



The future of mobile messaging

Get ready for AI-powered
conversations, deep data
insights and app-like
experiences



The changing face of mobile messaging

Over the past few years, organizations everywhere have come to rely on SMS to deliver information, alerts and experiences to consumers anywhere in the world. Consumers, meanwhile, have grown used to the ease and convenience of conducting essential business with organizations directly from their text inbox.

The secret is well and truly out there: mobile messaging is uniquely positioned to facilitate the most empathetic of interactions with consumers. The end result for businesses? Strong, enduring relationships and marked uplifts in revenues.

The next chapter

Yet as exciting as the business messaging opportunity has become, we're still only on the first few pages of this unique channel's story. Whether it's the emergence of rich new channels, the growing importance of AI, or the compelling data insights, the opportunities (and challenges) faced by those that have come to rely on mobile messaging have never been more profound.

This is an analog industry finally turning digital. And the dilemma facing everyone involved – whether enterprise or reseller – is what to do next.

In the next few pages we offer our perspective on these opportunities and challenges, and set out how your business can get ahead of its competitors – then prepare for the next decade of empathetic mobile messaging.



Who are we and why should you care?

OpenMarket is a mobile messaging solutions provider that helps businesses connect with their customers. Seven of the world's ten biggest enterprises, and the world's leading mobile messaging vendors, rely on our networks, our close relationships with carriers, and our strategic and engineering expertise to facilitate empathetic interactions with their customers – at scale.





The Empathetic Interaction™ explained

Mobile messaging gives companies countless invisible opportunities to surprise and impress customers in precise moments and in exact places.

But to deliver interactions that are truly empathetic, use what you know about the individual and the situation they're in, then anticipate what might make them happy.

You'll need an intelligent mobile messaging system linked to your customer ops tech stack, and the data and analytics to inform your interactions. Expert support and guidance from mobile messaging experts come in handy too.

Throw RCS (Rich Communication Services) messages into the mix and you have a great chance of facilitating what we call Empathetic Interactions – moments that surprise and delight your customers and lead to deep, enduring relationships for years to come.

OpenMarket's multi-channel mobile messaging platform, indigo, makes it easy for your people to create Empathetic Interactions without relying on IT's help.

Templated campaigns, best-practice insights, AI, and a direct connection to the world's best global messaging network help you deliver the right conversations, on the right channels, at the right time.

[Find out more](#)

The evolution of the inbox

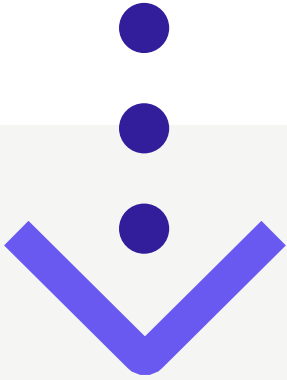
At the heart of the mobile messaging story is the humble (but powerful) SMS.

Even MMS (Multimedia Messaging Services), with its ability to deliver rich, engaging content like images, video and audio, has never quite threatened SMS's pre-eminence.

It's not hard to work out why. The power of text messaging has always stemmed from the immediacy of the medium – the 98% open rate and the total absence of user friction. This is a no-frills channel that has always worked well with simple text-based conversations. The extra effort needed to devise MMS campaigns has never quite felt worth it to most companies out there.

But a strange thing happened in 2018. After years of chronic underuse, MMS started delivering fantastic results for a select few businesses who decided to try harder to make their mobile messages resonate.

MMS has slowly begun to be more widely recognized and utilized for its ability to combine the reach of SMS with the creative potential to convey emotion and engage audiences in this Instagram-influenced era.



Consider some of the MMS possibilities:

- Send coupons or invitations by MMS rather than using the post
- Increase engagement by sending video messages
- Deliver images of new in-store stock
- Send how-to videos to help with customer onboarding

3x

At OpenMarket, we've seen business-to-consumer MMS campaigns deliver engagement and response rates around 3x higher than SMS.

The age of RCS Chat

So why has it taken until now for MMS – a decades-old technology – to start to really catch on? Could it have something to do with the excitement building in the world of mobile messaging about a new messaging standard with even richer interactive capabilities?

RCS – or to use its consumer-friendly name “Chat” – has become widely accepted as the next evolution of mobile engagement.

