

# The Empathetic Interaction™

**SMS messaging:**  
a new opportunity to delight  
customers at scale



Part 1

# The party's just started

We know what you're thinking: "An eBook on text messaging? Aren't you guys a quarter of a century late to the party?" It's a fair point. After all, the first text message was sent way back in 1992 – around two years before Justin Bieber (arguably the world's most famous Snapchatter) was even conceived.

But don't write off SMS just yet. In the worlds of business, marketing and customer experience, the number of messages being sent to and from customers is exploding at a rate of many billions each year.

Enterprise-to-person texting (confusingly also known as application-to-person texting – or A2P for short) is finally finding its place at the center of customer experience ecosystems, helping brands win all-new levels of engagement, trust and loyalty.

This eBook explains the reasons behind the stratospheric rise of A2P texting – and how the world's most customer-obsessed enterprises use texts in ways we're pretty sure you could never imagine. Finally, we explain how your business can use an automated, intelligent text-messaging system to facilitate Empathetic Interactions that blow the minds of your customers – while growing revenues and saving serious money.

Sound like we're overstating the case? Read on and prepare to be surprised.

## Part 1

# The party's just started

When people send text messages to each other it's known as P2P (person-to-person). When enterprises send text messages to people it's most commonly called A2P (not E2P as you'd expect). This is because Google Calendar came up with one of the first business use cases for messaging – free SMS reminders. The A2P (application-to-person) term stuck. Now we're all lumbered with it.

## The Empathetic Interaction™

SMS gives retailers countless invisible opportunities to surprise and impress customers. This is achieved in precise moments and at exact places by giving them information, alerts, experiences and engagements that they will be thankful for.

This is what we mean by the Empathetic Interaction. But to deliver them you need more than a customer's phone number. You have to use what you know about the individual and the situation they're in – then anticipate what might make them happy at precise moments.

All you need is an intelligent mobile messaging system linked to your customer ops tech stack. A good imagination comes in pretty handy too.

You might even find situations where your customers' needs and yours can be met in a single moment. That's exactly what our client, a Fortune 100 retailer, discovered when they deployed SMS delivery alerts to improve the purchase experience. But more on that later...

**"As the newly released 2016 Empathy Index demonstrates, empathy... is more important to a successful business than it has ever been, correlating to growth, productivity, and earnings per employee."**

**Belinda Parmar,**  
The most Empathetic Companies, 2016,  
Harvard Business Review

## Personal v personalized

Developing long, personal relationships with customers is the ticket to the big time for brands – the sure-fire way to attract loyal customers who keep coming back for more (while banging on about you on social media).

Very few retail brands do personal relationships. A small number do a good job of personalizing experiences. Amazon's a great example.

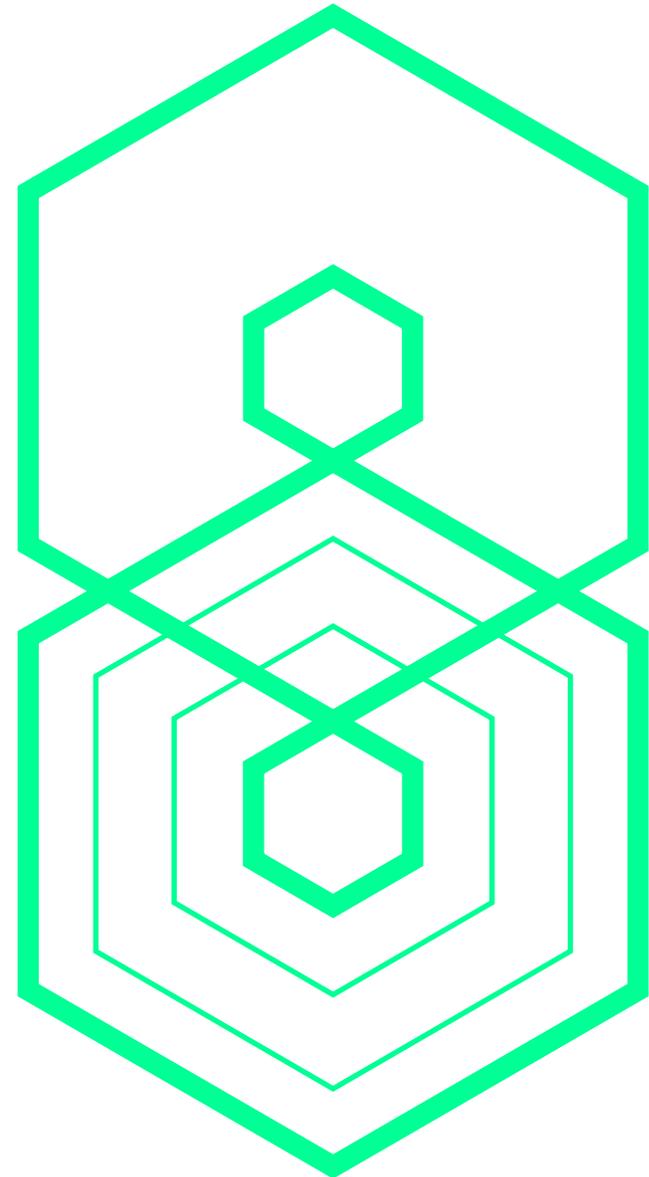
But personal is different to personalization. Personal interactions are informed by empathy and understanding. They're about being in touch with someone's thoughts and emotions in their moments of need.

