

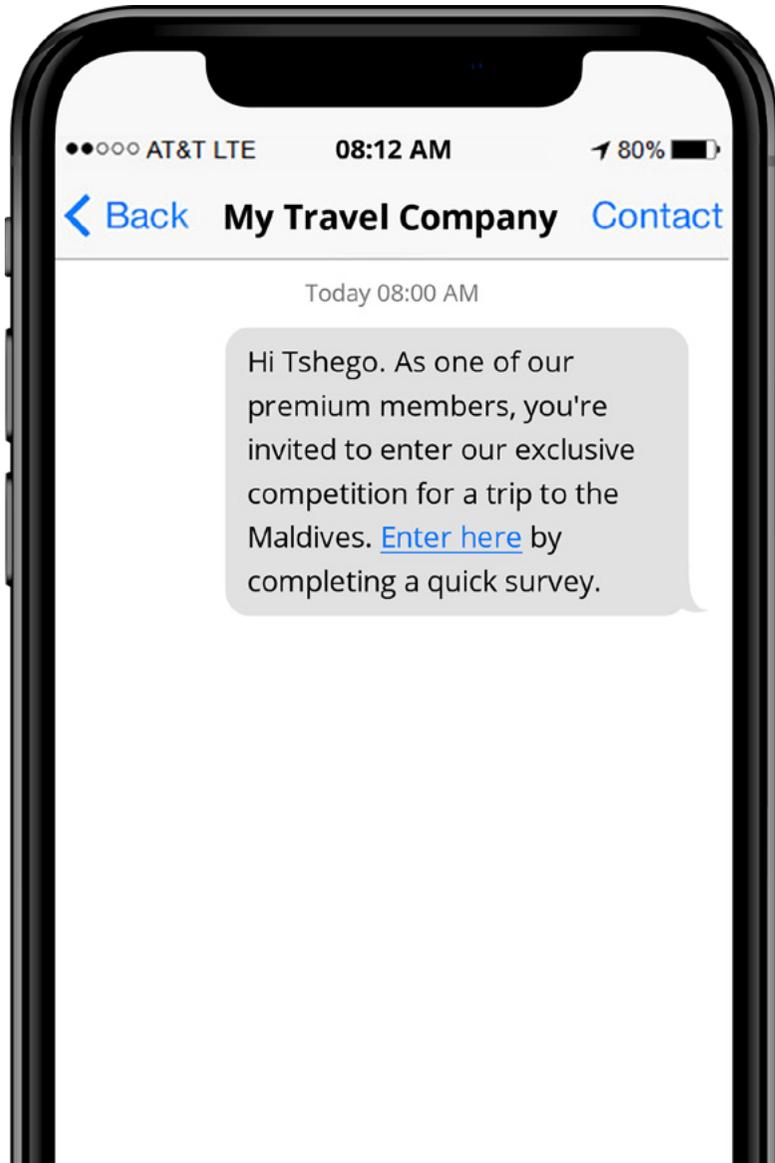


Guide to Effective SMS Marketing



What You'll Find Inside

Introduction.....	3
What is SMS Marketing and Why Do You Need It?.....	4
SMS Marketing Trends.....	6
SMS Best Practices.....	8
SMS Volume & Frequency.....	10
SMS Timing.....	11
The Freedom to Opt Out.....	13
Language & Tone.....	14
Character Length.....	15
Valuable SMS Content.....	16
Effective Calls to Action.....	19
How to Avoid Opt-Outs.....	20
How to Use SMS In Your Business.....	21
Industries Leading the Way.....	23
SMS Reporting.....	24
SMS Marketing Checklist.....	25
Conclusion.....	26



Introduction

SMS technology has been around since the dawn of mobile phones. And even though newer messaging technologies have been developed since, it remains one of the most effective marketing channels available.

In this Guide to Effective SMS Marketing, we'll teach you:

-  Why you need SMS marketing
-  What the latest trends are
-  What the SMS best practices are
-  How to build your database
-  How many messages you should send
-  When you should send SMSes
-  How to write impactful SMSes
-  How to use SMS in your business
-  And how to analyse your campaign results

So, take your time. Go through it carefully. Because what we're about to share with you may change your approach to SMS completely.

Enjoy!

Visit us at www.everlytic.co.za or [click here](#) to request a demo.



What is SMS Marketing and Why Do You Need It?

SMS stands for Short Message Service; a text-messaging technology that's offered by mobile phones and network providers. SMS Marketing is a form of direct marketing that uses this service to engage with subscribers on their cell phones.

According to [WeAreSocial](#), the percentage of mobile connections compared to the population in South Africa is 170% - a 10%+ increase from 2018 and one of the highest penetrations of its kind in the world. So, even though SMS has been around for decades, it still plays a big part in marketing.

For three major reasons:

1 People spend a lot of time on their phones.

The [2017 South Africa Mobile report by Effective Measure](#) stated that 42% of respondents spent 30 minutes to two hours a day on their phones, and 18% were on their phones for more than five hours every day.