It takes full advantage of all the interactive and rich features smartphones enable today, while conveniently delivering to the SMS inbox.

Section one

Like SMS, RCS lets businesses facilitate two-way messaging with customers, while delivering an endless variety of features, including:

- High-resolution photos
- Action and reply buttons
- Audio messaging
- Videos and animations
- GIFs
- Image carousels
- Rich Cards
- Branding
- Geolocation
- Add to calendar

The one factor holding RCS back? Apple isn't on board... yet. But the right mobile solutions provider will be able to circumvent this problem. OpenMarket ensures every RCS message that doesn't reach a phone can revert back to SMS – or can be recreated via a personalized mobile web experience, thanks to the RMM (Rich Media Messaging) solution we offer in partnership with VoiceSage. Even more sophisticated solutions will follow. Imagine sending out single messages that can be delivered to either Apple Business Chat, MMS, RCS, or SMS.



The icing on the RCS cake

The rich engagement opportunities offered by RCS – combined with the frictionless immediacy and open rates of SMS – are beyond exciting for the industry. But the data and insight opportunities are the icing on the RCS cake.

Expect a treasure trove of insights that will include: read receipts by default, on-screen event tracking, and the ability to customize call-back data tied to each customer action.

In short, you'll be able to find out what works and what doesn't, continuously improve the quality of interactions with your audience, and enjoy new opportunities to segment and target them. You'll be able to connect more deeply with customers and enjoy the most empathetic of relationships with them.



In 2018, OpenMarket became the first mobile messaging provider to deliver a commercial business-to-consumer RCS campaign.

Read the full story [here](#).



Data, insights and improved connections

Think of the companies – from Amazon to Google – that exploited the data opportunities at the dawn of the web.

Now consider the data opportunity RCS presents for your company. As text messaging moves from the analogue age to the digital, the businesses that move quickly to leverage insights and use them to inject more empathy into their interactions will leave competitors standing.

The end of the data drought

RCS and the data revolution in mobile messaging will take place in tandem. But there is still a huge amount of data that can be yielded from SMS to help differentiate your company and uncover new business possibilities.

Until now, the world of SMS has been seen as a relative data desert. In reality, deep wells of data and insights have always been there – right under the surface. It just needed the tools and expertise to extract them.

Data visualization tools are of pivotal importance to the messaging landscape, ensuring non-technical people can easily uncover patterns and meaning from the data available. With the right visual dashboards from the right messaging partners, you should be able to filter large swathes of messaging data by a multitude of factors

Section two

such as date, short codes, account IDs, customer segments, and whether a message was read or not.

The right dashboards will help you answer questions such as:

- Who are my customers?
- Who is and isn't responding to this message?
- What are they most interested in?
- What's leading them to engage?
- Which keywords are working?
- Who is filling out our surveys?
- Who is entering our competition more than once?
- What stands out here?
- What's the best time to send particular messages?
- Why are messages to certain phones and carriers failing?
- What's the most effective campaign?
- What's the most effective price?
- How many times can we send messages until they send a stop back?

You can collate campaign results to reveal powerful insights. You might work out that if you send X number of offers, you'll receive Y number of redemptions. Or you might send a notice out about a service issue and see X reduction in support calls as a result.

Solving data mysteries

The world of data can feel like an impenetrable mystery to those that are new to it. But the best way to approach mysteries is to look for clues.

Let's imagine a scenario.

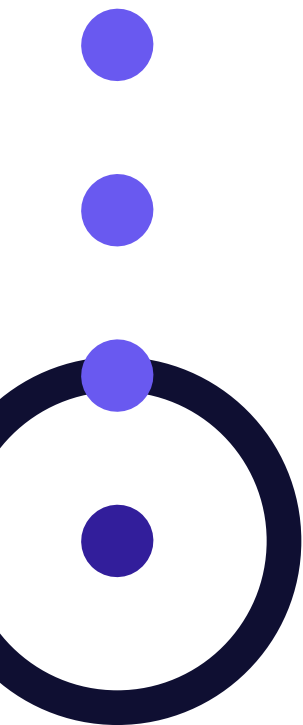
A fast-food chain sends out a two-for-one offer by SMS, using different message copy. A data dashboard reveals that 59% of customers responded once, 25% responded twice, and 9% responded three times.

