

Its all about asking the right questions

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Understanding the mobile marketing landscape, and how to use it to your benefit is critical for today's marketer. But to do it right, you need to ask the right questions.

From my experience as a mobile marketing consultant, these are some of the frequently asked questions people have:

When running an SMS competition...

) **Do I have to use a keyword?**

) Generally, yes...

) Networks have a shortage of short codes and are encouraging us to use Shared rather than Dedicated short codes

) The networks and WASPs try to discourage dedicated short codes by specifying certain payout policies, pricing and regulations

) You can either share a short code by "renting" it for a short period of time or use a keyword that is specific to your campaign.

) You can also use keywords to assist in the measurement of the efficacy of your advertising

) So, unless you are expecting huge volumes or the campaign mechanics will not allow you to define a keyword, use a shared short code with a keyword

) **Can I choose my short code number?**

) Very difficult as the short codes are generally allocated to the WASP rather than to the brand

) Short code is generally linked to cost of the SMS

) **How much revenue do I get?**

) Generally about or under 50% of the cost to the user

) The rest goes to the networks and WASPs

) **Can I change the cost to the user and keep the same number?**

) No, the cost to the user of the short code is pre-set and is extremely difficult to change and only if it is a dedicated number

) **What do I have to say on my ad?**

) Refer to the WASPA Advertising Rules available for each medium e.g. TV, Radio, Print, Email, Website, Outdoor etc

) <http://www.waspa.org.za/code/advert-rules.shtml>

What about SMS messaging: when do I use it and how?

) When?

) SMS is an effective medium to start a conversation with your prospective and existing customers

) However it has to be matched to the right target market

) **How do I create an SMS message that entices and gets response?**

) Make it personal by greeting them by name

) Make it clear to the recipient who the message is from, if possible at the beginning of the message

) Provide something of value to answer the recipients question: "What's in it for me?"

) Prompt them to reply, if you would like their opinion or response, or would like to start or continue a conversation.

) Provide a reply path that is monitored, and listen to their response, and react to it

As a marketer, you may or may not be sending the SMS messages out yourself and may choose to use a service provider or an online bulk messaging service. There are many out there, and most of the time, cost per message is the only consideration marketers make in terms of selecting which to go with. But there are a number of questions that may also be relevant when you choose an SMS service provider:

) **Can you personalise the message?** i.e. include the customer's name in the salutation, or account number or even amount outstanding on their account

) **Is there a reply path and how easily can I access the replies?** As mentioned, it is extremely important to listen to your SMS recipients and what they have to say in reply to your message. So how easily this information is accessible and actioned is very important.

) **Are the replies monitored for unsubscribe or opt-out requests?** In some countries, it is mandated that you provide a way for customers to easily unsubscribe via the reply path. It is therefore important that replies are monitored to identify and then honour the unsubscribe requests received.

) **Do you provide a delivery report on the SMSes you send out on my behalf?**

Just like you may manage your emailing lists, this functionality allows you to see which numbers "bounced" i.e. could not be reached. It is important to manage and maintain your cellphone lists so they do not age. An idea is to use another channel of communication like email or a make a phone call to them to find out about the status of their cell phone number, and if their communication preferences have changed.

) **Can you send SMSes that are longer than 160 characters (extended SMSes) should I require it?**

The latest phones can handle SMSes that are longer than the standard 160 characters. If the phone doesn't though, SMS messages arrive in a number of parts, and they are automatically broken up, even mid-word, to fit into the maximum 160 characters and may arrive in no particular order. This makes the task of reading your message very difficult for the SMS recipient. So you need to consider the use of "extended" SMSes very carefully depending on who your target market is and what phones they are likely to have.

) **Can you define the window period of the campaign distribution so that my messages do not go out after hours in error?**

There is nothing more detrimental to your brand than a customer or prospective customer receiving your SMS in the middle of the night. Some service provider have implementing a "safety net" that allows you to set a window period for when your SMSes will not go out. If by chance your you send or an automated system gets a request to send SMSes out during that window period, the SMS is suppressed or left pending to be sent out the next morning. For example, some banks ask you if you would like to receive account transaction notifications after-hours or to hold them for the next working day.

When sending **MMS messages**, you will most likely be using a service provider. Although, there are fewer service providers who offer this service, these questions may assist you in sorting the wheat from the chaff:

) **Can you pre-check the cell numbers with the networks/carriers to understand which numbers are MMS enabled?**

This is important because you will want to identify who on your distribution lists are enabled to receive MMSes, and not send an MMS to those who are not. Why is this important? Firstly, you do not want to be sending an MMS to your customer if they cannot open it or worse they receive it as 4 jumbled SMS messages which looks like junk from your brand. Secondly, you definitely do not want to be paying to send an MMS to someone who cannot receive it.

) **Do you provide a delivery report and what can you measure?** As with SMS, most networks provide feedback as to their ability to deliver your MMS. The ability and way which the service provider communicates this very important feedback is an important consideration in choosing the right MMS service provider.

) **Do you optimise the MMS dependent on the phone screen size?** As part of the pre-check with the networks, some

networks/carriers and service providers have the ability to understand which phones the customers on your mailing list have, and therefore optimise or format the MMS slides to fit to a big or small screen, portrait or landscape. Being able to do this will obviously improve the communication of your message.

) **How good are your creative services?** The skill and experience of their creative team will affect how good your MMS looks and impacts how well your message impacts the recipient. When choosing a service provider, ask them for examples of previous work they have done and you be the judge!

) **How well do you optimise the size of the MMS (audio and graphics)?**

The size of the MMS file that is to be sent is critical to its success. Although, most networks will restrict you by charging you a fee for large MMSes, which is discouraging, you need to understand that the larger the file, the longer it may take the recipient to download the MMS, especially in countries where bandwidth is an issue, and what's more your customer may lose interest in your long message if it is too long. So, a service provider who can optimise the audio and graphic parts of your MMS message will give you the ability to say more with less.

) **Do you provide and manage an opt-out service?** In most countries, the ability to manage the recipient's wanting to opt-out from receiving MMSes in future, is highly regulated. It is therefore important to ask the service provider whether or not they can assist you in this task by providing an automated unsubscribe service, much like is done with email lists. This could be by reply to the MMS or by offering a cheap short code to SMS to capture the request.

) **Can you provide a pop-up to a mobile website at the end of an MMS?**

Some service providers can allow certain compatible phones to pop-up a message after the MMS has played and ask whether or not the recipient wishes to connect to the mobile site link? Obviously, this is a great feature to improve response rate on your MMSes if your call to action is to get them to visit your mobile web page or site. And there's more... if you track that link, as you can do in an email, you can see exactly who and when of your customers clicked on the link! This makes for impressive reporting which will impress any boss or customer

) **Can you set the MMS so that it cannot be forwarded?** This may be important if you would like to send a message to a closed group where that MMS is only applicable to that person. Examples of these may be a notice of an overdue account or a mobile voucher or ticket to an event.

) **Can you personalise and customise the MMS?** As with an SMS, it may be nice or even important to include a name, account number or value, like an amount owing on an account. In these situations, having the ability to include this customer centric information is important to the success of your message.

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