2 SMS is still preferred.

Effective Measure's report also revealed that SMS is used by 51% of the South African mobile population – second only to WhatsApp.

3 SMSes are delivered instantly and have a high open rate.

According to [MobileSquared](#), over 90% of SMSes are read within three minutes. You also don't require data to receive an SMS, so your message is always delivered.

In other words:

SMS is a largely under-recognised marketing channel that, if used correctly, can yield significant results – especially in South Africa.

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What is SMS Marketing and Why Do You Need It? (cont.)

Good reasons to adopt SMS in your marketing strategy, include:



Cost Effectiveness

SMS is one of the most effective forms of marketing. Everlytic's packages, for instance, range from 14c to 26c per SMS depending on your sending volumes. When combined strategically with the rest of your marketing campaigns, it can turbocharge conversion rates.



Geographical Reach

With extensive worldwide infrastructure and global mobile penetration increasing year-on-year, SMS is probably the only truly global communication technology – especially since not everyone has a smartphone or internet access.



Multi-Channel Integration

Because of its low cost, SMS can easily complement your larger marketing strategy, which, in turn, boosts conversion on what you're already doing.



High SMS Ad Recall

According to the [2017 South Africa Mobile report](#) by Effective Measure, SMS ads are the highest remembered compared to ads on other channels.



Customer Engagement

Personalised messages connect with your subscribers in a way that generic communications can't, boosting customer satisfaction and improving engagement.



Opt-Out Functionality

Your contacts should always be able to opt out of your SMS communications. This isn't just best practice – it's the law. And it gives your customers the freedom to choose the kind of content they prefer to receive.

SMS ads are the highest remembered compared to ads on other channels.

SMS Marketing Trends

Technology is constantly evolving, disrupting industries, and changing the way we all work. And SMS is no exception. These are some of the latest trends in the SMS space.

SMS Chatbots

Chatbots are relatively affordable pieces of software that can receive information from customers and respond with relevant answers. They're used by companies to communicate with clients on things like receiving feedback, giving support, and responding to frequently asked questions. And now you can implement them over SMS too.

Because chatbots have access to massive amounts of data, processing power, and storage space, most of these programmes outperform their human counterparts in recall and accuracy. And with the humour and sarcasm integrated into chatbots like Apple's Siri, these interactions can feel surprisingly human too.

SMS to Email

SMS has amazing reach and fast open rates, but it can be hard to get your message across in 160 characters. That's where SMS to Email comes in. With this feature, you can SMS a link to your contacts that, when clicked, takes them to the online version of an email.

This helps you to:

- Reach more subscribers
- Engage with mobile-only subscribers
- Create an eye-catching complement to your SMS messages

SMS to email combines the beauty and functionality of email with the reach of SMS. In our increasingly mobile market, this is a game-changer. In fact, Tsogo Sun reaches 61.3% more subscribers because of it. [Read their case study here.](#)

Visit us at www.everlytic.co.za or [click here](#) to request a demo.

For Mobile First

When you implement strategies like SMS-to-email, or even just send a link in an SMS, it's important to remember that customers will experience the entire journey on their mobile devices. So, it's critical that the URL you're directing them to is responsive to mobile screens and functionality.

If optimising your website for mobile is a massive task, try creating mobile-friendly landing pages for specific campaigns instead. With strong calls to action and key takeaways, these can be just as effective and a lot less time consuming to implement.

Proximity Marketing

Proximity (or close-range) marketing via SMS triggers a message to your contact when they come into a certain range of a specific location. With our phone locations continuously tracked by things like GPS and cell phone towers, it's a clever way for brands to connect and engage with the subscribers who are geographically closest to key locations.

“Tsogo Sun reaches 61% more subscribers with SMS to Email.”

- Everlytic [Tsogo Sun Case Study](#)

SMS Marketing Trends (cont.)

SMS Personalisation

Many smart SMS platforms allow you to personalise your messages to each individual user as they go out, pulling info (like the subscriber's first name, ID number, account number, loyalty point balance, etc.) from the relevant fields in your database.

Personalised Attachments

Effective personalisation can go even further with personalised attachments. If you need to send invoices or monthly statements, for instance, you can do so with the peace of mind that the right statement will go to the right person. When partnered with intelligent tracking, you can even draw reports to see who clicked on the link to download the attachment.

List Segmentation

Consumers are saturated with information and, as a result, have become desensitised to content that doesn't speak to their interests.