What could you do with this data?

Perhaps you could investigate what made the 9% so enthusiastic for the offer. This could be achieved by tweaking a filter on a data dashboard to look more closely at the 9%. You could then drill down on the types of messaging that appealed to them.

One version might stand out. If so, you might have just unearthed a highly effective type of messaging that you can move forward with.

There could be many other ways to gain insights from the 9%. For example, you could look at their demographic profiles and work out how to more precisely target them in the future – trying to isolate data points that could lead you to predict who responds well to this type of offer.



Become a messaging data expert

Sometimes you might find there are too many data sources, and too much analytics work to do. In these situations, strategic advice from messaging experts can be important. The good news? You'll probably find learning comes easily when you become used to working with good data dashboards.

Start now and you can quickly become a relative expert in messaging data analysis. After all, relatively few businesses around the world are doing this at all.

Aggregate data from everywhere

The right mobile messaging solutions partner should also be able to provide you with aggregated messaging insights gleaned from across industries.

For example, they may have worked out that it's best to launch charity campaigns on Mondays. Or they might have found that takeaway offers should be sent at specific times on Friday evenings, depending on the age of the customer.

These are questions that are being answered every day in the world of websites and apps. Now it's time to leverage the insights that can be gleaned from one of the most effective communication mediums ever designed.

Data can improve connections

There are potential pitfalls to avoid when you run two-way, automated conversations with global audiences. Maybe the phones of customers with a certain carrier automatically bar the type of message you're sending.

Section two

Maybe your messages can't get through to certain regions in certain countries.

These are issues that can be swiftly uncovered by the right data dashboards. And these are issues the right mobile services provider will be able to quickly fix – for example by sending messages to people with the barred phones urging them to unlock permissions, or by contacting the carrier itself to work around the country-specific sending issues.



Inject AI into mobile messaging

We've all experienced substandard and ultimately frustrating interactions with automated systems and voicebots – from those on our phones and in our living rooms, to those we are forced to interact with when we call up company call centers.

On the other hand, most of us have experienced how effective automated responses can be in specific situations. Automated mobile messaging conversations are a case in point:

Your delivery will arrive between 10am and 12am tomorrow. Text Y to confirm or N to rearrange.

Y

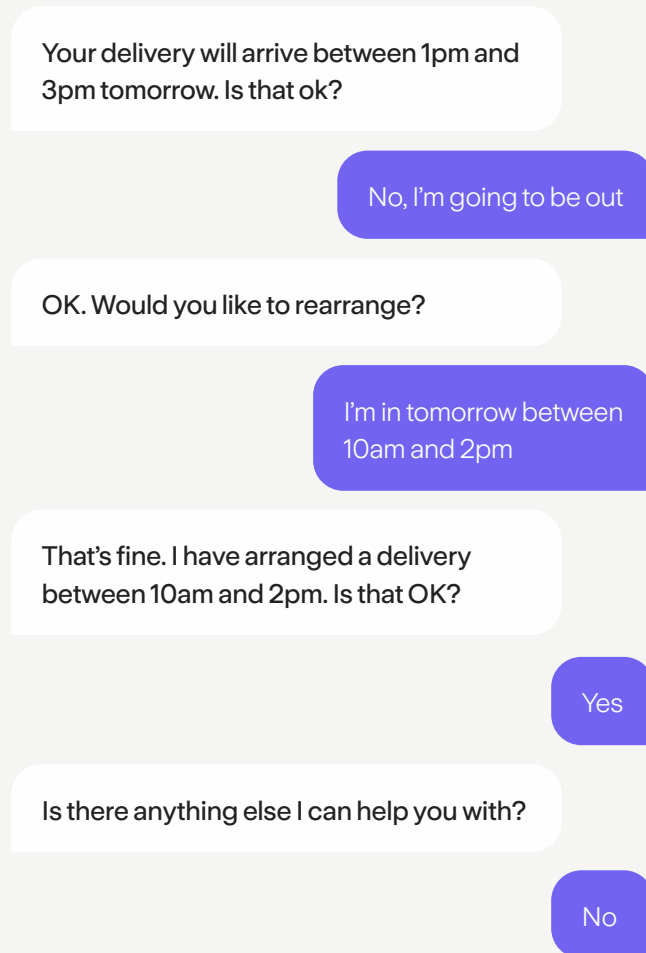
Today at 1:30PM

Well-designed automated mobile messaging conversations tend to be useful, quick, easy to use, and stress free. But they are about to get even more effective and efficient.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) capabilities plugged into your messaging platform will ensure conversations become more natural, intuitive and empathetic. NLP can interpret questions and responses posed by the customer.