So if you can be there for your customers when it counts – and consistently and continually make their lives better – you'll receive intense loyalty and advocacy in return.

But the sad fact is most retailers can't do personal using their existing lines of communication. In fact, most have serious customer operations process problems without even realizing it.

These process failures have three (related) causes. And forgive us for getting all technical here:

- Emails *are lousy* (and hardly anyone reads emails from businesses).
- Automated voice systems *are lousy* (and they annoy the crap out of people).
- Call center experiences generally *are lousy* (they're way too time consuming for customers and really, really expensive for companies to deliver).



## Humanity is calling

We're not going to pretend text messaging is the only answer here. But here are few numbers to help explain why it is becoming such an important communication channel for so many companies.

- 4.8 billion people or more use text messaging\* (that's 64% of the human race)
- 98% of texts are read (compared with 20% of emails)
- More than 90% of texts are opened within three minutes
- 100% of texts are really cheap to send

\*To put this stat into context – only 4.4 billion people have access to TVs. Only 2.2 billion use social networks. And only 2.6 billion have an email account.

Text messaging is the most widely used form of written communication humanity has ever known. Think about your parents, your kids, your grandparents, even your great-grandparents. We'd be willing to place a bet that, as long as they're physically able, all of them text.

Texting is also the most efficient form of written communication humanity has ever known. Close your eyes and think of your text notification tone. How long do you ignore that sound for when a text arrives? 10 seconds? 20 seconds? 30 even?

Don't feel ashamed. The ping of a text turns the best of us into the proverbial Pavlovian dog – mouths watering and desperate to consume.

## Time to take advantage of texts

Take another moment to imagine all the time-critical, high-priority situations you'd like to communicate with your customers. Then think about the power of integrating such an effective, immediate, consumable communications system into your company's tech stack.

You'd have an opportunity to automate customer conversations – ensuring processes such as deliveries, authentication, and post-sales support run so smoothly your customers will want to throw their arms around your brand and never let go.

More than that, you'd have an opportunity to enjoy intuitive, automated, in-the-moment, Empathetic Interactions with customers – at incredible scale.

Part 2

# Customer experience rules



## Case study

### Turning the tables

When it comes to alerts, a lot of retailers have got it the wrong way around.

Normal practice puts the responsibility on the customer to log on to a website and check when their parcel is being delivered. And even when retailers do communicate, there are problems. Emails and voice calls are too slow or intrusive, which means messages don't cut through – leading to missed packages, wasted deliveries and disappointed customers.

But for our client, a Fortune 100 retailer, this way wasn't good enough. They wanted to improve the purchase experience for their customers, and increase their own efficiency. That meant finding a fast, effective way to streamline package shipping status communications – that also scaled to reach millions of customers.

Using OpenMarket's mobile messaging network, the company designed a system that delivers time-critical SMS notifications for customers who need immediate shipping status on their orders.

So, if a customer makes an online order, they can sign up to get SMS alerts sent to their mobile phone, like: 'Your package has been dispatched'; 'Your package is with the courier: estimated delivery time: 7pm'; 'Your package has been delivered'.

This gives customers the information they need right away, so they don't need to check a website, search their emails or call customer service for help. And the retailer saves time and money on those calls – and by not delivering to customers who aren't home. Win-win.

**At OpenMarket we call this an Empathetic Interaction.**



## The customer experience opportunity

Analysts say customer experience is likely to be the most significant future differentiator in the near future for large companies serving millions of customers.

Good customer experience correlates with repurchase, trying new offers, forgiving mistakes, lifetime loyalty and recommendations to friends and colleagues.

You can imagine the power of simple, personal, considerate interactions like our Fortune 100 client's text notifications. That's why customer experience is rising so high on the over-stuffed agendas of C-Suites everywhere.

## Amazon et al

No doubt you're tired of hearing about the fantastic customer experiences provided by Amazon, Apple, and Airbnb. But their business models are great examples of how companies can exploit specific aspects of communication technologies to serve their customers.