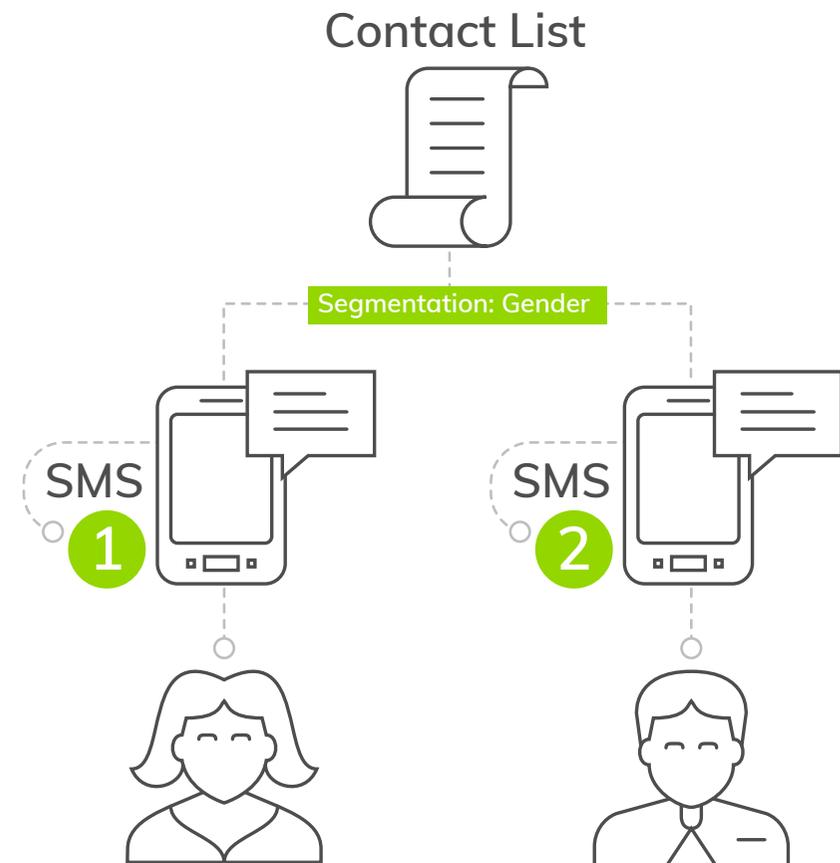
List segmentation helps get the right content to the right people by splitting your target audience into groups of similar needs and interests. This allows you to optimise your message to smaller, more defined audiences, improving engagement and building trust... results that ultimately affect your ROI.

A strategic and well-planned integrated campaign is lean, clear, consistent across the board, and seamlessly integrated to provide maximum communication impact.

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Integrated Marketing

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) leverages the best performing elements of multiple marketing channels (like PR, social media, content marketing, advertising, print media, mobile marketing, telesales, and events) and integrates them into one continuous and consistent client experience.



SMS Best Practices

Like all marketing, SMS campaigns require upfront planning, strategic thinking, and a keen understanding of local best practices. Get started on your SMS marketing campaign by:

1 Knowing your Audience

You know all about your business and what it offers. But do you know your target market? This is the key first step where many businesses stumble. Why is it so important? Because these are the people you need to understand more than anything if you hope to convert them into clients. So, make sure you spend a lot of time researching and analysing them.

For instance, consider:

- **Who they are** in terms of age, gender, income level, education level, cultural background, behaviours, habits, interests, location, and any other characteristics or features of their lives that you can pinpoint
- **What problems they face** that you can solve
- **What style of language they use** when they communicate
- **What level of knowledge they have** about your company, offering, or industry
- **What platforms and devices they use**, so you know where to reach them with supporting content

Understanding this level of detail helps you to speak to their particular pain points in language that they can connect with.

2 Setting Goals & Objectives

Before you do anything with your SMS campaign, you must understand why you're doing it. If you know what you want to achieve and how you want to achieve it, you'll be better able to measure your progress along the way.

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Set SMART goals

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time bound

SMS Best Practices (cont.)

3 Gaining Consent

In today's age of data privacy and the local and international laws that protect it (like POPI and the GDPR), it's vital that you ask for consent before sending SMSes to a client. This is because the risks of non-compliance are far more damaging to your business than you may realise.

Opt-ins can be done via an online form or by asking people to SMS a keyword to a specific number. In either case, it must be clear that you are collecting their mobile numbers for marketing purposes and that in doing so, they give you permission to market to them.

To ensure a smooth and compliant opt-in process, make sure your opt-in request is:

Specific

Collect every piece of information for a specific purpose.

Informative

Share details about what you're using their information for.

Explicit

Consent must come as a clear, specific, and affirmative act (like filling in a form).

Distinct

Consent must be distinct from other actions (i.e.: not hidden in a contract).

In Opt-In Format

Steer clear of any pre-ticked boxes or any kind of default consent.

Written in Plain Language

Use the kind of everyday language you use to talk to people on the street.

Flexible

Allow users to adapt their preferences on SMS frequency and content type.

Transparent

Give contacts access to the data you've collected on them if they ask for it.

The illustration shows a smartphone screen with a form. At the top is a pencil icon in a circle. Below it are three input fields labeled 'Name', 'Surname', and 'Email'. Underneath the 'Email' field is a checkbox followed by the text 'Subscribe to our newsletter'. At the bottom of the form is a large green button labeled 'Submit'.

Follow these guidelines and you'll be set to grow and keep your database POPI compliant.

Keep your database current by regularly encouraging readers to update their details in your system. Provide links in your SMSes that they can refer to if they need to and send standalone data-accuracy campaigns intermittently.

For more information on how international data-privacy laws affect your business, read our blog post on [Keeping Your Database POPI Compliant](#) or download our [whitepaper on POPI and the European GDPR legislation](#).

