



The mobile messaging guide for marketing platforms

How to get SMS and MMS
marketing campaigns up quickly
– and running smoothly



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Spam-free. Incredible open rates. Unmatched engagement.

It's not hard to work out why SMS has emerged as a pivotal channel for marketing platforms and digital marketing agencies over the past few years.

If you're reading this guide, you probably already have big brands relying on you to deliver high-volume mobile messaging campaigns. Or perhaps you're about to introduce messaging into your multi-channel mix.

Either way, you need to be able to offer the right level of service and advice.

There's the stuff that's probably already in your business sweet spot – like marketing strategy, getting the content right, and optimizing campaigns according to cost-per-conversion calculations.

Then there are the bits that are outside your sphere of expertise – getting messaging campaigns approved by carriers and up and running fast; keeping delivery rates high; ensuring messages arrive on time; staying compliant with global rules and regulations; staying on the right side of the spam filters; guaranteeing the security of consumers' messaging data. **The list goes on.**

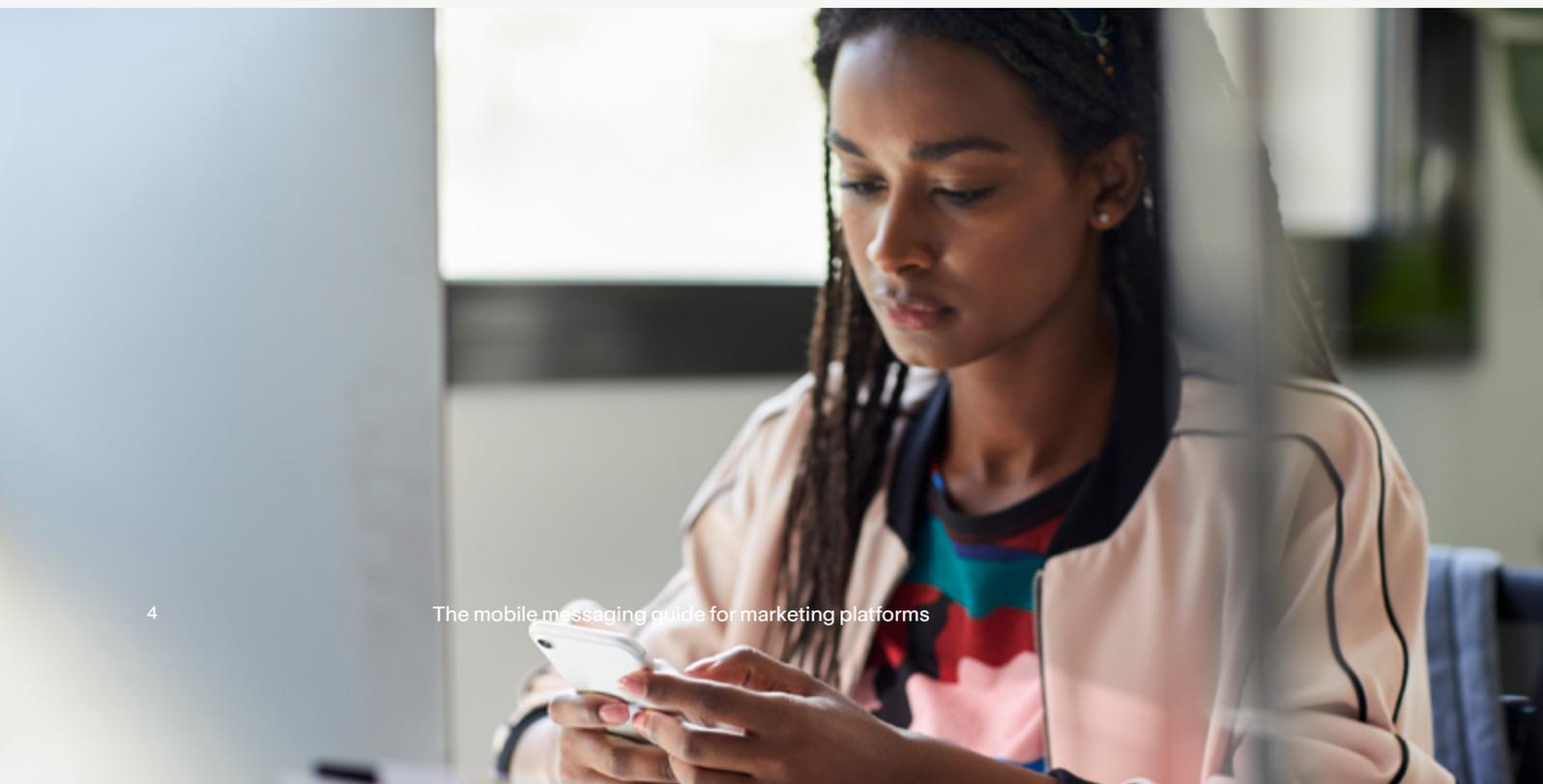
Introduction

The bread and butter of SMS messaging

These services are the bread and butter of SMS messaging. Your customers (quite rightly) expect you to be able to deliver them.

But here's the thing: the mobile messaging industry is complex and heavily regulated. There are many mobile operators (think Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T etc) with their own mobile networks and connections that messages must travel through. Delivery speed and reliability is far from a guarantee with many providers.

There are also strict compliance rules in place to ensure the messaging on mobile operator networks remains spam and fraud-free. Add to this list the myriad legal requirements to sending messages in hundreds of countries across the world.



Smoothly and swiftly

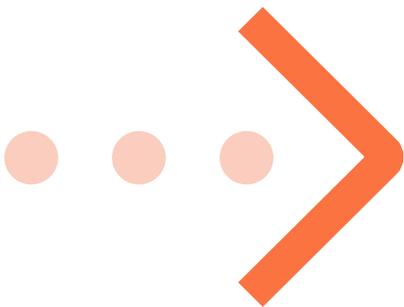
To deliver the reliable, smooth, swift service your customers expect, the simplest solution is to work with a messaging partner with the required experience and reputation.

But to choose the right partner, and to work with them effectively, you need a good deal of SMS knowledge yourself.

That's what this guide is for.