These three companies are among the handful that set the customer-experience bar so high for others. And now, customers demand good brand experiences wherever they are. It doesn't matter what industry you're in: tech, telecoms, retail, leisure, hospitality, healthcare, education – just about every sizeable business has been affected by recent innovations in customer experience.

Yet most older brands are still terrible at the details of customer experience. This gives retailers an incredible opportunity to take advantage of pent-up customer demand for better engagement.

But can the communication channels used by most big retail brands facilitate this? Let's examine.

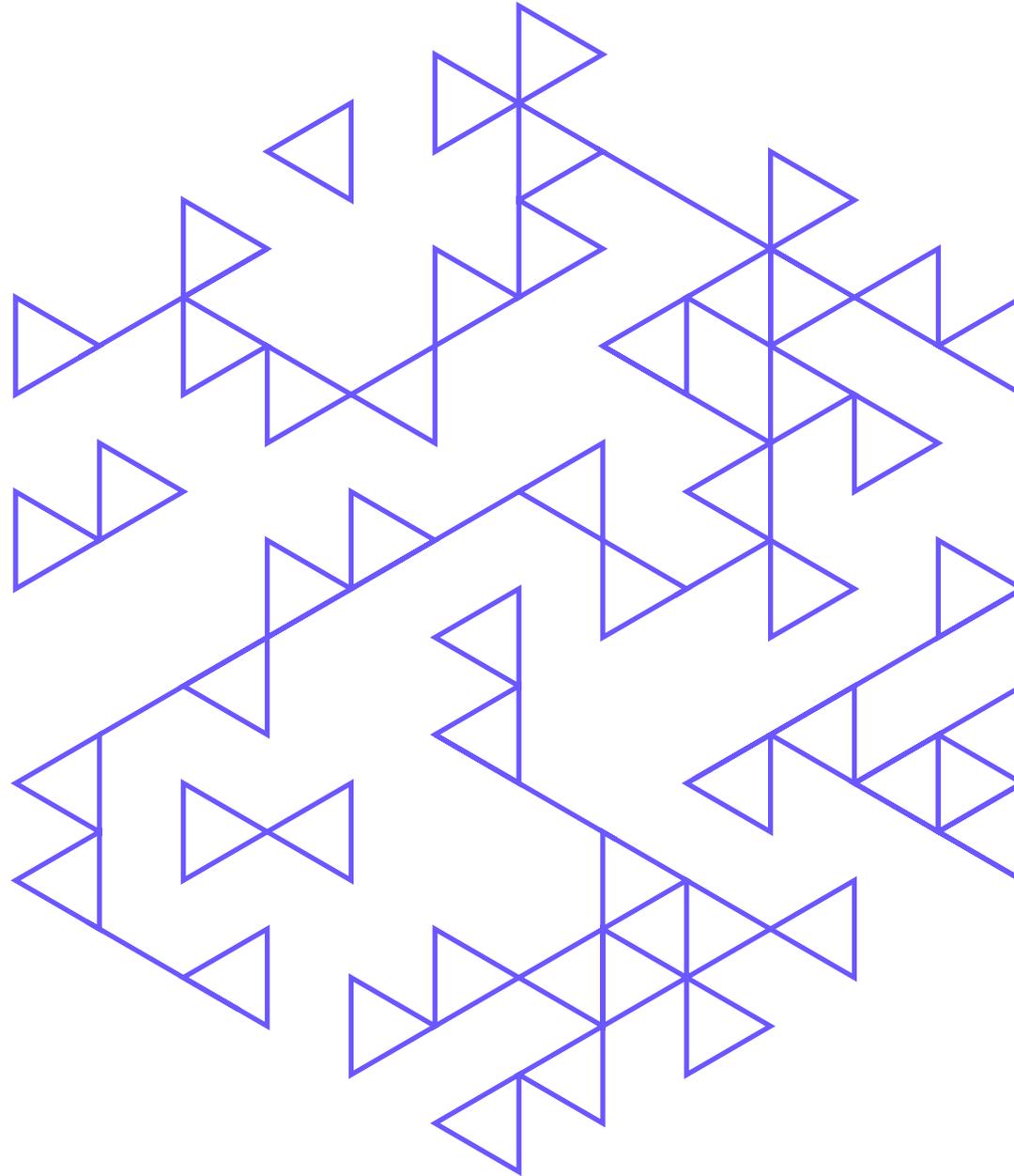
## Part 2

# Customer experience rules

## The limited reach of apps and OTT services

A smartphone app can be a great communication tool for retailers and their customers – and OTT push and chat services can be useful at times. But they have big disadvantages:

- Very few companies have a large customer base regularly using their apps. This means many non-users are excluded.
- Similarly, companies can't communicate with their whole customer base using OTT apps.
- Many customers experience "app fatigue" and will simply not download one more app if they don't have to.
- Apps must be adapted to different operating systems and, like OTT, are dependent on good Wi-Fi or mobile networks (as well as smartphone ownership).



