dotdigital

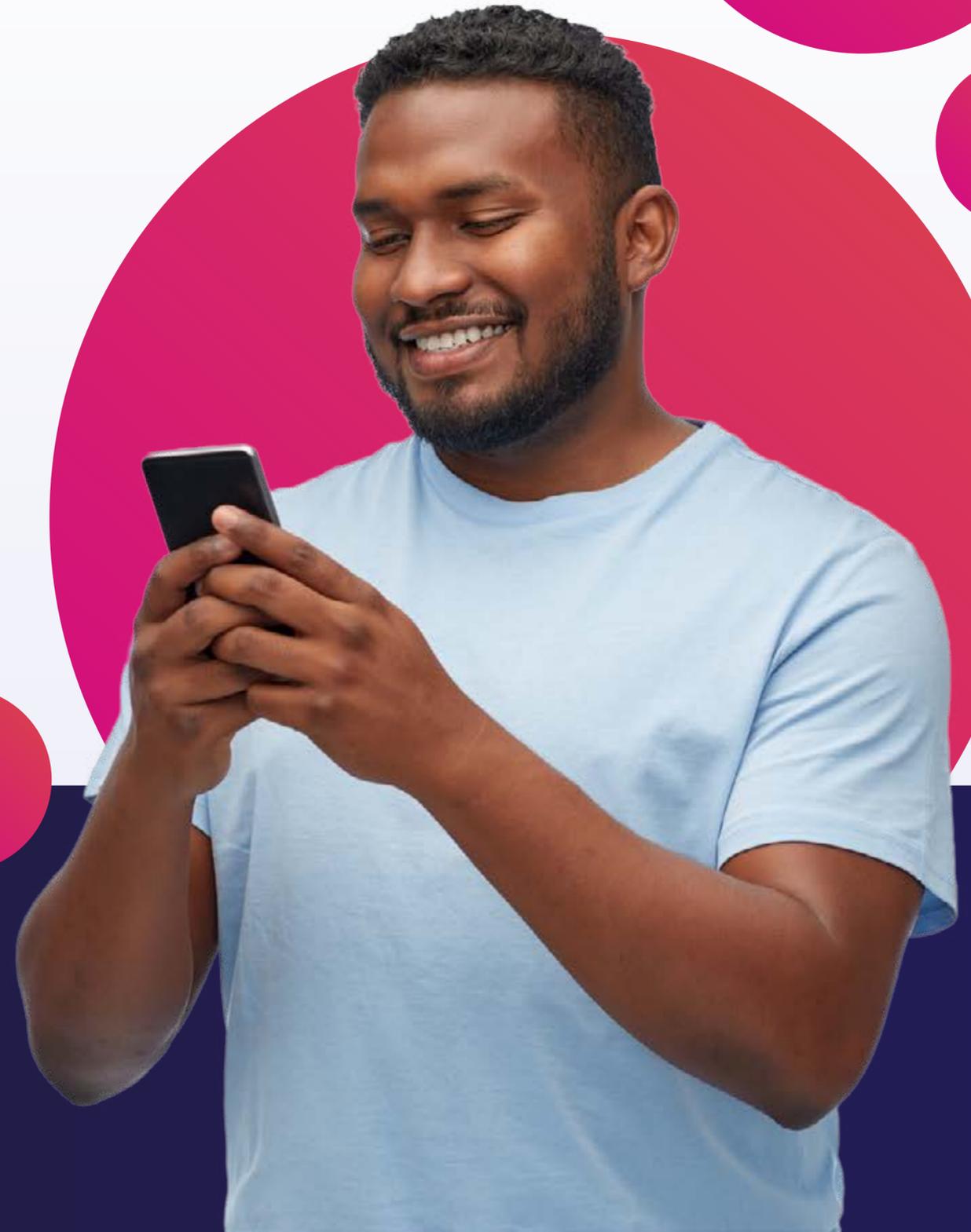## LOW LIFT, HIGH REWARD:
the SMS marketing cheatsheet

SMS: an introduction

SMS, standing for short messaging service, is a way for you to communicate with your customers in 160 characters or less, right to the palm of their hand.

