

## **My SMS Marketing Plan Steps to Success**

### **Introduction:**

The ultimate success of any SMS marketing program hinges on creating and executing the proper plan. When the fundamental steps are followed, SMS marketing can and will produce results far in excess of any other traditional media.

The plan is divided into discrete steps:

1. Program Goal-Setting
2. Program Preparation
3. Program Initiation
4. Program Execution
5. Program Measurement
6. Program Refinement

### **1) Program Goal-Setting:**

The objective of any marketing activity is to increase business. Set a distinct, realistic and MEASURABLE goal. Some examples of goals are:

- xx % increase in overall sales
- xx % increase in sales of a specific product(s) or product line(s)
- xx % increase in patron traffic
- xx % increase in leads
- xx % increase in event attendance
- ...etc.

Whatever the metric used, it needs to be realistic, and measurable. Work through various scenarios, not just one. For example, if a restaurant, calculate what a 10% response rate will mean to the bottom line. Do the same for 20%, 30%, 40%. While some of the projected response rates may not be immediately achievable, seeing what the impact of different response rates is on the bottom line will provide an ultimate goal that can be worked towards as the SMS program matures. What we're saying, don't be satisfied with GOOD results; strive for GREAT results.

### **2) Program Preparation:**

With any SMS marketing program, you need to plan and execute the following:

- Advertising Plan
- Staff Training

- Promotion Plan

### ***Advertising for the SMS program***

A business needs to advertise its SMS program. Sounds obvious, but many businesses fail to realize that strong advertising is needed in order to get as many people enrolled into the program as possible. The theme of the advertising should be access to EXCLUSIVE promotional offers; i.e. the discounts your customers receive through the SMS program will ONLY be available to those that join the program.

As an example, if a restaurant, one should print table tents for all the tables, describing the benefits of the mobile program, with a clear call to action for joining, “To join our mobile program, text EATS to 12345”. The advertisement should also clearly state the frequency of the restaurant’s promotions. Recommended frequency is 1 to 2 messages per week.

In-store signage is also effective. Signage should be placed in obvious places in the rest rooms, at the checkout counter, and anywhere else where there is foot-traffic.

In-store personnel should also be trained to entice people to join the SMS program. Again, if a restaurant, management may want the servers to entice their patrons to join the program when presenting their bill.

If the business has a website, the SMS program should be prominently advertised on the site, along with all the associated benefits.

All marketing collateral should have the call to action to your SMS program, including business cards.

Many POS systems have the capability to add custom content to the register tape. Put the call to action on every receipt.

Many retailers have branded bags that they place customer purchases into. The next time you go to print, place the call to action on the bag.

In all cases, enrollment into an SMS program is most successful when the initial opt in is tied to some immediate benefit, such as, “join now and receive immediate 10% discount on their next purchase”. Others offer enrollment into a contest / sweepstakes of sort, where the winner receives some item of value.

In summary, advertise the program through all the in-store and marketing venues that your business utilizes. If you do print advertising, include the call to action on your ads. If you do email marketing, do the same. The number of people joining your program will largely dictate the success of your promotions.

**NOTE:** The above list may seem daunting, but a business is not expected to implement all of these at once. The majority of the above items are just add-ons to existing vehicles, and you can simply have them changed the next time you reorder. What is absolutely needed at the onset however is some concentrated advertising through in-store signage and promotion by the business' staff.

### ***Staff Training***

ALL staff that has any contact with customers should be trained to market the SMS program and get people to join the program. They should also be given an overview of the program; what kinds of promotions people will receive, how often they'll receive them...etc.

Your staff has the most direct access to your customers. Take advantage of that; they can be the most effective recruiters for your SMS program.

### ***Promotion Plan:***

OK, you've done all the prep work for getting started. Now is the time to start planning how and what you're going to be communicating to those who are now joining your SMS program.

Elements of your promotion plan are:

- What you're going to promote
- When you're going to promote
- How often you're going to promote

**What** you're promoting was (or should have been) identified during the Program Goal-Setting Phase, as you're SMS program's objective is to achieve those specific goals. However, stuff happens, and you'll be making in-course corrections as needed. Don't worry. A plan is not fixed in time; it's a road map that will change as business conditions change. Nevertheless, going into the program, promote a couple of the items that you had identified as needing improvement, and rotate your broadcasts between those. Over a relatively short time, you'll identify the promotions that work best for you.

