



Two stunning RCS success stories

How RCS rollouts by Virgin Trains and Subway rocked the business world

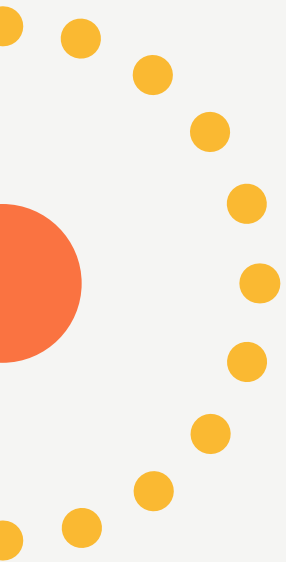




Better engagement and a big sales lift

For years now, customer experience (CX) experts have been shouting from the rooftops about the interaction potential of Rich Communication Service (RCS). But now data from two of the first RCS rollouts is here. And it turns out even the loudest RCS optimists wouldn't have dared to predict the uplifts in engagement and sales conversions.

Here are two game-changing RCS stories from two RCS pioneers – the UK's Virgin Trains and international sandwich chain Subway.



Virgin Trains

Connecting with customers

Virgin Trains were famous in the UK for their customer service. They worked hard to dream up and deliver pleasing experiences to passengers at every stage of their journeys.

That's why mobile messaging was such an important channel for the business. It let them offer information and help at specific moments in specific places. To Virgin Trains, small touches were everything.

The RCS rollout

In 2018, the Virgin Trains team began thinking about how they could use RCS Business Messaging to help their customers. They partnered with Vodafone and OpenMarket to become the world's first company to roll out an RCS communications program on a commercial basis.

As part of the program, RCS messages were sent to customers' smartphones 10 minutes before they arrived into London's Euston Station. The messages delivered latest updates for underground train services, complete with buttons to find out more information.

Passengers fell for the experience immediately. Every single person that fed back awarded the service a five-star rating. Not one chose to opt out.

Impressive.

Check out this case study on how Virgin Trains customers got to their train seats ahead of rush-hour crowds – thanks to platform notifications sent via mobile messaging.

[Download the case study](#)



No need to wait for full adoption

Virgin Trains had long known there was little point in waiting for every phone to become RCS compatible, or for every mobile operator to facilitate the service. Every RCS message they sent through OpenMarket simply reverted to an SMS format for passengers that couldn't yet receive RCS.

John Sullivan, Chief Information Officer at Virgin Trains, couldn't have been more excited about the channel's potential. He said: "My big ask is for the other mobile operators: Can they get on board with RCS? Following the surprise and delight from our customers, we just want to make sure we continue that momentum. We want to push it as hard as we possibly can. We are now an absolute believer in RCS because our customers love it."

RCS uplift

As well as reverting any RCS message to an SMS format, OpenMarket can automatically transform a message from UP2.0 (the current version of RCS) to UP1.0 (its predecessor). This means even older RCS phones get an enhanced experience over SMS.



Subway and RCS

A marketing leap

Subway's story is very different from Virgin Trains'. The global sandwich chain teamed up with mobile comms specialist Mobivity – an OpenMarket partner – to test the effectiveness of RCS for customer promotions.

The team sent one group of customers two offers via SMS, then sent another group the same two offers via RCS. The wording for the offers – a two-sandwich deal and a \$20 meal deal – matched exactly, but the branded RCS version included interactive buttons and product images.

The conversion rate was an incredible 140% higher than SMS for the two-sandwich offer, and 51% higher for the meal deal. Subway were already a huge advocate of SMS marketing – and had permission from millions of their customers to receive deals via SMS. But RCS blew SMS out of the water.

140%

**Increase in conversion rate
compared to SMS**

Engaging everywhere

The Subway team ran the initial campaigns in Los Angeles, Houston and Cincinnati, before expanding into more US markets. Wherever campaigns went, the results were similar.

They used RCS to practice fundamental marketing strategies with rich content. They also experimented with RCS to make it easy for customers to order and reorder food.

Subway chief digital officer Carissa Ganelli has lauded the response rates as “blow-the-doors-off” impressive. She said: “As marketers, we know that images usually sell more and lift conversion rates, and that you can’t do any of that in SMS. Consumers don’t have to download anything to get that graphical interface since RCS lives within the native messaging app. The only thing that would have surprised me is if it didn’t have a higher response rate.”



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Carissa Ganelli
Chief Digital Officer at Subway



The final takeaways

Combine those things with the raw power of the world's best mobile messaging network and it becomes quick and cost-effective to send messages worldwide.

The two campaigns shared some similar overall findings. Data from both revealed the time between users receiving an RCS message, then reading it, was typically under two minutes.

In a sense this is no surprise. SMS has long been known for its high opening rates – with a reported 90% of messages read within three minutes. However, this opening-rate data has always been gathered from customer surveys, as it can't be extracted from the SMS channel itself.

RCS, on the other hand, provides great insights into delivery and read data. So for the first time, the Subway and Virgin Trains RCS campaigns could demonstrate that almost all messages were opened in under two minutes.

No user training required

Despite the fact RCS is a brand new technology, neither Virgin Trains or Subway customers required user training or instructions. And opt outs were non-existent. The campaigns demonstrate that RCS programs can be rolled out with no customer action (in the form of an app download) or effort required. There is zero user friction. Few technologies can make this claim.

Factor in the SMS fallback feature, and there is little reason not to start exploring what RCS can do for your company.



2 minutes

**Almost all RCS messages were
opened in under two minutes**

Multi-channel messaging

Discover how the indigo multi-channel messaging platform works.



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We're OpenMarket

We help the biggest brands in the world use mobile messaging to connect with people in the moments that count. When they need to be helpful and responsive in real time. When customer experience isn't just a buzzword, it's an obsession. We'd love to do the same for you.