SMS Volume & Frequency

If you use SMS marketing responsibly, research by [Velocify](#) suggests that client engagement increases with the number of messages you send. For example, their stats showed that the conversion rate of the third SMS sent after contact was initiated was **328% higher** than the average SMS conversion rate. The trick is to ensure that your content is valuable, relevant, and respectful.

In terms of how often you should send SMSes, this will vary according to your audience and your type of business. Some companies send once or twice a week; others send once a month. Test it out to find the frequency that works best for your company and your audience. Then stick to it.

Get a routine going by sending SMSes at planned times and with consistent frequency. This will get customers comfortable with when to expect your messages.



SMS Timing

When is the best time to send SMSes to your clients? This is what research shows:



After You've Connected

Velocify found that, when used after a relationship has already been formed, text messages can improve conversion by up to 112.6%. Conversely, texting a prospect before contact has been initiated organically decreases the likelihood of ever contacting that lead by 39%.

This suggests that the success of integrating SMS into your sales and marketing strategy is an earned one that shouldn't be taken lightly.

Thanks for signing up to Everlytic communications, Tshepo. We'll keep you informed about marketing trends and stats as we release them. Chat soon! Everlytic.

Texting a prospect before contact has been initiated organically decreases the likelihood of ever contacting that lead by 39%.

At Specific Times

When it comes to the best times to send general marketing SMS messages, the research varies. Some say business hours are best, others say mornings and evenings on weekdays, and there are even some that say that Saturday mornings are optimal.

At the end of the day, the best time to send SMSes depends on your audience and the nature of your business. Start by eliminating the less preferred times, where possible (like rush hour and after 8pm), and experiment with the others to find times that work best for all stakeholders.

"Marketing SMSes sent on Mondays have the lowest response rate."

- www.mobilemarketer.com

SMS Timing (cont.)

When It's Relevant

When you send your SMSes depends on your business, the interaction your clients have with it, and your other supporting communications, like email and social media. These are the time guidelines for some common SMS communications:



Weekly Deals

If your company has a deal that runs on a certain day of the week, your SMSes should only go out on that day to remind clients of the special.



Transactional SMS

These should go out immediately, no matter what time of day it is – your clients are expecting (and possibly even waiting) for them.



Appointment Reminders

Send two of these SMSes out. One 24 hours before the appointment, and another one hour beforehand.



Weekend Sales

Send notifications about weekend sales on the Thursday beforehand, and again on the Saturday morning.



Holiday Sales

These are sales that everyone looks forward to, so you can start earlier and send a few more. We recommend three:

1. One, two weeks before the sale
2. Another one, three days before, and
3. The final one, on the starting date of the sale.

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The Freedom to Opt Out

Just because your contact has opted in to your database doesn't mean that they have to stay there – they must be able to opt out of your messages at any time. To allow this, your opt-out process should be:

- Clear,
- Easy,
- Free of any penalisation or cost, and
- In the same channel as the communication (SMS opt-outs must be over SMS).

This last point can get tricky, because opting out also can't cost the contact anything to process. Luckily, there are SMS short codes you can create that enable subscribers to send opt-out messages completely free of charge.

Platforms like our SMS Builder can automatically insert the 'STOP' short code into your SMSes for you. Our system then monitors all replies to these SMSes and immediately unsubscribes any STOP requesters from future SMS communications.

Opt-outs must be in the same channel that the message has been sent in. So, you can't share a link to a web-based unsubscribe page over SMS. The opt-out functionality must be SMS-based, and it must be free of charge for the user.



Language & Tone

People do business with people – not machines or sales agents. Keep your language style genuine and authentic. Not only will people engage with it better, but plain language will avoid any confusion about your message.

Character Length

Keep your characters down by:

Using Powerful Nouns and Verbs

Adjectives and adverbs take up space; often unnecessarily. So, use better nouns and verbs instead. For example, instead of saying 'run quickly', say 'race'. Don't say 'speak quietly', say 'whisper'. Being smart about your words will keep your messages shorter and more compelling.

