

**FUNDAMENTALS
AND EMERGING
TRENDS**



BUSINESS TEXTING



Preface

This E-book describes the basics of business texting, the core features, a sample implementation, and some of the new trends and techniques in business texting.

What is business texting?

Business texting is a system for business owners to send text messages to their customers. It is the most effective way to convert prospects, communicate with customers and deliver critical information such as documents and collect payments as well.

There are two types of business texting: Short code (5 digits or 6 digits number) or long code which is your 10 digits phone number.

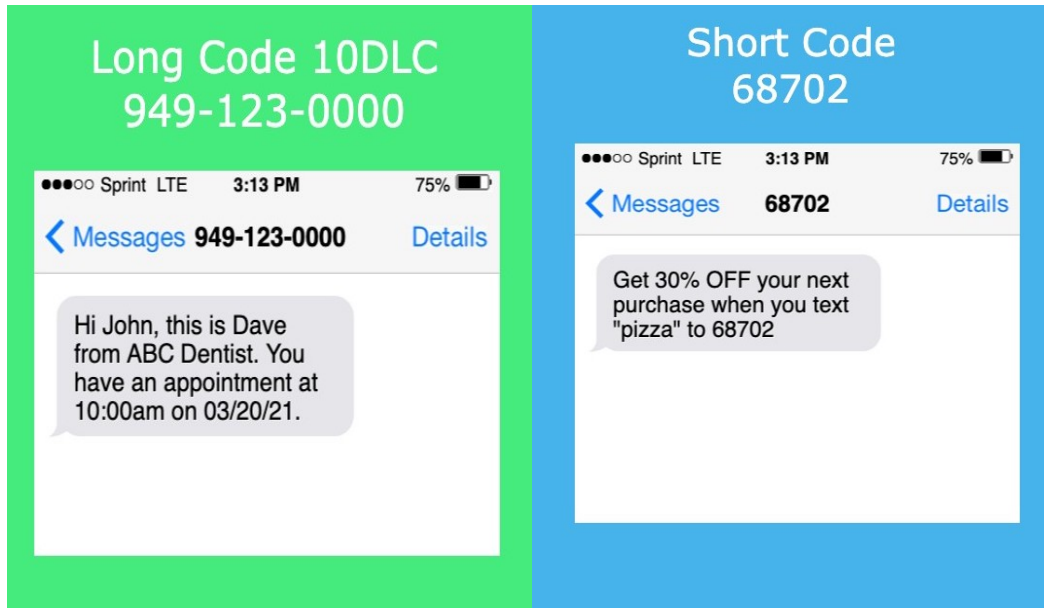
Short code can cost thousands of dollars per month. Businesses typically share short codes because of their cost.

The benefit of short code is that it's easy to remember and increases visibility. For example, your short code can be "88888" or "68702".

Using short code, the message is sent from business to customer. Customers are not able to respond to the messages back to businesses if the short code is shared with multiple businesses. They will have to differentiate their offerings with keywords. For example, two companies can share the same short code 88888, but one would need to use the keyword "PIZZA" and the other "BURGER" to differentiate the customer response.

Unless you are prepared to spend thousands of dollars to acquire a unique short code, it might not be the best choice for your business. The shared short code is going away in year the 2021.

Long code or regular 10-digit number texting uses an existing business landline or VOIP number for two-way conversational messaging. Most customers recognize your business phone number and therefore more likely to treat it with attention as opposed to SPAM text from a short code number. However, not all telco providers can support business texting with a landline.



Another alternative for business texting is toll free number texting. Toll free number texting is preferred because of its higher throughput that can support hundreds of messages per second. Regular long code (10-digit number, or 10DLC) text throughput is a few messages per second.

However, toll free number has its shortcoming as well. Some toll free numbers can only support SMS (Short Message Service or regular text message) and cannot support MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service or text messages with pictures). If Toll free number is your choice, please beware that the number supports both SMS and MMS.

Business texting platforms are typically offered as web-based Software as a service (SaaS). The benefit of these business texting platforms is that there's no special equipment to buy and there is no app to install. Any mobile or desktop web browser is all you need to get started.

Some platform providers have mobile apps, however web-based business texting platforms are more popular due to their interoperability.

Why should you consider business texting?

The way consumers communicate today is evolving. With the advent of mobile devices, consumers can talk, chat and text anywhere in the world on the go.

We are no longer bound by our desktop PCs or our landlines. People prefer texting to talking over the phone or sending emails. It's easy, convenient, and saves a lot of time and most importantly, texting allows for instant communication anywhere in the world. Two-way texting is becoming the preferred way of communication between individuals.

Because of this new trend, business to customer (B2C) communication is evolving as well. B2C communication is changing from phone calls to emails and now two-way texting. It is the most preferred method of communication between businesses to consumers. Texting reduces wait time, speeds up the decision-making process. Some of the most advanced business texting platforms have features like document signing and payment collection.

Speed of communication and accuracy of delivery is key in communication between business and consumers. Here is a benefits comparison between email, phone and SMS.

	Open Rate	Response Time	Spam Rate	Winner
Email	20%	90 Minutes	47%	
Phone	48%	28 Seconds	11%	
SMS	98%	90 Seconds	10%	✓

SMS has the highest open rate with one of the shortest response rates amongst other means of communication. SMS or text messaging has become the clear choice for businesses to communicate with their customers.

The other benefit of SMS or text messaging is that you can almost always reach your customers as the SMS feature is setup by default in all mobile phones. Text messaging reduces anxiety and doesn't interrupt the consumer's daily routine. Text messaging is also personable and approachable.