It will set out everything you need to know about putting a reliable SMS service at the heart of your multi-channel mix. Ultimately, it should help the brands you work with reach the right customers, in the right moments, with the right message – millions at a time.

At OpenMarket, we call these *empathetic interactions*.



Who are we and why have we written this guide?

We're OpenMarket – a mobile messaging solutions provider that's been helping businesses connect with their customers since 1999.

We're one of only three "Tier 1" messaging solutions providers with direct SMS connections to all major US carriers.

Some of the biggest enterprises on the planet, and the world's leading messaging vendors, rely on our networks, close relationships with carriers, strategic advice and engineering expertise.

Important terms defined

SMS aggregator

When a brand wants to send a text message to a customer, it has to send the message to that customer's carrier (for example T-Mobile). Carriers don't have the time and resources to help these brands, so aggregators handle the process.

Mobile messaging solutions provider

Some leading aggregators (like OpenMarket) do far more than "aggregate" messaging. They provide ways for brands to utilize messaging (whether SMS, MMS, RCS or OTT services like WhatsApp) in all sorts of situations. That's why "mobile messaging solutions provider" is a more appropriate term to describe more evolved companies that started life as an SMS aggregator.

For a more detailed glossary of messaging terms, [click here](#).

Compliance.

Get your campaigns up and running – fast.

Your business customers need to be able to send many thousands, and even millions, of marketing messages in a short space of time. For this, they need short codes.

Short codes are 5 or 6-digit ‘phone numbers’ for sending and receiving messages (both SMS and MMS) between consumers and companies. Short codes are the gold standard of mobile messaging numbers because they’re memorable, trustworthy and let you send large numbers of messages at once.

But the messaging power that short codes give you and your customers comes with a lot of responsibility.

Before letting a brand use a short code, mobile operators want to be sure it’s not going to be used to annoy their subscribers with spam-like marketing. More specifically, the mobile operators want to know exactly what the brand is using the short code for, and whether it has sought the consumers’ permission before contacting them.



Check out our guide, [The long and short of US business messaging](#), to find out which numbers (whether 10 digit long codes or short codes) are right for different use cases.