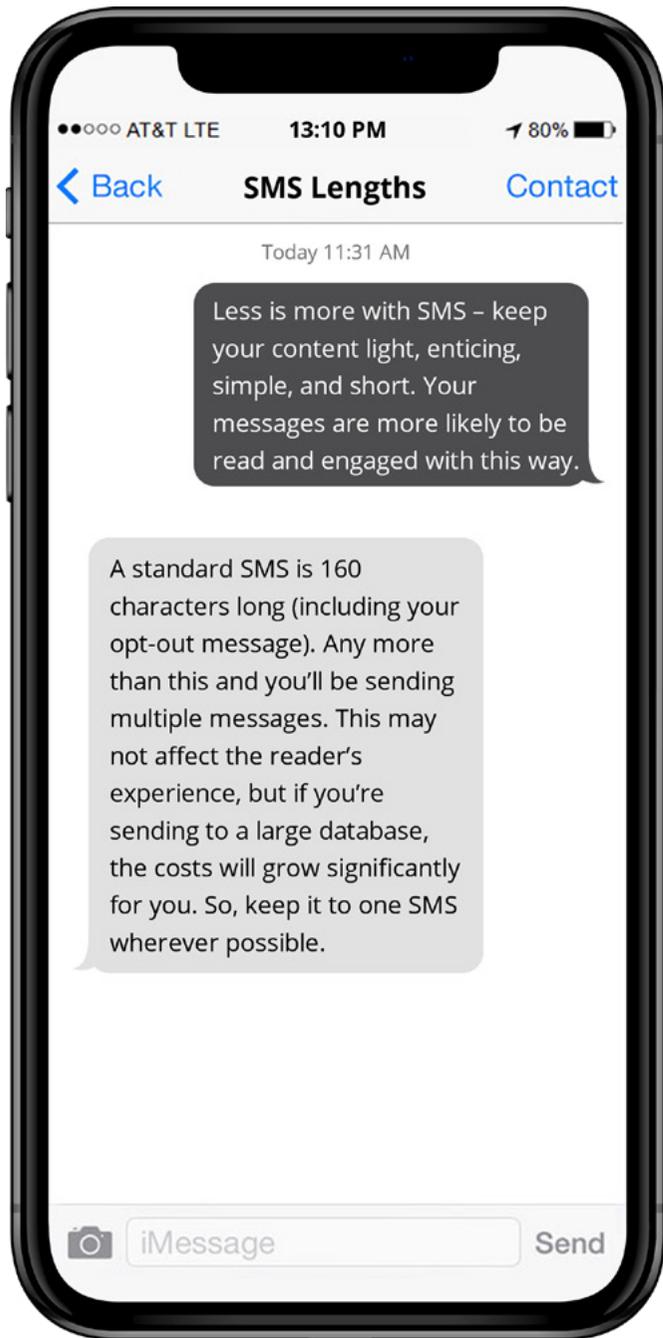
Cutting Out Redundant Wording

There are many words we use that are a waste of space. For instance, saying someone shouted loudly is redundant, because shouting is loud by definition. The same goes for common phrases we use, like 'in order to' – just use 'to'. There are many of these in our everyday lives that you can cut down on immediately.

[Click here for some examples.](#)

Using Everyday Contractions

Contractions are two words shortened into one using apostrophes that mark the space of the missing letters. They form the everyday words we use when we speak, like I'm (I am), you're (you are), we've (we have), and he's (he is). Using them in your SMSes doesn't just decrease your characters, but because they sound so natural, they're easier to read and are more engaging too.



Valuable SMS Content

Now that you know all the theory, let's get into the practical: **how to write an SMS so that it's read and acted on.**

In general, we've found that most SMSes consist of four major things:

1 A Hook

This can be a friendly greeting or a striking statement.

2 The Message

Say what you need to say as simply and clearly as possible.

3 A Time Boundary

Specify a time or deadline by which your reader should act.

4 The CTA

A call to action tells the reader what to do next.

These are the standard ingredients for a marketing SMS; with a little creativity, some of them may even overlap. The hook and the time limit, for instance, can be combined by starting an SMS with a sentence like: Time's running out on your exclusive deal.

How ever you go about it, do your best to address them all when structuring your messages.

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Happy birthday, Thando! We're giving you 50% off EVERYTHING for today only. Grab it now: www.home.co.za

SMS is very personal and can be intrusive, so make sure you add value in every SMS.

Valuable SMS Content (cont.)

People want information that entertains, educates, or moves them. So, once you've got the basic structure of a great SMS down, pay attention to these important SMS-writing tips too:



Have a Warm Opening

Don't just say hi. Say something like 'Happy Friday', or 'Welcome back'. Let the reader know how pleased you are that they're reading your SMS.