**When** you promote should be tied to the specific offer or event that you're promoting and the related time frame ("offer good from start date to end date"). With text messaging, your SMS program subscribers will receive the promotions with seconds of sending them. Don't send it too early. If too early, people will tend to forget it. If you send it too close to the offer time, commitments may get in the way. It really depends on the type of business and the type of offer. Obviously, if a restaurant promotes a lunch special, it should be sent out about an hour prior to lunchtime. If a weekend event is being promoted, send it out a day

or two prior to the event. REMEMBER to include some kind of promotion code in ALL of your broadcasts. We'll talk more about that in the "Program Measurement" section below.

Lastly, the **frequency** of your promotions should not exceed 2 per week (unless the offer is tied to specific days of the week, such as Mon, Wed, and Friday specials). Again, experience will provide the best guide for what works best. Promoting too often will increase opt outs and will also dilute the "exclusiveness" aspect of your SMS program. Promoting too infrequently will produce lesser results.

### **3) Program Initiation:**

All the hard work is done and now is the time to build excitement for the program.

You've had all the signage printed, you've decided what the initial offer is, and you've trained your staff. Now make sure the signage is placed in prominent locations, where there's the highest foot traffic and where people have time to read (as mentioned above; rest rooms, customer tables, checkout counter...etc).

When you launch the program, make it a big deal. Advertise some one-day special to get the most people in that you can, and get the staff energized about promoting it. Remember that it's important to get as many signups as you can quickly. The faster you build your database of program subscribers, the earlier you can begin sending them promotions and start reaping the associated benefits.

### **4) Program Execution:**

This is the simplest piece to do! You've decided what you're promoting, when you're promoting, and how often you're promoting. Now it's simply a matter of using our software to schedule and submit the promotions. You can actually set up your promotions in advance; as many as you want. The system will send those out on the scheduled date and time. Accordingly, in one sitting, you can stage an entire month's text promotions. Once scheduled, our system takes over.

You're limited on the size of the promotional message to 160 characters, so use abbreviations; "for" becomes "4", "to" becomes "2", "late" becomes "L8" and so forth. Again, make sure you include a distinct promotion code for each type of promotion. Namely, promoting a 2 for 1 drink night is different than promoting a free appetizer and each offer should have its own promotion code.

### **5) Program Measurement:**

This is an area that is much overlooked, or underused. Measuring the effectiveness of your text campaigns is a critical phase in ensuring the continued success of your SMS program.

How do you measure SMS campaigns? Firstly, you have to make sure that you include a promotion code on ALL your outbound campaigns. When customers redeem your offers at checkout, the code that's on their text message should be recorded. Most POS systems allow the entry of a promo code in order to provide the discount. Recording the sale in one's POS system will provide reporting whereby you can see exactly the sales volume being rung up by each and every promotion. If your POS system doesn't have the ability to enter promo codes, have a "check off" sheet at the counter where your staff can keep track of text promotion redemptions. On that check off sheet, record the promo code, the sale amount and the date of sale. Again, this manual method should not be necessary given the capabilities of today's POS systems, but if it is, the effort will be well worth it, particularly in the early stages of your SMS program.

After 30-60 days of sending out your SMS promotions, you'll now be in position to look at the results, by specific promotion.

## **6) Program Refinement:**

We're almost done. Let's review what you've done so far.

You've set your goals and objectives, so you have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish and how. You've done all the necessary advertisement of your program, allowing your customers to be aware of the benefits of joining. You've kicked the program off with strong promotion, and built excitement within your client base, you've got a good number of sign ups and you've started sending your text messages. You've also recorded the redemption activity, so you know the response to each discrete promotion.

This is where you refer back to your original goals for your SMS programs. Compare your objectives to the actual results. For example, if one of your goals was to increase liquor sales by 10 % on Friday evenings with a 2 for 1 drink promotion, you're now able to look at actual results versus that goal. If actual results are below your objective, you may have over-estimated results, or maybe the promotion is being sent at the wrong time, or a host of other reasons. Whatever the reason, review both your objectives and the strength and timing of the promotional message for possible changes.

You will likely find that certain promotions work way beyond your expectations. That's good, and you may want to increase the frequency of those offers. Bottom line is that the results will provide you with insight into what works and what doesn't work. What doesn't work should be either discarded or reviewed for possible changes. Maybe a 2 for 1 drink promotion has the "wrong" hours. Instead of 4pm to 6pm, maybe it should be 5pm to 7pm. You have the

opportunity to experiment with different offers until you zero in on what brings your business optimum results.

**Summary:**

Although the above plan seems daunting, it really isn't. You don't have to do all the steps, but you should at least have thought through them all. The key elements are to:

1. Know what you're going to promote
2. Strongly advertise the SMS program
3. Get everybody in your business involved
4. Send out promotions on a regular basis
5. Measure as best you can

If you do the above, you'll get results far in excess of anything you've tried before. If you go through the full process, you'll achieve even more.

***Happy Promoting!***