Section 1

This process must take place for every short-code campaign. And there's not just one mobile operator to deal with. There are dozens in the US alone – and potentially hundreds if a campaign is global.

This is not a simple tick-box registration and provisioning process – even for highly experienced messaging aggregators. That's why it takes some aggregators months to get short-code campaigns up and running in the US. And even then, one mistake in the compliance process can lead to further delays.

However, when you work with a provider that has close relationships with the carriers, knows their systems and processes inside out, and has a team of engineers to automate provisioning processes and tie carrier systems together, the time it takes to get a short code approved in the US can be closer to two weeks.

Keep your campaigns running like clockwork

There are two parts to mobile messaging compliance:

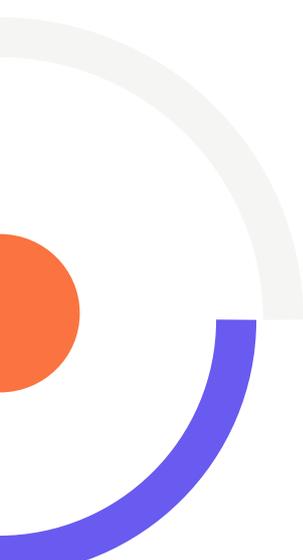
1. Getting your campaign approved and registered
2. Ensuring it stays compliant, and doesn't trigger any spam filters, for as long as it runs

Marketing is an area of mobile messaging that is subject to a lot of rules and policies that relate to spamming, customer permissions, and general customer experience. These rules and policies can change at any time. The right partner can give you the assurance that your campaigns will stay within these rules, and stay up and running with no issues.

Responsive account management

A crucial piece of the short-code provisioning puzzle is a responsive account management team to hand-hold you through the process. This team should ensure you understand what the operator and legal requirements are for each of those short codes. They also play an important intermediary role – heading off issues and problems, and making sure the process runs smoothly.

Section 1



In fact, mobile operators rely on these account managers almost as much you will. They trust them to make sure that campaigns sail through the process, and that, ultimately, consumer inboxes are being protected.

Of course, account management teams need more than deep knowledge and good relationships with the mobile operators to do their job well. They also need time to see the process through.

Mobile messaging solutions providers that have tens of thousands of customers simply can't offer this time.

Revealing insights

A few more pieces of the short-code compliance jigsaw are dashboards, reports and alerts that let you know whether campaigns are adhering to the rules or are likely to fall foul of carrier guidelines and get blocked. Dashboards that deliver insights from the AT&T 7726 spam report, and tools that monitor prohibited words, are good examples.

The right tools

Good UIs to file all this information are key, but it's important to remember this is not a system that can be automated. Good short-code compliance requires a combination of carrier relations, account management, time, and tools.

Local knowledge

Your partner should also help you stay abreast of the regulatory ins and outs of each country you're sending messages in. For example, in some destinations, if you send a message that has particular words in it, or a particular type of content – or even a particular URL that's not approved and set up by the mobile operator – you can be liable for hefty fines. To complicate matters further, these regulations can change daily.

Compliance.

Keep your messages flowing.

As a marketing platform, you need to know that your customers' messages are reaching consumer inboxes in seconds – thousands and millions at a time. A reliable messaging network is a bottom line requirement.

A mobile messaging network is made up of multiple connections to wireless mobile operator networks across countries, and all around the world.

Every provider's mobile messaging network needs to rely on various in-country aggregators to deliver messages globally – meaning some messages go through multiple 'hops' before arriving in inboxes. It's the messaging provider's responsibility to make sure that these suppliers' connections are stable, reliable and secure.

A mobile messaging network should have smart routing systems that recognize if there's a drop in quality of a supplier's network (for example, if messages are being delayed, or if the delivery success rate is going down). Then the provider can automatically switch traffic to a different supplier.



Section 2

Direct connects

You should expect your provider to have direct connections with operator networks in your most important markets. Direct connections cut out the middlemen, and reduce the chance of anything going wrong. Messages arrive faster, and you also have more visibility on what's happened to the message along the way. If there are multiple messaging hops, you'll still get that visibility most of the time, but if there is a break somewhere in the chain, that information can be lost.

Reach everyone, everywhere

The bottom line is you want to know you're able to reach almost every adult with a mobile phone.

