

OPINION PIECE
BULKSMS.COM
May 26, 2008

SMS messaging increases customer satisfaction

The sending of SMS notifications to customers' cellphones is adding value to the management of customer relationships by allowing companies to communicate instantaneously with targeted customers.

The key principle of using SMS for customer relationship management (CRM) is that business processes are made transparent to the customer. Customers are made aware of the status of an order, booking or transaction. This reduces uncertainty and increases customer satisfaction with the service by cutting out unnecessary telephone calls to the company.

"A CRM solution should increase workplace productivity and keep customers updated on any extended business process. It is very inefficient for a business and a customer to continually make telephone calls about the status of an order," said Dr Pieter Streicher, managing director of BulkSMS.com, a global SMS messaging company headquartered in Cape Town.

SMS messaging creates business efficiencies by reducing the number of incoming calls from customers that a support team or contact centre is required to handle. By sending SMS messages a company saves time by providing information updates at each step in the process instead of managing client expectations over the phone. SMS's are also stored digitally, allowing a company to keep a record of all communications with a client. This increases staff productivity, reduces the cost of CRM within the company, and allows a company to log customer interactions.

"In furthering CRM, we suggest that companies begin adhering to a communications etiquette that promotes workplace productivity and customer satisfaction. SMS messaging satisfies both criteria," said Dr Streicher.

For instance, if it is more appropriate, send an SMS information update rather than leaving a voicemail on a cellphone. An SMS notification can be easily accessed and read by a customer as the cellphone acts as a digital notepad where one is able to store SMS messages. Voicemail, on the other hand, is inconvenient as the customer has to listen to all voice messages before accessing the information they want or they may battle to hear the message.

Examples of using SMS for CRM

- Airline and car rental agents send booking codes to customers to confirm a booking,
- Banking institutions send alerts verifying a transaction on a customers account,
- Call centres provide a ticket number and agent's number via SMS that allows a customer to speak to the correct person when they next call,
- Car maintenance companies send reminders to vehicle owners that their vehicle is due for its next service or that a vehicle is ready for collection,
- Insurance companies provide ticket numbers for claims and provide regular updates on the claims process,
- Retail outlets inform customers of when an order has arrived, and
- Web hosting companies notify customers of service downtime and the reinstating of services.

Another use of SMS messaging for CRM is to gauge customer satisfaction by asking customers to respond to a short SMS survey. A customer can respond at their convenience and not need to answer a telephone call and the company can easily store this customer feedback electronically.

“The fact that cellphones are becoming the communications device of choice is leading many businesses to use SMS messaging as a key part of their CRM strategy; adding value to their business processes and increasing customer satisfaction,” said Dr Streicher.

According to Dr Streicher the adoption of application-to-person SMS messaging for CRM purposes is on the increase. Companies are migrating or integrating their CRM processes with SMS notifications. This has led many firms to select a service provider that supports the sending of bulk SMS messages using an Internet enabled messaging application.

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About BulkSMS.com

BulkSMS, a division of Celerity Systems (Pty) Ltd, has been in operation since 2000 and is headquartered in Cape Town, South Africa. BulkSMS is a leading wireless application service provider offering bulk SMS messaging solutions to large and small businesses, public benefit organisations, and individuals. BulkSMS.com has a global market presence, including Europe, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. To further an organisation’s SMS communication needs, BulkSMS offers 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. BulkSMS.com is a member of the Wireless Application Service Provider Association (WASPA).

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