

## **BULKSMS OPINION PIECE**

**BULKSMS.COM**

October 26, 2009

### **Increasing demand for SMS over voicemail**

Changes in consumer behaviour and technology are shaping cellphone use. One area that is increasingly gaining attention is how consumers are moving away from voicemail and towards SMS messaging.

This trend toward text over voice messages can also be seen in the services offered by network operators and Google Voice who provide subscribers with a voice-to-SMS or voice-to-email transcription service. While there have been some concerns raised about the privacy of information handled by some third party services who use automated or manual transcription methods to convert a voice message into text, the uptake of these services goes to show that there is market demand for text based rather than voicemail messages.

#### ***Text trumps voicemail***

There could be two reasons for the demand for text over voice messages. First, people are too busy to spend the time listening to voicemails. Anecdotal evidence indicates that people reply to a missed call rather than listen to a voicemail message left by the caller. Second, the youth have developed a predominantly text based communications culture reliant on social media and SMS messaging. The tendency is to text, tweet or use instant chat first instead of making a call. It is not unlikely that as the younger generation enters the workforce their communication habits will follow and begin to shape business interactions.

Recent research conducted by uReach Technologies, the voice messaging systems provider for Verizon Wireless and other mobile network providers, bears out these observations for the North American market. Their key finding was that voicemails are increasingly neglected by people; thirty per cent of voice messages remaining unheard after three days or longer, and more than twenty percent of the people surveyed do not even make the effort to dial in to check their voice messages.

On the other hand, in research conducted in 2008 by Opinion Research Corporation for Sprint, another USA-based network, SMS messages were acted on within an hour by 91 percent of people under the age of thirty. This age group was also found to be four times more likely to answer an SMS within minutes than respond to a voicemail. Those over thirty years of age were found to be twice as likely to reply within minutes to an SMS rather than a voicemail message.

#### ***Ease of use***

Much of the debate about the value of voicemail versus SMS for leaving messages is about ease of use. Which technology feature is more convenient depends on whether a person is leaving a message or receiving the message. In the case of the former, it is far easier to simply leave a voicemail message when making a call if the other person does not answer their phone. For the recipient, receiving a message as an SMS is far more convenient. They can scroll through and act on their text messages far more quickly than dialing in to listen to a string of voicemail messages.

Today's shift toward short text based communications as a compliment to voice is a factor in explaining a consumer preference for receiver-centric rather than caller-centric convenience in handling messages. This is part of the broader mobile culture where consumers are empowered to manage their communications to suit their on-the-go lifestyle and business needs – an option that was not available to people in the fixed-line only era. It seems that the technology which makes it easier for the receiver is going to be the messaging medium of choice going forward.

**BulkSMS.com - The Power to Message**

A division of Celerity Systems (Pty) Ltd.

Suite 202, 4th Floor, South Lobby, Boulevard Place, Heron Crescent, Century City, 7441 (Cape Town, South Africa)  
Tel: +27 (0) 21 552 6321 (Reception) Fax: +27 (0) 21 552 2848 Email: [info@bulksms.com](mailto:info@bulksms.com) Website: [www.bulksms.com](http://www.bulksms.com)

### ***Making for better business communications***

In the business context, listening to voicemail messages adds to an already busy schedule by increasing the amount of time required to act on one or more message. On the other hand, by sending a succinct SMS message, the recipient is able to read, digest and act on important information more quickly than if they listened to a message and transcribed key details. In a company where business communications are core to service delivery, SMS therefore becomes a key medium for increasing internal efficiencies in staff interaction with clients, other staff or suppliers.

For businesses, sending an SMS message over leaving a voicemail makes sense and has the following advantages as a key medium for effective business communications:

- *SMS is more convenient for the receiver* - it is a lot quicker to read several SMS's compared to listening to many voicemail messages.
- *SMS is easier to work with* - the relevant details are already presented in an SMS message, which makes it easy to act on the information.
- *SMS increases efficiencies* – an SMS is more likely to be read and acted on as soon as it is received.
- *SMS can be archived* – once acted on, an SMS can be stored and saved for later reference.

By looking at its workflow, a business can identify where moving to SMS based communications makes sense instead of relying on telephonic interactions. In so doing, they take advantage of the growing receiver-centric mobile consumer culture with a preference for text over voice messages.