25% of installed apps are never used

26% of apps are abandoned after one use

90% of users quit Android apps in the first 30 days

## Email is slow (and spammy)

You could spend days, weeks and months reading all the data out there on the best practice for ensuring emails are read. But similar research isn't available for A2P text messaging. Why? Because just about every text (98% to be precise) is read (compared with 20% of emails). Just as significantly, emails have a 2% click-through rate compared with 19% of SMS messages.

Email does have a big role to play in retailers' future communications ecosystems. But it isn't an effective channel for time-sensitive engagements with customers. In fact, email can't hold a candle to SMS messaging when it comes to streamlining and optimizing communications for the full range of customer-centric processes.

To compound the case against email, many emails from retailers are increasingly being routed to different folders by spam-detection technology.

**70% of all  
email sent  
worldwide  
is spam**

## Voice (AKA talking on the phone) is expensive

The major downsides of voice can be summed up in two words: time and cost. Even the most basic call centers are hugely expensive for companies to run. The very best centers, with excellent staff using fantastic tech, can be a ruinous burden.

That's why so many retailers struggle to give customers good voice experiences. And that's why customers are all too used to waiting ages on hold, being put through to wrong departments and being cut off.

Of course, sometimes only one-to-one human interactions will do for customers. So voice is a hugely important channel.

But in many situations customers would just like to get what they need without having to talk to anyone. That's why the response rate to mobile surveys on phones is 20% via SMS compared to 10% for voice.

Wouldn't it be wise to free your staff from frequently asked questions and communications that could be dealt with through SMS?

As for automated voice systems, customers generally hate them because they tend to be clunky, unintuitive and time consuming.

**Paul doesn't want to call your service desk. He doesn't want to stop playing with his daughter.**

**And thanks to your SMS helpline, he doesn't have to.**

**With a simple text, you've identified his problem and arranged a convenient time to fix it.**

**No fuss, no tears and a working home cinema before tomorrow's game.**



Part 3

# The Empathetic Interaction™

Voice, email, apps and OTT approaches will have roles to play in your communications ecosystem for years to come. But none of these channels can match the ability of SMS messaging to optimize communications for a whole range of customer-centric processes that demand in-the-moment engagement.

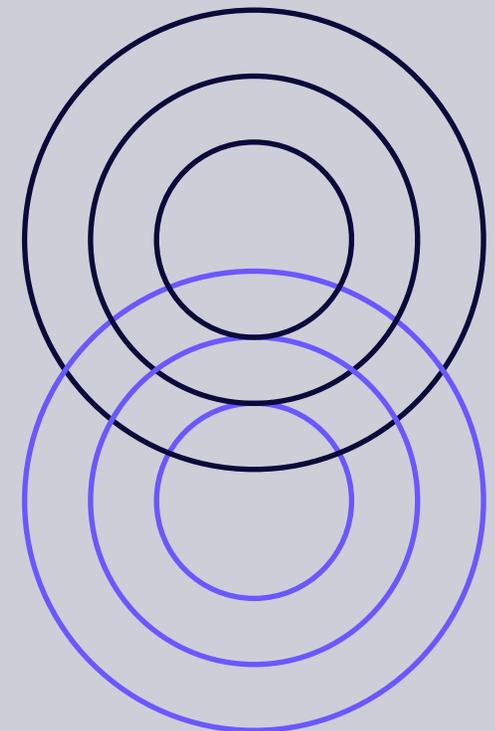
### Part 3

# The Empathetic Interaction™

That's why up-and-coming customer-obsessed brands are dovetailing text messaging into their communications ecosystems – and turning the traditional customer experience algorithm on its head.

Instead of paying more for better customer service, these companies are saving money and seeing customer experiences improve exponentially. They're using intelligent texting systems that are completely automated and – because they work in the cloud – based on low-risk, pay-as-you-grow business models.

Texting allows brands to connect people unobtrusively and conveniently to what they want to know in real time. And it plugs the sinkholes into which customer satisfaction plummets as tasks are passed between internal departments.



**Impressing your customers can be as easy and painless as giving them the option to text**

- A) Confirm (and pick up your pre-order), or**
- B) Re-schedule (and have the store hold it a little longer)**

**This is the kind of Empathetic Interaction that makes it really easy for your customers to recommend you to their friends (and your customer operations to run like clockwork).**



## Case study

### Smarter approach

The problem was clear: a global retailer's customers were frustrated about the amount of time it took to solve technical problems with their smartphones and tablets.

So we helped this retailer design an SMS workflow between their support organization and their customers using our Mobile Engagement Platform.

Two-way SMS provided a smooth and consistent customer experience on a channel that people felt confident using. Problems got resolved quicker and customer satisfaction rates rose.