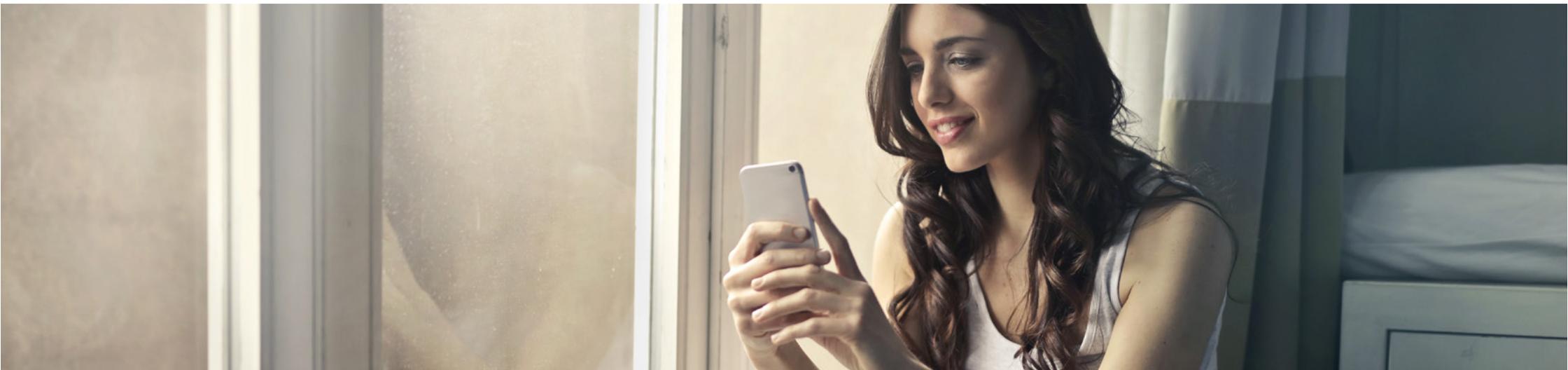
Identify Yourself

People get a lot of SMSes – don't assume the contact knows yours is coming from you. So, write your SMSes in the kind of language that reflects your company voice and remember to include your company name.



Get Personal

Personalise your SMS messages by greeting your contacts by name and including content that's interesting to them. This makes them feel special and increases engagement.



Valuable SMS Content (cont.)



Create Urgency

This is especially helpful in retail, because limiting a sale to a certain number of items, or to a specific time, urges clients to buy now. Do this by including terms like

“last day of sale”,
“today only”,
“time is running out”, etc.



Avoid Shorthand

It's okay to **wryt lyk dis** if you're sending messages to your friends, but in business, unless SMS shorthand is used strategically for a specific marketing or communication purpose, it's a definite no. Not only does SMS shorthand look unprofessional, it also takes longer to read. If you have more to say, break the message up into a series.



Use Emojis

Emoji's are very successful in direct marketing. This is because our brains process images (facial expressions in particular) faster than text. They can also help you to keep your messages under 160 characters –

just don't go overboard.



Effective Calls to Action

Marketing messages are only valuable if your audience knows what to do with them. A short and clear call to action (CTA) cuts through any potential distractions and focuses the reader's attention on what's important: **taking action**.

But the most powerful calls to action don't just tell you to 'read more' or 'click here'. They've got to entice your reader; tell them more about what they're getting for it. But with the character limitations of SMS, how do you drive action and still keep it short?

Be Very Clear

People are often on the go when reading SMS messages and may not pick up on subtle or complicated language. Keep it simple, straightforward, and concise to make sure they get the point quickly and understand clearly how to act on it.

Use Short Verbs

Buy. Act. Get. Text. Call. Shop. Reply. Rent. These are all short doing words that tell the reader immediately what it is they should do, while keeping the SMS character count down.

Stick to One CTA

Sending people multiple CTAs dilutes the impact of your message and confuses people – decreasing your click rate. If you have more than one message, send two SMSes with enough buffer time between them to avoid annoying the reader. If you have different messages for different audiences, segment your database and target each of them separately.

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A properly segmented database means that you can send messages that are specific to the reader's interests.

How to Avoid Opt-Outs

You're bound to get some people opting out of your communications. How do you keep this to a minimum? This is what we recommend:

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

SMS is personal and can easily feel invasive if you send irrelevant messages or if you send at inconvenient times. Make sure you really understand your target market, so your readers consistently find value in your messaging. Work hard to give them their space by sending at optimal times and managing their expectations in terms of content and message frequency.

Offer Control

Understanding your target market will get you through the door, but keeping subscribers can mean you need to give them some control over the messages you send them. A good way of doing this is by creating a preference centre where they can start, pause, and control the frequency and content of the messages you send them. This will support their needs and increase their engagement with the messages they receive.

Check the Link

If you send a link in an SMS, make sure you double check that it works and that the web page that it directs to is mobile responsive. In Everlytic, we'll even shorten the link for you to limit character use. Send a test SMS to yourself and others you trust to troubleshoot any problems before it goes out.

Welcome Back

If your contact decides to opt out of your communications, include a link or SMS code in your opt-out confirmation message, for them to re-subscribe if they decide to at a later stage. This lets them know that they're always welcome to come back and gives them an easy reference point for how to do it.

How to Use SMS In Your Business

SMS marketing is versatile. For example, you can use it if you're having a sale or if you've just launched a new product or service. Personalise it with the contact's name and their preferences and you're significantly more likely to make a sale.

But SMS isn't limited to marketing. It's an all-round engagement tool that keeps your clients, staff, users, or even students happy, informed, and coming back for more – especially since you can include links to websites and landing pages in the message. This means you can use SMS for many different purposes, including:

SMS Updates

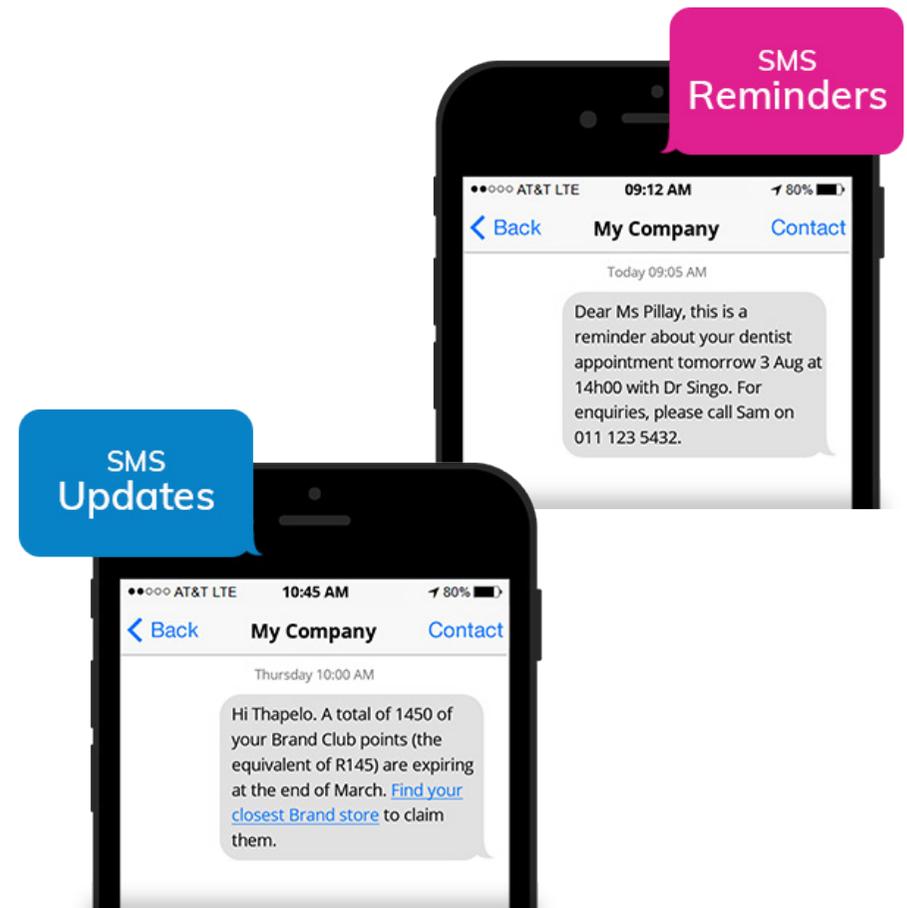
Companies that process customer products and services in the background can use SMS to keep clients informed. eCommerce sites, for instance, can use SMS to update clients on purchases, order processing, and delivery. Companies with loyalty programmes can SMS members when their points are about to expire, driving the urgency to buy.

Internal Comms

SMS isn't just for targeting clients. It can be a useful communication tool for employers too. Shift workers, for example, can benefit from shift reminders sent directly to their phones. You can even link to an online calendar where workers can track and plan their shifts themselves.

SMS Reminders

Many events are planned or booked long in advance, including appointments, parties, corporate events, and even student exams. Remind the attendees of these events in advance to ensure they remember, arrive, and RSVP timeously.



How to Use SMS In Your Business (cont.)

Surveys over SMS

Collecting customer feedback can be tedious. Try taking them on an SMS journey instead. You can use this after they've completed a call with customer care, after they've bought a product from your store, or even after they've booked a service on your site or mobile app.

Sending Coupons

SMS is ideal for sending shopping coupons to clients. The high read rate and the urgency of an expiring discount voucher helps to drive sales and client engagement.

Issuing Tickets

How many times have you forgotten to print out a ticket before an event? Or, how about when you printed the ticket, but forgot it on the dining room table when you left? SMSing a unique ticket code to a subscriber makes users' lives simpler; a benefit that could increase their chances of using your service again.

Building Relationships

Any contact with your subscribers is an opportunity to build a relationship. Use SMS to send messages on special dates and at important life events to show them that you care.

Taking Payments

Cash flow is an issue in many businesses. Back up your debt-collection processes by sending an SMS to your clients with a link to your online payment portal.

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Recruiting

The recruiting process is often impersonal, because it's hard to keep hundreds of applicants informed about their application. This isn't the case with SMS. With integrated CRM and SMS marketing systems, recruiters can keep applicants informed at the click of a button, improving the application experience, and increasing returning applications by top talent.



SMSing a unique ticket code to a subscriber makes users' lives simpler; a benefit that could increase their chances of using your service again.

Industries Leading the Way

Anyone can leverage the benefits of SMS in their marketing strategy. But there are some industries that are leading the way. These include:

-  Communications
-  Retail
-  Financial Services
-  Transportation
-  Healthcare
-  Hospitality
-  Technology
-  Education

Financial institutions, for instance, send real-time SMSes to alert you about transactions and updates on your account. Retail uses SMS for sales alerts, customer loyalty updates, delivery notifications, etc. Hospitality organisations, like Tsogo Sun, use SMS to reach more of their customers, bolstering their existing email campaigns. And educational institutions use SMS for things like exam reminders, results updates, and lead-nurturing campaigns.

If you work in these industries and haven't yet included SMS in your campaigns, you're missing a massive opportunity. Get on board now.

Visit us at www.everlytic.co.za or [click here](#) to request a demo.



SMS Reporting

It's difficult to know how well your SMS campaign is performing if you don't have the right data. By tracking the right metrics against your campaign goals, you can continuously grow, adapt, test, and optimise your campaigns based on how your audience responds to them.