Let's imagine you work with a brand in Seattle that has customers in rural Thailand. Let's imagine this brand has customers or prospects that use a relatively obscure local carrier whose staff don't speak English. A situation like this can be complicated for a mobile messaging provider. But the right one should be able to maintain that connection 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

High volume

You also need to know that your provider can handle huge traffic volumes. Have they hosted live major television show votes involving millions of viewers? Have they supported huge enterprises in peak periods of business – for example on Black Friday or Cyber Monday? The provider needs to demonstrate an ability to sustain high throughput too.

When you send large-scale campaigns, a lot can potentially go wrong. So you need a provider that can react to problems in seconds – or anticipate them so they never happen.

Section 2

Your provider's network architecture should offer a scalable and highly available platform with no single points of failure or bottlenecks on capacity growth. The system should be highly asynchronous (in other words a set of processes that run independently and safely of each other). This should be backed by queues that allow bursts of traffic to be smoothed out while still being reliably delivered. A network of geo-redundant data centers (which can function completely independently of each other) should also be part of the solution.

A white glove approach

Reliable message delivery is not just about the network. Good account management can keep your delivery rates high. For example, an account manager might notice that your delivery rate has slipped in a certain campaign, then recommend you look at your database and identify whether a group of customers have the right contact details.

Sometimes just little tweaks can have a big impact to your campaign and delivery success rate.

An insights-led approach

Your provider should also offer real-time delivery receipts which confirm that your message has been successfully delivered to (and received by) the mobile handset of the customer. If your messages don't make it to their destination, your delivery receipt should indicate why and where it was held up. Clear dashboards should also be available that allow you to grasp trends, such as SMS volume data and delivery success rates in different areas.

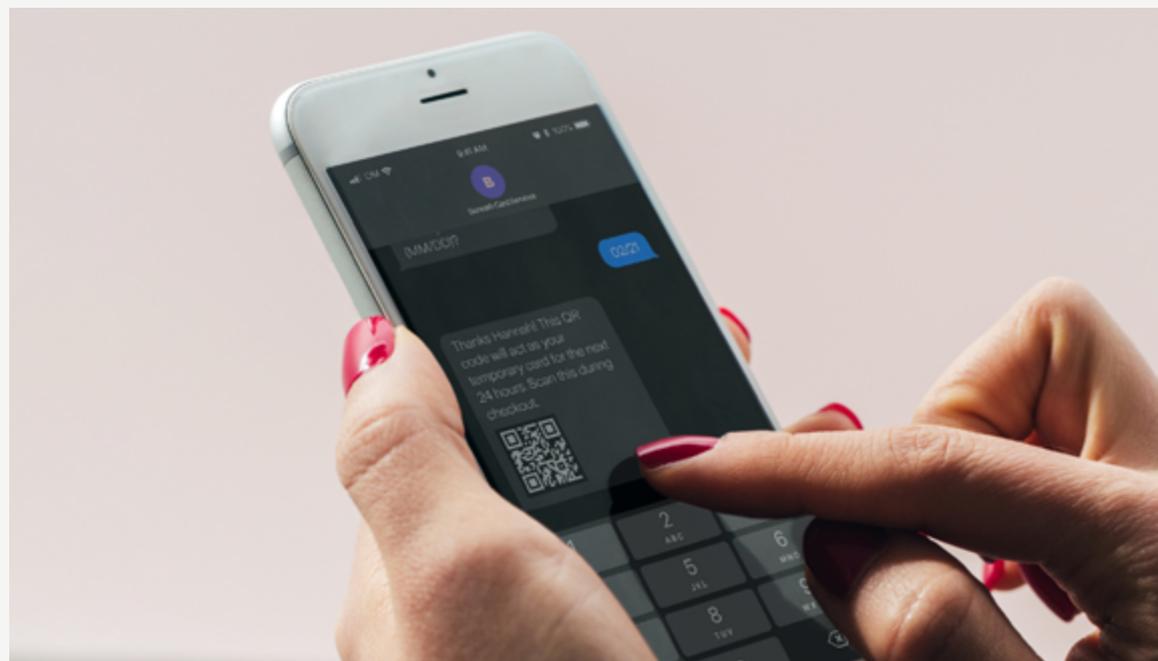
Rich messaging. Give customers the best messaging experience.