It was also a win for our client's customer service teams. Most technical issues with mobile devices are common and simple to fix, so a program that helps customers self-serve means huge savings in technical support. It also frees up customer service people to solve more complex customer issues (which is way more fun).

After the success of the program in the US and Canada, our client quickly scaled the mobile diagnostics solution to 30 more countries. And they started using SMS workflows to deliver Empathetic Interactions in other areas of the business including operations and logistics, IT and security, and customer support.

By working out what their customers needed most, our client was already showing empathy. Our part was helping them deliver it.

**If you're ready to start delivering Empathetic Interactions to your customers, let's talk.**

Part 4

# Empathy in action

Banks use texts to secure online banking transactions, airlines use them to send gate-change alerts, and logistics companies use 2-way texting to arrange deliveries. There's an endless array of use cases for text messaging and endless opportunities for Empathetic Interactions; and retailers should learn from and apply the successful examples that already exist.

But let's discuss a few specific business areas text messaging works particularly well in – then find out how companies can roll out a messaging system across the business.

## Part 4

# Empathy in action

## Customer operations

Customer operations is made up of managing multiple steps – from customer onboarding, all the way through to fulfilment and ongoing account management. In large companies with millions of customers, there are many billions of these interaction opportunities every year.

Each customer transaction tends to unleash several smaller, time-sensitive and interlinked interactions – such as account set up, choice of payment option, delivery or appointment set up, post-purchase follow up, and so on.

These interactions can be managed far more successfully with text messaging (as opposed to email and voice) because:

- There are often lots of them going on at the same time and they're different in nature (for example someone wants a 3pm delivery, someone wants a 4pm).
- They are subject to change at short notice (for example customers forgetting appointments or changing plans).

- There are often multiple interaction triggers – both inbound and outbound – making up an individual transaction. This tends to happen more when the product or service is comparatively complex.
- Without automation, they're labor intensive – and high costs hide in the process nooks and crannies between customer journey steps, communication channels and silo-ed in-house departments.
- They need to be personalized and orchestrated at scale.
- Context – interaction, purpose, place, priority and time – is central to satisfaction.

By connecting the process dots, intelligent SMS systems allow individuals and teams to proactively plan (rather than reactively fight fires), work smarter, improve customer service, and enjoy their jobs more.

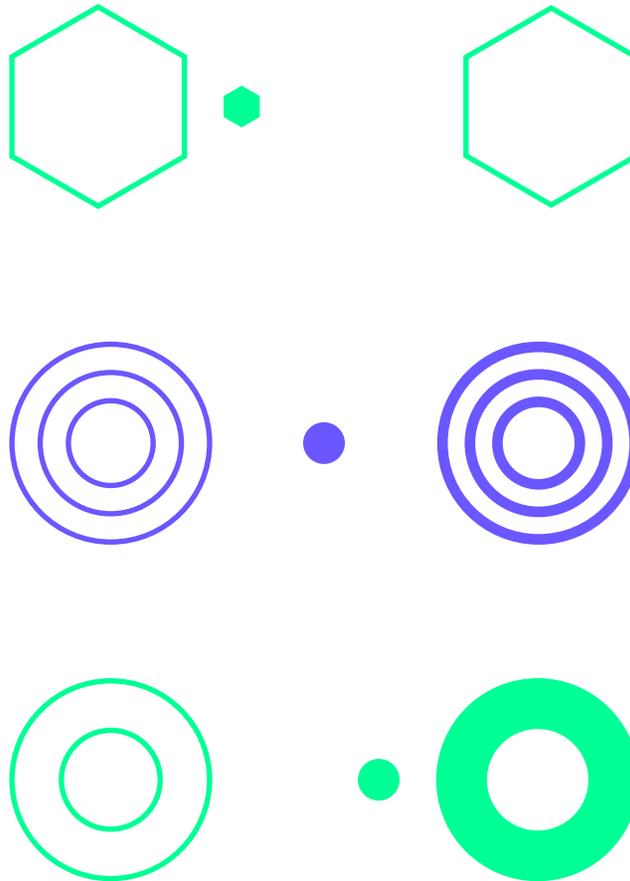
**That moment when...  
this gym bunny hopped in to  
get new trainers. Because your  
text gave her 20% off the new  
sports range.**



## Sales and marketing

Remember, 90% of text messages are opened within three minutes. This means texting is a great channel for time-dependent promotions – whether a special on coffee or headphones. When marketing departments have mobile numbers and permission to send texts, they can provide useful, timely, personal comms to customers through entire lifecycles.

Customers can also text to find out if a product is in stock, and receive SMS alerts when an item they've browsed is on sale or when an item they want has arrived.



