11 Powerful Text Message Marketing Platforms by Lexoremman

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Smartphones, and what I call my "dumb" phone, are an underused method for communicating with customers. Text messaging is like soccer: bigger everywhere in the world, but the USA. That is changing however, and because of that, mobile marketing is entering a new phase of acceptance and adoption.

No doubt you've heard that 2012 will be the year mobile takes off. Umm, it was also the year of mobile in 2009, 2010, 2011... Never mind all the prognostication. Just make sure that you open this door if your customer wants to keep up with you via mobile. The following 11 text messaging solutions may help you earn a new sale or keep an existing customer happy.

1. GroupMe. GroupMe is a completely free mobile app. If you have a small set of people you want to send a group text message to, this may be the ideal tool. You don't even need a smartphone or mobile phone of your own to make this work.

2. Signal. Signal is a significant player in the mobile marketing space because that's not all they offer. Their platform allows you to manage all your customer communications in one dashboard. E-mail, Facebook, interactive promotions (think surveys, geo-location stuff) are all in one place. Plans start at $30/mo.

3. Fanminder. I've mentioned these guys a few times. They combine the power of Facebook with Mobile. You can send social and mobile messages to your fans. The 0-100 Fan package is completely free.

4. TellMyCell. TellMyCell lets you upload existing contacts/customers via .CSV (spreadsheet) file and then create groups. You can schedule messages to go at specific times. It offers pay-as-you-go pricing, then bulk plans start at $29/mo.

5. TxtImpact. I like the simple way TxtImpact has designed their site. When you click on Text Message Marketing, you get a simple chart that shows the different ways small business owners can use it: Text-2-Join (build your list), SMS voting/polling (ask your customers for their opinions), and so forth. Free trial, then plans start at $25/mo.

6. Trumpia. Trumpia makes it clear what you get in each plan. I like that they have a way to tie a QR code (that bar-code like technology that is growing in popularity) to your mobile marketing. Their appointment reminder option looks like a great one for many small businesses. Basic plans as low as $15/mo with annual prepayment.

7. EZ Texting. EZ Texting doesn't charge for incoming messages, so if your customer responds, you're not paying for that additional message - many plans offer this, too, by the way. You can send a message from your phone or from the Web app. I like that you can send a voicemail broadcast, too. Starter plans begin at $29/mo.

8. Mobivity. Mobivity looks to be more of a full service shop with a team to help you develop a custom app and mobile marketing process at your company. Their basic plan starts at $79/mo and offers a limited free trial.

9. Clickatell. Clickatell offers a robust and detailed mobile marketing solution. You can get a dedicated two-way number that allows you to engage with your mobile customer. They have a clear

message pricing calculator if you want to add specific options. Plans start at $9.95/mo.

General note: Some mobile marketing services offer you only a shortcode, which is not two-way - meaning you can't start a conversation with your mobile customer - but often you don't need that if you're sending a coupon or one-way offers.

10. Txt180. Txt180 has a simple, yet elegant service. It is flexible to the point that they even have an alternate opt-in message you can send to your customer. All mobile services, like many e-mail services, are required to send a message allowing the customer to opt-in or out (permission-based). Txt180 makes this easy and seamless. Plans start at $9.95/mo.

11. CallFire. CallFire is more than just text messaging. They are a full-service VOIP (voice over internet protocol) provider and have interactive voice responders, voice broadcasting and a cloud call center in addition to SMS marketing services. Pricing starts at $.03 (meaning 3 cents) per message, pay-as-you-go. I like that they break down their offering by industry, too, so you can see how others like you are using it.

To close, mobile marketing via text message (SMS) is not about spamming your customer base. It is only going to work on a permission based philosophy. You don't need to listen to the hype around mobile marketing being the next big thing; that doesn't really matter. The question is only can you share something via text message that serves your customers. If the answer is yes, then jump on the mobile marketing train.

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