative. By text-enabling a Toll-Free Number, companies can convey reliability and accessibility that inspires trust and confidence that professional support teams are standing by to offer immediate assistance.