## Introducing SMS to enterprises

The trend for enterprises is to initially use text messaging for a particular purpose in a particular department. But then other departments tend to hear about the possibility of text messaging and find their own appropriate use cases.

## Two-factor authentication

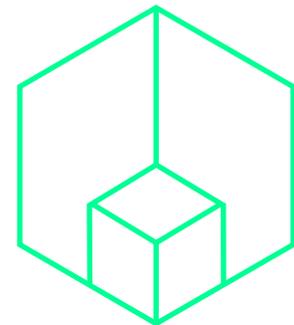
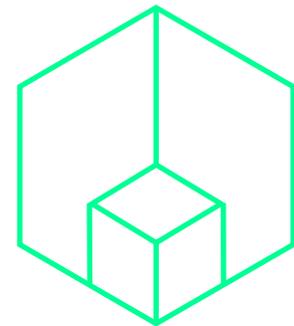
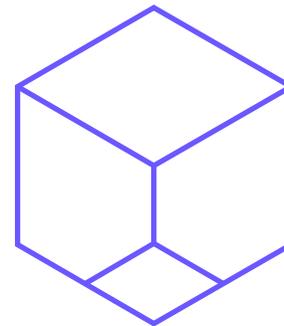
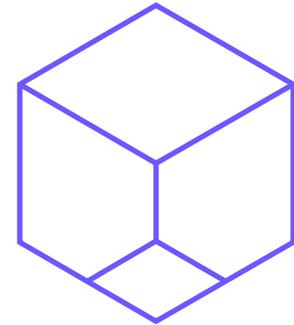
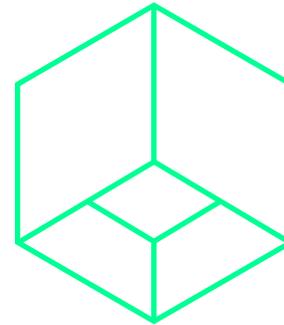
If you want to keep something valuable safe, you might want to keep it in a locked room. If you do, make sure you keep the code and the keys in different places. This cautious approach is a form of two-factor authentication.

If your customer stores sensitive order or payment details in their online account with you, it's worth a thought.

Text messaging is frequently used by IT departments and companies as a second authentication factor. For example, banks use text messaging as a cheaper form of 2-stage authentication than fobs (secure IDs) or calls from customer service departments.

Two-factor authentication has become a cornerstone of the sharing economy – the core business models of companies such as Airbnb and Uber rely on identifying users. WhatsApp also sends a text message to each of its new customers' phones to authenticate them. And Google uses a similar 2-factor authentication for Gmail users.

Authentication use cases are good starting points for retailers that want to experiment with text messaging. In these cases, the IT department itself is responsible for the process so it can gain valuable experience to pass on to other parts of the business.



## Use your imagination

At OpenMarket, we're always wary about talking about specific A2P use cases because there really are unlimited opportunities for brands. It all comes down to vision and imagination.

But here's some ideas to get you thinking.

You've got a new store in town. He lives local and loves a freebie. It's a perfect situation. Just add text.

She just texted to let you know how good your in-store service is – even the rain couldn't dampen her spirits.

He's just spent those reward points before they expired – thanks to your text reminder.



Part 5

# Alive and kicking

## Text is dead... Long live the text

Upon hearing rumors he had died, author Mark Twain was said to have told a reporter: "Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated".

Many people think text messaging started dying a slow death after WhatsApp was born. This may be true in the world of P2P. But as we've seen in this eBook, A2P text messaging is alive and kicking (and far from being an SMS killer, WhatsApp needs SMS more than ever).

And soon every retail enterprise will increasingly rely on text messaging to connect with their target audience and provide timely, personalized, and contextual information, easily and at scale.

## The Romans and the space shuttle

Text messaging is the simplest, easiest, and most natural way of communicating through a device that is in our possession almost all of the time. But there's another reason the technology will endure. Here's one last story:

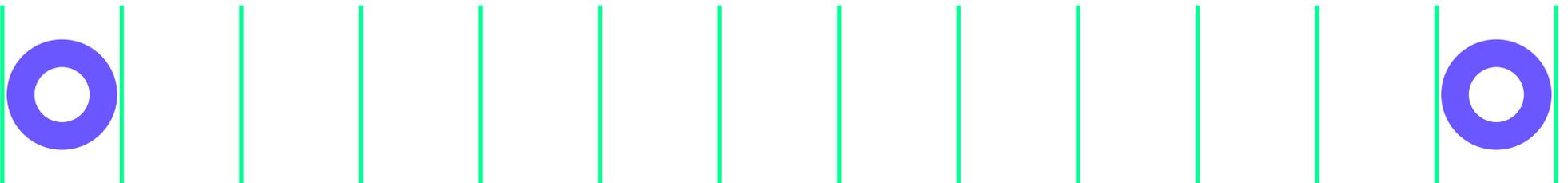
The Romans, by all accounts, were a very particular civilization. And they were particularly exacting when it came to their vehicles. So wheel spacing on Imperial Roman war chariots became a standard 4 feet and 8.5 inches.