Section three

A delivery confirmation conversation could pan out like this instead:



Today at 4:30PM

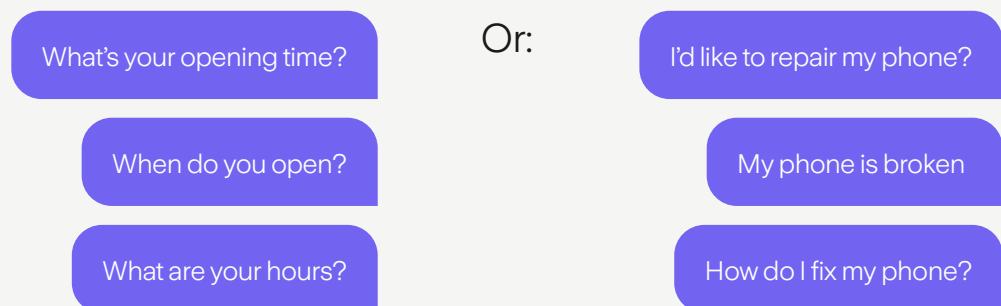
Before plugging NLP into your automated messaging programs, you'll need to understand the different scenarios in which you'll be communicating with customers.

Section three

An important part of this is working out what the intentions of different customers that talk to you might be. For example: Will they be speaking to you about deliveries of packages, your latest offers, or getting a device you sold them repaired?

Most businesses will be able to predict the types of interactions they'll have with customers. You'll only need a few examples of customer intentions to get started. The AI technology can then use this information to train a machine learning model to understand not just the examples you enter, but numerous other phrases that mean the same thing.

For example:



You'll be able to specify different intents, facts about the business, and suitable responses. Then as people use your service, you can incorporate what they say as training examples, so the service continues to improve.

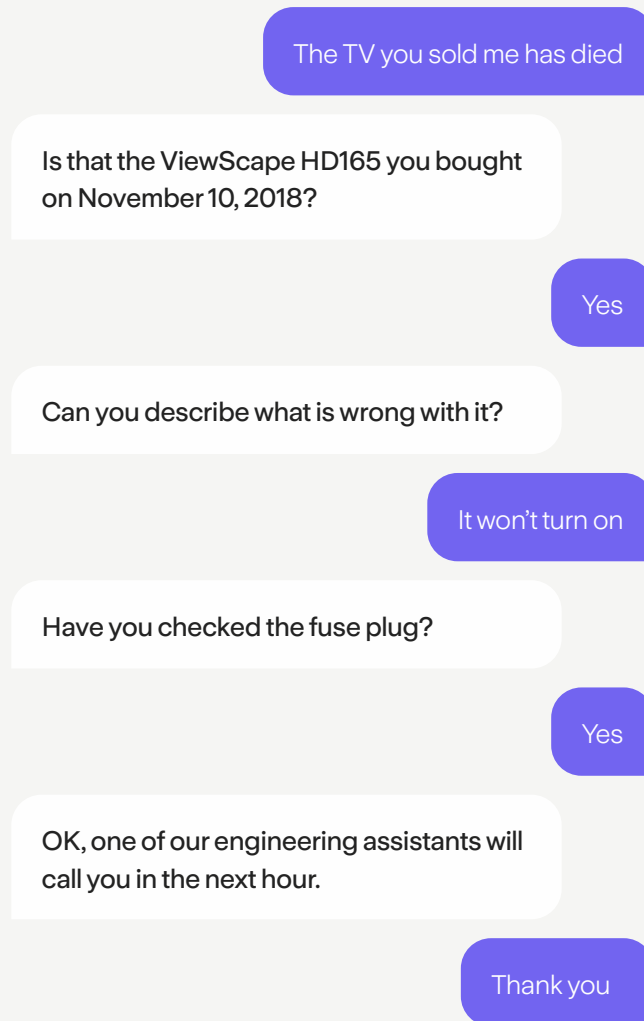
No new interface required

As significant as this development is for customer communication, it's more evolution than revolution from your business's point of view.

