



Texting by the Numbers

Research shows that many people prefer texting over a phone conversation due to the ease and speed of response. Keep in mind that:

- 64% of consumers with texting capabilities would prefer using texting to voice as a customer service channel.
- 77% of Millennials with texting capabilities are likely to have a positive perception of a company that offers support via text.
- Only 1 of the top 25 global consumer product companies offers texting as an option—revealing a significant opportunity.
- A single 800-number can be used for voice, texting and multi-media images and video—and telecom carriers are supporting the technology.
- 52% surveyed by HeyWire Business said they would be likely to text with a customer support agent.



Texting

Is Quickly Becoming the Preferred Channel of Choice

By Frank Pettinato

With consumers eager to engage, it's time for companies to bring this technology to the consumer affairs function. Here's how to get started.

Every day, more than 5 billion text messages are sent in the United States. Both SMS (short message service) and MMS (multi-media message service) messages are used to swap information, answer questions or grab someone's attention. As text messaging becomes increasingly popular, so does the overall use of smartphones: eMarketer estimates that by 2018, more than one-third of consumers worldwide (more than 2.56 billion people) will use smartphones. Further, research shows that many people prefer texting over a phone conversation due to the ease and speed of response.

Many consumers want to interact with brands in a similar way. If consumers love to text in day-to-day life, why wouldn't major consumer product brands consider bringing texting into the consumer service arena? Understanding consumers' communication preferences can position companies to better serve



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their customers and provide options to enhance their experience. A recent Harris Poll indicated that 64% of consumers with texting capabilities would prefer using texting to voice as a customer service channel. And 77% of Millennials with texting capabilities are likely to have a positive perception of a company that offers text capability for support.

This past fall, we researched the top 25 consumer product companies globally to determine which provide texting as a customer service channel. The results were surprising. Only one of the top 25 was offering texting as an option—revealing a significant opportunity. The great news is that there is new cloud-based technology on the market that enables consumer product brands and over-the-counter companies to use a single 800-number for voice, texting and multimedia images and video—and telecom carriers are supporting the technology.

While brands have previously used texting solutions for other purposes, they haven't typically used the solution for handling consumer affairs questions or concerns and proactive point-of-sale promotion. With consumers eager to engage, especially through texting, it's time for companies to take this opportunity to bring this technology to the consumer affairs function to enhance the consumer's experience and enhance brand revenue opportunities.

The Options Are Endless

There are various scenarios in which consumer product companies can use texting to connect with

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and support their consumers to further enhance their customer experience with the brand. Here are a few potential scenarios a company may consider when deciding whether or not to leverage texting as a communications channel:

Point-of-sale consumer affairs support: A company can place messaging on a product in a store, on a website or other key areas to encourage consumers to ask questions via text messaging. In some instances, a company doesn't have to change the 800-number on existing packaging.

Offers at point-of-sale: Brands can increase sales by providing text offers such as coupons, recipes and loyalty programs to consumers while they shop. Interacting with a prospective customer during a purchase decision can deliver high-value results, including new customer acquisition and increased customer loyalty.

Enhanced consumer complaint resolution: Consumers can text a picture of a product issue for immediate resolution, and the company can gain immediate insights into product quality issues. This scenario enhances complaint support by allowing consumers to text (MMS) pictures of a damaged product and receive feedback instantly. By allowing the

consumer to engage in the moment, a company will benefit with increased customer loyalty and satisfaction with increased efficiency in the contact center through a lower cost channel.

Proactive outbound messages: Outbound texting scenarios should also be considered, but thoughtfully. A product recall notification, reminder of a sub-

scription renewal deadline, or reward notification from a frequent buyer program could significantly increase customer loyalty and drive up renewal rates, again all while communicating with the consumer in their channel of choice.

In the recent survey “The High Demand for Customer Service via Text Message,” HeyWire Business found that over half of respondents (52%) said they would be likely to text with a customer support agent, and that same group “would prefer texting customer support more than their current preferred method of communication.” This reinforces the fact that consumers are welcoming texting solutions in their customer service experience.

Regardless of the scenario, texting can help get answers or issues addressed quickly, allowing companies to be more accessible to consumers. Further, the exchange improves the consumer’s overall experience with and impression of the brand.

Working Smarter

Beyond improving the consumer’s experience with the brand and leaving a positive lasting impression, another major benefit to implementing a texting solution for consumer affairs is a decrease in call center costs. The solution would not serve to take away from the important role of contact centers, but to add to the variety of contact options for a customer.

As text messaging continues to emerge as the leading channel of communication for consumers, this advanced technology allows agents to handle multiple text message conversations all in one screen. They can view the history of each conversation for context, thereby streamlining the process and increasing agent capacity while reducing contact center costs.

Additionally, keyword-based, auto-reply messages can be set up to handle basic questions such as product location, allowing customers to receive a relevant response, even during unstaffed hours.

If consumers love to text in day-to-day life, why wouldn’t brands consider bringing texting into the customer service arena?



Don’t Ignore the Numbers

It’s important to come up with new and innovative ways to engage with consumers and keep them invested in a brand. Today, consumers expect and, in some cases such as product recalls, require immediate answers to issues. For these reasons, companies should seriously consider implementing texting as a customer service solution.

Remember the end goal for companies and consumers: making the consumer service process more efficient, personal and as seamless as possible. Implementing a texting solution can be a game changer for a brand and allow a company to make long-lasting positive impressions with consumers that last a lifetime. Now is the time to make a decision—engage with consum-

ers via their preferred method, or be left behind as technology moves forward. **CRM**



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