After the Romans conquered England, their 4ft and 8.5in wide chariots gradually made ruts in the roads. From then on, English wagons tended to be made to the same specifications – otherwise the wheels would break on the uneven roads.

Fast forward a few hundred years, and engineers making the first English trams started using the same tools and measurement devices they had always relied on to create wagons. So tramways ended up 4ft and 8.5in apart. The same measurement was then used for rail lines in England – and the U.S.

Fast forward another hundred or more years, and booster rockets for the first U.S. shuttle (made in Utah) had to be transported through a tunnel only slightly wider than the track. So engineers had to design the booster rockets to be slightly smaller than they would have liked.

So there you have it: a standard set by the Romans influenced the building of the space shuttle.



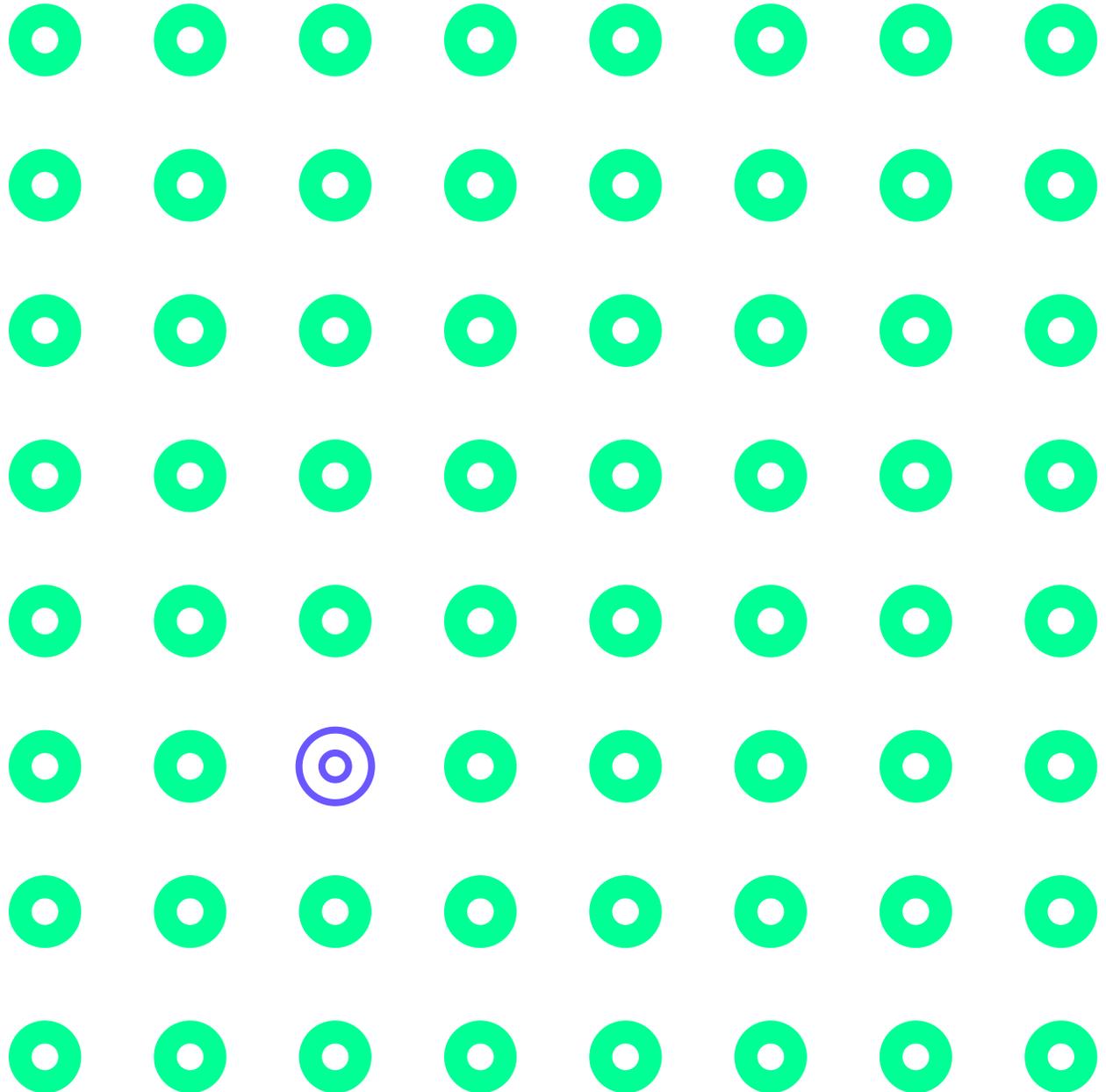
## An established standard

This is a tale that highlights the enduring power of established standards and ways of working.