Now could be the time to look beyond the text in text messaging – and offer your brand customers more empathetic and powerful ways of reaching consumers. There are different multimedia messaging options to consider – each of which require different levels of expertise and investment.

Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS)

MMS uses the same technology as SMS but allows you to send additional media in the messages. While it's most commonly used to deliver photos, it can also handle short videos, GIFs and audio.

A client of ours in the fashion industry enjoys MMS click-through rates of 30% or more, and over 20x return on investment. And our messaging partners report that MMS delivers 300% more engagement than SMS-only campaigns.



Section 3

Rich Communication Services (RCS)

RCS is SMS on steroids. It lets you deliver interactive, app-like experiences straight to your customers' messaging inboxes. In addition, it allows you to gather data that you can use to optimize customer experiences and understand what's working in your marketing campaigns.

Google has rolled out RCS as Android's primary texting platform, which means it can be used by anyone with the Android messaging app. Soon, every new Android phone will accept RCS in the default messages inbox, and every major mobile operator globally will support it.

Apple is yet to get on board, but in the meantime, the right messaging provider can ensure any message sent to an Apple device can revert to SMS (or the RMM format we discuss below).

Branded Messaging

[Branded Messaging](#) is a unique solution from OpenMarket that allows you to send SMS messages that arrive in customer inboxes with your brand logo. Our indigo multi-channel messaging platform converts the message during transit. It's a quick, simple solution that requires no more work on your side than sending an SMS does.

Rich Media Messaging (RMM)

[RMM](#) is a solution provided by OpenMarket and our partner VoiceSage. It lets you deliver RCS-style messaging experiences to customers that don't have an RCS-compatible phone.

When you send an RCS message, any device that does not support it automatically receives a fallback SMS message containing a personalized website link. A customer that clicks on this link gets a website experience that replicates the RCS message.

Long or short? Choose the right number.

Short codes are the obvious choice for high-volume, measurable marketing campaigns. But in the US, another business messaging option has emerged – 10 digit long codes, AKA 10DLC.

10DLC won't give your customers the same high-volume throughout as short codes, but it might be right for some of your use cases.

As you probably already know, the US mobile operators no longer allow brands to use shared short codes. Instead they want each campaign to have its own approved code so that that messages can be easily monitored.

So short codes and 10DLC are the available US options.



OpenMarket's self-service 10DLC tool lets you buy and register a 10DLC number for a marketing campaign – then start messaging within minutes.

[Find out more](#)

Section 4

Migrate your US short codes

Well-known short codes are precious. So if you want to switch messaging solutions providers, you'll need to know that your provider can deliver a smooth short-code migration.

This involves co-ordination with each carrier on your behalf, tools to support the process, and general care to ensure you avoid downtime and undelivered messages during the migration.

Close relationships with all the major US carriers, and knowledge of the process and potential pitfalls, are necessary for this process to run smoothly.

To find out more download our guide:
[Migrating US short codes the easy way](#)



Protect your customers. Secure mobile messaging.

The highest of security standards should be table stakes in mobile messaging. But this isn't always the case.

Look for attainment of ISO 27001 (2013) – a globally recognized standard that certifies security controls for the people, processes, and technologies that make up a messaging platform are suitably robust.

Seek out providers who build security into their development lifecycle and practices. Data should be encrypted in transit using common industry-accepted encryption ciphers and strengths. Customer content stored at rest should also be protected by one or more encryption mechanisms.

Ask whether your provider has had any security breaches. And look for an experienced, dedicated global information security and privacy department headed by a Chief Privacy Officer (CPO) and/or Chief Information Security Officer (CISO).

Components of a provider's platform should be highly available so customers are protected from data loss. Look for data centers that are geographically distributed to minimize the effects of regional disruptions such as natural disasters and local outages. If hardware, software, or a network does fail, services should be automatically shifted from one facility to another so operations continue without interruption.

Thank you!

We hope this guide has proved useful. If you have any more questions or you'd like some specific advice, please [get in touch](#).

Or if you'd like to compare costs then [click here to request a quote](#).

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.