Cross-channel marketing is crucial to engage your customers, and SMS is a channel on the up. SMS sends were up 56% YoY in 2022, and a huge 640% since 2019 with over half a billion SMS sends created using Dotdigital in 2022.

So if you're not using SMS in your cross-channel strategy, you're going to get left behind.

Advantages of SMS marketing

Strong engagement rate

Due to the strong delivery rate, sitting at around 98%, SMS is a strong option for both your marketing and transactional messages. Whereas email apps often allow users to personalize their alert settings, SMS messages often land on your customers home screen. This makes it much more likely to be seen than an email.

Advantages of SMS marketing

Instant communication

SMS messages take no time at all to create, thanks to the absence of design and the relatively low character count. This makes SMS a winning channel to get a message to your customers in rapid time.

With Dotdigital's one-click SMS campaign builder, you can create an SMS based on an email campaign in just one click. It's never been so easy to take a cross-channel approach.

Integrating SMS into your cross-channel strategy

When to use SMS

Any good cross-channel strategy utilizes different channels for different styles of message. SMS is great for time-sensitive marketing messages such as flash sale alerts or back-in-stock notifications. The high delivery rate of SMS also makes it a reliable option for transactional messages such as delivery updates and verification codes.

Integrating SMS into your cross-channel strategy

Reaching customers on their preferred platform

A winning customer experience is driven by preference and choice. By giving your customer a choice of channel, you're instantly increasing the odds of a positive customer experience. Ask customers for their SMS preferences in your preference center to ensure you're reaching customers on their preferred channel.

Dotdigital customers using Adobe Commerce, Shopware, Shopify, or WooCommerce can now capture SMS numbers as part of the check-out process. Shopify merchants are also able to offer an SMS-only checkout to their customers. This enables you to bake SMS into the customer experience from prospect to conversion.

Crafting effective SMS messages

Tips on writing concise and clear messages

With only 160 characters per SMS message, now's not the time to beat around the bush. SMS messages should be short, to the point, and clear. Keep language simple, whilst on-brand, and don't waste valuable space with unnecessary filler.

Be sure to include a clear CTA in your message too. Unless it's purely an information message, your CTA is crucial to drive engagement. Due to the simplicity of SMS messages this will just be an in-text link, so keep it clean and use link shortening to ensure you can track your campaign whilst saving valuable characters.

SMS checklist

- ✓ Keep your message clear, concise, and on-brand

- ✓ Include one clear and obvious CTA to drive clicks

- ✓ Use link shortening for tracking and reducing character count

- ✓ Ensure any personalization doesn't tip you over 160 characters

Crafting effective SMS messages

Using personalization in SMS content

Adding personalization to your SMS messages is a great way to communicate directly with your customers. In fact, due to the personal nature of SMS, most users expect a higher level of personalization.

SMS works like email in that you can simply utilize data fields in your campaign to bring in personalized elements such as first name, location, or order number.

Top tip

When using your data fields, it's essential to be aware of how personalization can increase the overall message length and cost of your SMS sends.

For example, if your campaign sits at 155 characters and uses a first name field, anyone with a name longer than five characters will cause your SMS to split into two. This will still appear as one message to your customer, but will count as two sends in your account.

Best practice for SMS marketing

Legal regulations and obtaining consent

Just like email, you need to get consent. Not only is it best practice, it's also the law. Sending unsolicited SMS messages is a sure-fire way to anger customers and prospects, and damage your brand reputation too.

Provide clear and easy-to-access opt-out options to your customers. Often this is a link within the SMS campaign itself, or recipients can reply with a 'stop word'. At Dotdigital we have a list of 'stop words' and will automatically suppress any number that uses one in a reply.

Best practice for SMS marketing

Best practices for frequency and timing of messages

As with most marketing, best practice for your brand will be different to others. Utilize your SMS data to figure out which times are best for your customers, and employ a testing strategy if you lack this data.

In terms of frequency of SMS, this again will differr per brand, but do remember that an SMS is a lot more intrusive than an email. SMS culture varies around the world - in the US customers are accustomed to receiving sales SMS, whilst in the UK it's a newer experience. Be sure not to overdo it, and only send SMS messages that truly benefit your customer.

SMS has great engagement rates, as an industry it's up to marketers not to overuse it and lose the impact the channel currently offers.