Section three

AI will augment, rather than replace, preprogrammed automated text systems. You'll be able to plug NLP applications into established mobile messaging platforms (which should already be connected to back-end systems such as CRMs). This means there will be no need for businesses to turn to a new conversational interface to reap the benefits of AI-powered mobile messaging.

Here's how it could work:



Today at 4:30PM

Note that the AI in this scenario can extract customer-related information from the CRM – for example, who the person is and what their recent purchases are.

Can bots be empathetic?

AI-powered conversational commerce will ensure automated interactions between brands and consumers become a bit more natural and “human”. But perhaps the humanization of technology isn’t the main attraction for users.

The killer benefit is surely the efficiency introduced to the interaction.

After all, there are many situations in which the last thing we want to do is speak to a human. Maybe we’re not in the mood to be polite, maybe we want to order some hemorrhoid cream in private, maybe we just want a really straightforward, to-the-point interaction.

Used wisely, AI-powered mobile messaging will reduce the number of steps and the time it takes for a business to help a customer. It will remove friction, create flow, and enable businesses to interact with customers more empathetically than ever before.



Complexity and the human imperative

We're in this together

The beauty of mobile mobile messaging is its simplicity. You need an intelligent mobile messaging platform – or a system linked to your customer ops tech stack via a decent API. Then you need the phone numbers of your customers, and permission to contact them. Only then you can start enjoying valuable interactions with them.

But in reality, setting up and running text messaging campaigns that deliver interactions as empathetic as the modern consumer demands can be complex. It's even more challenging to do this on a global scale. There are many pieces to the puzzle, such as:

- High-performing SMS, MMS and RCS APIs to ensure programs connect with back-office systems
- Close to 100% performance reliability and low message-delivery latency so customers get the instant service they expect
- Natural language processing to improve conversation utility
- Data expertise to continually improve campaign effectiveness
- An open line to carriers to ensure they play their role in delivering all your messages

The list goes on and on.

Now think of the countless different communication scenarios companies might face:

- Maybe you need to deliver a survey to 70 locations, with live localization requirements for each location, limited text character allowances that require concatenation planning, and extensive testing
- Maybe you need guaranteed latency between 99.5% and 100% to ensure password authentication processes run smoothly for customers
- Maybe you need accessible data on short-code failures to find which messages aren't being delivered
- Maybe you have a large campaign going to Uganda and you need a million messages to go out in 20 minutes
- Maybe you need your IoT-connected devices to send detailed RCS alerts to various engineers when certain events take place.

At OpenMarket, we work with the very biggest enterprises in the world, which in turn have the most talented engineering and account teams. Even they need constant support. To achieve campaign perfection in the modern era, a multitude of barriers and moving parts must be overcome, and many problems must be solved.

There's sometimes no easy way to knock down or maneuver around these barriers. Being pointed towards the documentation area of a provider's website won't lead to good outcomes.

To deliver world-class messaging campaigns, you need a mobile solutions provider with expertise across territories, close relationships with carriers, deep account teams, and technical support available 24 hours a day.

Time to switch

The likelihood is you already use an aggregator or messaging solution provider. It's worth noting that switching can be a notoriously painful process – especially if you have short codes you've spent a lot of time and money getting known among customers.

Too many businesses endure failing messages or downtime because mobile carriers follow different processes as they move short codes used by their customers over to different messaging solution providers.

So you need to be sure the migration is quick and easy. Your provider should work out ways to ensure there is no downtime by coordinating with each carrier on your behalf and putting a changeover plan in place.



Welcome to the new era of empathetic interactions

The next steps

Innovations in the mobile messaging space are coming thick and fast – so now's the time to become a first mover in the new era of empathetic mobile messaging.

This is less daunting than it might sound. Remember, mobile messaging innovation is taking place on tried and true networks and channels. This is evolution rather than revolution.

Choose a partner steeped in mobile messaging heritage and innovation, with the expert support in place, and success will naturally follow.

We are OpenMarket

As an Infobip company, 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.

