

## **OPINION PIECE for ITWeb**

**BULKSMS.COM**

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### **It's not all doom and gloom**

The business outlook for 2009 seems bleak. One report which may get you reaching for a Prozac is Grant Thornton's [2009 International Business Report](#). It found that South African business sentiment was pessimistic. In 2008, 75% of local businesses surveyed were optimistic, this year those with a positive outlook slumped to 35%. There were particularly low expectations for turnover, profitability and employment in the year ahead.

Common wisdom says that during an economic slowdown businesses should cut unnecessary spending, free up their cash flow, focus on customer retention strategies, and – above all –not stop marketing for their product or services. Each of these business activities require business communications and SMS messaging offers some unique advantages when you are looking to increase staff productivity or streamline internal and external communications costs.

The SMS advantage is that these messages are short, relevant and targeted communications. Internet-based SMS messaging takes this further allowing you to manage large contact lists from your computer and send to contact groups from your work desk.

### ***Tips on using SMS messaging during lean times***

#### ***1. Work and spend smart***

Regular information updates to customers or clients would simply not be possible without SMS. Telephoning a list of contacts takes many more working hours, especially when you have to call back when a client is not available, than simply sending out an SMS. An SMS delivered to a cellphone is always read, allowing you to make contact and leave a message at the same time. SMS then frees up time for other important office tasks.

In cutting costs and re-evaluating your budget, assess where you can save on your telephony spend. Look at your business processes and see where a simple text message could replace a telephone conversation. Messaging is far cheaper than making telephone calls when all you need to do is convey important information to one or many persons. For example, instead of calling customers when their orders have arrived and are ready for collection simply send them an SMS.

#### ***2. Liquidity is the aim***

One way to unlock cash flow is to set up a process to call in debts, especially long overdue account payments. SMS messaging is ideal in initiating this process. It allows you to make contact with debtors by sending out account reminders in a cost effective manner and without burdening your administration team. Application-to-person messaging over the Internet from a computer enables you to easily manage contact groups or link to your existing debtors' database – be it in Pastel, SQL or any other dynamic datasource. Internet based SMS messaging costs from as little as 25 cents a message.

#### ***3. Incentivise and build relationship with existing customers***

By engaging customers or clients with whom you already have a business relationship will have several advantages. First, the principle that "twenty per cent of your customers generate eighty per cent of your business" is not to be sneezed at when strategising how to grow revenues. Next, by seeking ways to

provide additional value to your existing customer base you foster brand loyalty. One way to do so is to start a campaign where you send promotional messages via SMS with a unique digital voucher or one-time password (OTP). On purchasing goods or services from you, customers can then redeem a discount by displaying the text message to in-store staff or capturing the voucher's code during an online payment. A further point to consider when engaging with existing customers is that they are your best advocates if you are offering them real value and keeping your brand top of mind.

#### *4. Marketing must be targeted*

Sales led marketing requires a promotional message that demonstrates the uniqueness of your brand, especially when your target market is busy cutting back on their spending. This means that you should focus only on the profitable areas of your business and spend money marketing those products or services rather than diversifying into new and uncharted areas. This marketing spend should be invested in using internet and mobile technologies which offer you a lower per eyeball cost and higher reach to a targeted audience than traditional marketing channels. A mobile marketing campaign using an opt-in database enables you to send short promotional messages directly to a relevant consumer demographic. This direct marketing channel will also ensure that your brand remains visible in the market.

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#### **About BulkSMS.com**

BulkSMS.com is a leading wireless application service provider offering bulk SMS messaging solutions. We offer two-way bulk SMS messaging, premium rate solutions and supports mobile marketing campaigns. BulkSMS flagship messaging solution is the BulkSMS Text Messenger, a desktop application.

The company has a global market presence, including Australasia, Europe and the United Kingdom, the Middle East and Africa, and the United States of America. Our text messaging solutions are geared for small, medium and large enterprises as well as organisations in the social sector.

BulkSMS.com, a division of Celerity Systems (Pty) Ltd, has been in operation since 2000 and is headquartered in Cape Town, South Africa and has offices in the United Kingdom. BulkSMS is a member of the Wireless Application Service Provider Association (WASPA), 160 Characters, and the Mobile Marketing Association (MMA).

For more information on BulkSMS.com's mobile messaging services visit [www.bulksms.com](http://www.bulksms.com). For direct enquiries email [info@bulksms.com](mailto:info@bulksms.com) or contact BulkSMS telephonically on +27-21-552 6321.