Top tip

SMS sends are more intrusive than an email, so be extra careful of send times. Check out the local laws around SMS sending, in the US and UK, for example, there are 'quiet hours' where brands aren't allowed to send marketing messages post-8pm or pre-9am.

Monitoring and analyzing SMS performance

Key performance metrics and ROI tracking

To know if your SMS campaigns are working, you need to keep on top of your reporting. Take a look at how much revenue was generated from a campaign as well as the engagement rates and any delivery reports. This will help you hone your ongoing SMS strategy by seeing what messages and send times work, and which don't.

With Dotdigital you can get more insight into campaign performance with our advanced revenue attribution for SMS. By tracking both direct and assisted campaign revenue, you can now easily identify how different touchpoints are performing throughout the customer journey. This allows you to see exactly where value is added even though it may not seem like it at first glance.

SMS in a nutshell

SMS is a simple, but effective marketing channel. It's a marketer's best friend; high engagement rates but low input required. Incorporating SMS into your cross-channel approach allows you to increase your touchpoints with your customers and create a customer experience tailored to their preferences.

As marketers, it's important we continue not to overuse SMS as a channel, in order to maintain those high engagement rates. This means sending at respectful times and delivering truly relevant, valuable content to subscribers.
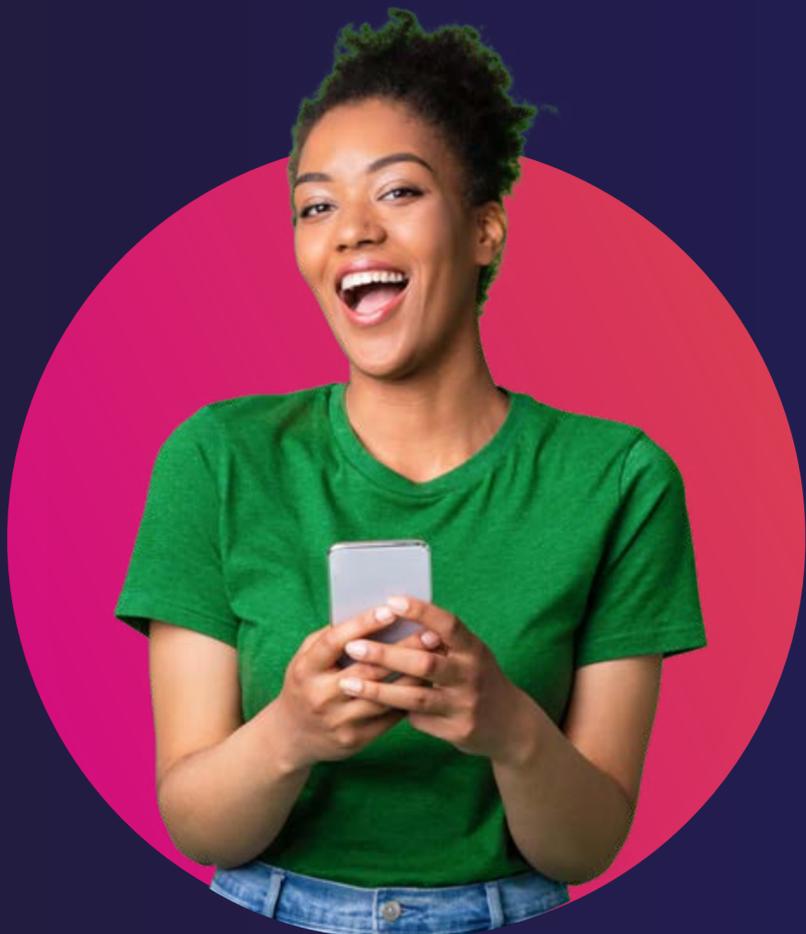
See how Dotdigital's unrivalled SMS features can boost your marketing

Watch a quick demo

Save time
Email to SMS in one click means cross-channel marketing has never been easier and your touchpoints just doubled.

Reliable ROI
Advanced revenue attribution for SMS shows you exactly which campaigns are driving revenue and engagement.

Stay compliant
With Dotdigital's automatic suppression for SMS, rest assured your opt-outs are taken care of instantly.

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