Text messaging has become a similarly crucial standard in communication technology. And it's hard to imagine how a ubiquitous channel could now evolve and take its place. How long would it take to roll out a new communications technology to nearly 5 billion users? Perhaps a decade at the very least – probably more.

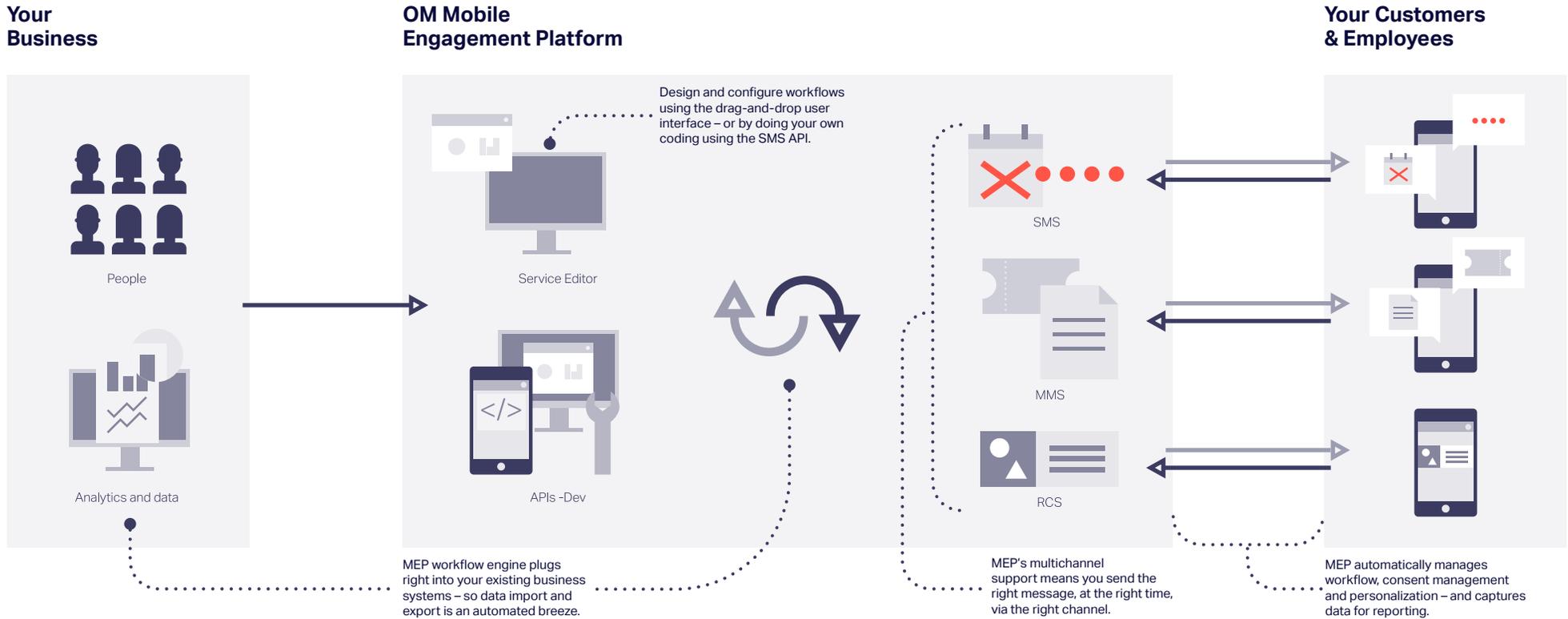
So for the foreseeable future, text messaging is likely to remain the best way to reach an audience – irrelevant of language spoken, age or county of residence.

That's why any enterprises would be making a wise investment by using SMS ruts on which to communicate with and engage their audiences.



Part 6

# The first steps



Part 6

# The first steps

Integrating an intelligent SMS messaging system into a communication stack and initiating structured workflows is no easy feat if you don't have the experience and expertise.

There are also many challenges to sending out messages internationally. SMS is globally unified from a standardization point of view. But when it comes to ways of using SMS, the regulations and local implementation might vary slightly from country to country.

That's why choosing the right partner is essential. If that partner has market-leading expertise, consultants, applications and APIs, getting a text messaging system up and running – then delivering Empathetic Interactions to millions of customers – can be easier than you would imagine.

To find out where to start, what to prioritize, and how to manage your venture into text messaging, [read our workbook](#).

Or you could just give us a call.  
We'd be happy to talk.

For more stories where SMS made the difference, [check out the rest of our Empathetic Interaction series](#).