These are **several metrics** that you should be aware of when running an SMS campaign.

Number of Sends

Tracking the number of contacts you send messages to sets the stage for all your other metrics.

The Click Rate

By using tracking links (UTMs) and integrating with tools like Google Analytics, you can track how many contacts navigated to one of your web pages from a link in your SMS. This gives you an idea of the level of engagement that the SMS received, how many people are interested in your product or service, and which campaigns work best for your audience.

SMS Replies

A reply to your SMS can mean any number of things. Make sure you track and read each of the SMS replies you get so you can better understand how your audience is interacting with your messages.

Conversion Rate

When it comes to SMS, the conversion rate indicates the percentage of contacts who perform an action like replying, calling, or signing up for a demo. If you're able to track how many of those engagements result in an actual purchase, you'll get a strong idea of the return on investment of the SMS campaign.

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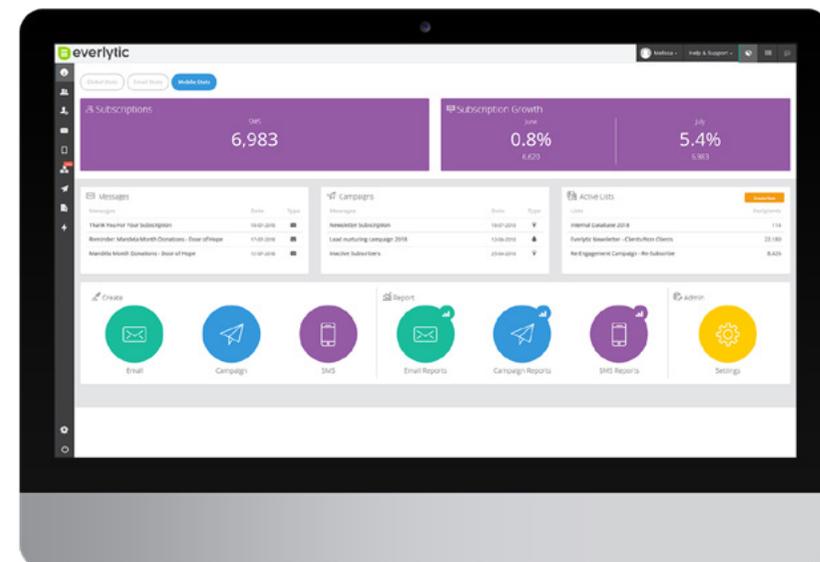
Cost Per Conversion

SMS is still one of the most cost-effective marketing channels – especially considering the high conversion rate. But each campaign is unique, so it's important to calculate what the real ROI is for SMS in your business.

Opt-Out Rate

You'll always have some people opting out of your messages, no matter how good your campaign is. But sometimes the number of opt-outs is unusually high. Keep track of the number of opt-outs you get on each campaign, so you can pick up on any red flags and adjust your strategy immediately.

There will always be people who opt-out of your database, so consistently growing your database is important if you hope to increase your returns.



SMS Marketing Checklist

There's a lot to absorb in this guide. So, we've compiled this SMS Marketing Checklist to help you navigate through the process.

Best Practices:

Know your audience in terms of:

Who they are

Their problems

Their language

Their knowledge

Their platforms / devices

Set SMART objectives and goals

Gain consent by ensuring opt-in request is:

Specific

Informative

Explicit

Distinct

In opt-in format

Written in plain language

Flexible

Transparent

Segment your database

Test your message

Frequency & Timing:

Only send if your SMS is valuable, relevant, and respectful.

Only send once your reader has initiated contact.

Avoid inconvenient times, like Mondays, rush hour, and after 8pm, if possible.

Optimise your sending time to your reader and business.

Ensure Your Opt-Out Process Is:

Clear

Easy

Free of penalisation or cost

In SMS format

Language & Tone:

Keep your language style genuine and authentic.

Keep your content light, enticing, simple, and short.

Character Length:

Stick to 160 characters (or use SMS to email for extra content)

Use powerful nouns and verbs

Cut out redundant words

Use contractions (e.g.: I'm, you're)

Does your SMS contain:

A hook

A time boundary

A strong call to action (CTA)

SMS Writing Tips:

Have a warm opening

Identify yourself

Personalise your SMS

Create a sense of urgency

Avoid SMS shorthand

Use emojis

CTA Tips:

Make it clear

Use short verbs

Stick to one per SMS

Avoid Opt-Outs By:

Respecting your reader's time and space

Offering control of SMS content and frequency

Double checking the links in your SMSes

Providing a welcome-back link when a subscriber opts out

What to Track:

Number of sends

Click rate

Replies

Conversion

Opt-outs

Conclusion

SMS marketing is highly underestimated. Use the tips and guidelines we've given you in this guide to make the most of your campaigns going forward.

Partner with Everlytic, and you'll not only receive continuous insights like this on our blog and in our reports, but our intelligent software will help you send, monitor, and analyse all the metrics you need to keep your SMS and email campaigns compliant and impactful.