There is no doubt that text messaging is more effective in delivering critical messages than voice and email communication.

Some small business operators may already be using their personal mobile phones to send text messages to their customers. Using your personal number and personal device may not be the best way to communicate with your customers. But some small business owners may not know about business texting platforms nor do they know about the ability to send text from your business phone number.

Here are some of the reasons why you should not use your personal phone to communicate with your customers.

- **It is chaotic.** It is difficult to send text to hundreds of customers using one device. The personal messaging tool is not designed to track hundreds of conversations at once.
- **It is not secure.** If your business associates leave the company, their contacts and conversations leave with them.
- **Information is not shared.** The text based conversations are not visible to other team members. Text messages are not shared from one device to another.

This convolutes the tracking down of conversations between customers and various customer support representatives.

Business texting solves all of these potential issues. It uses the company's business phone number. The messages are sharable amongst all staff members, any member of the customer support staff can interact with the customer. And all of the conversations are saved and secured.

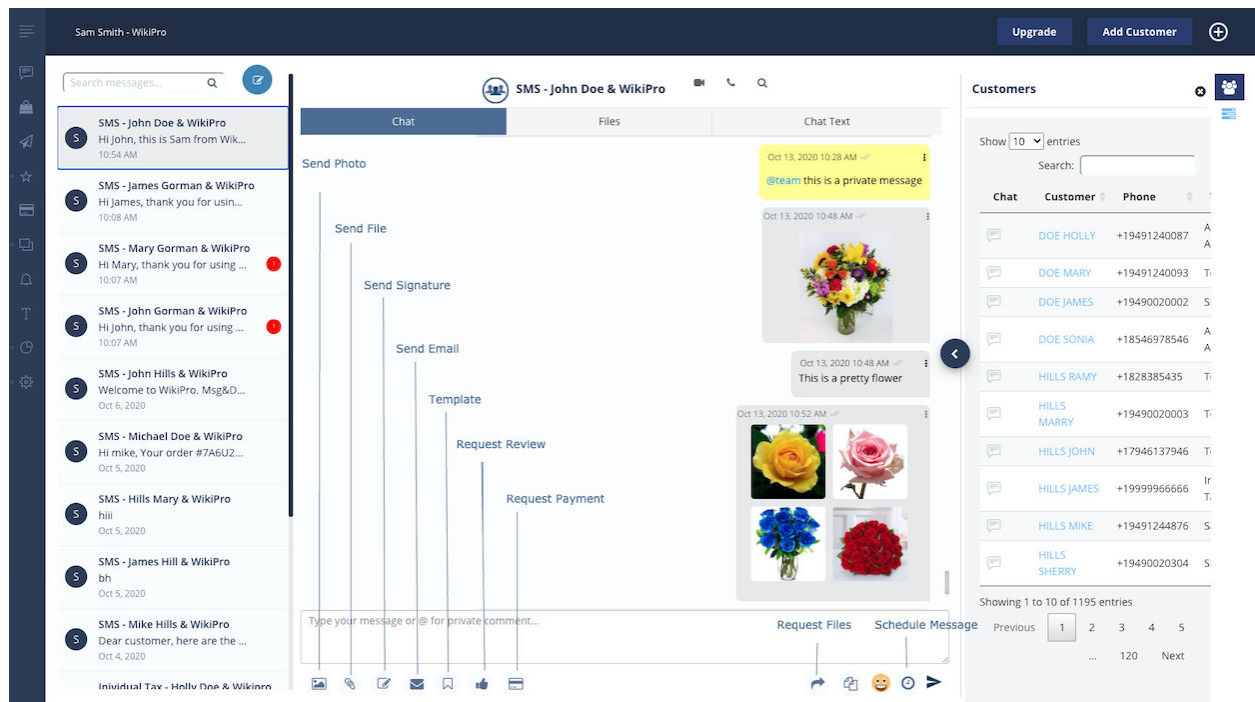
What are some of the key features of business texting?

1. A business texting system shall be able to send and receive text messages. SMS text messages are succinct and to point. A text message should be less than 160 characters in length. All phone carriers measure text messages in character batches called segments. Most messages can carry up to 160 characters per segment. SMS cost is measured according to segments. If your phone carrier advertises that there's a \$0.05 per text. It is saying that it will charge \$0.05 per 160 characters. If you are sending a text with 1600 characters, the cost is \$0.5.
2. MMS or multimedia messaging service can send and receive images (JPG, PNG), documents (PDF, Excel, Word). However, there are file size limits and it varies across carriers. If you are sending a large file, your message may not go through. An alternative solution is to upload the large file to a cloud storage and send the link to the file.
3. You can send text messages through your existing business phone number. This is the most important aspect of business texting. Your phone number is the identity of your business. Your customer can now call and text the same number. Most businesses don't realize that such technology exists today that can help them receive text messages on their existing phone numbers.
4. You can access a business texting platform anywhere with an internet connection. There's no special equipment or app to install.
5. All customer service representatives can chat with customers all at once. Group chat feature keeps everyone on the team informed of the conversation. If one person goes on leave, someone else on the team can take over the conversation. The customer won't know the difference. This can't be done if the conversation is carried out from an individual's phone number. It is to be noticed that not all business texting providers can differentiate employee. Some providers have a common login for everyone. The more advanced providers have one login per employee. This allows the business to track employee messaging activity.
6. Campaign feature can send text messages to a group of customers using bcc. BCC SMS stands for "blind carbon copy of text message". BCC hides the recipient

list which protects users' privacy and prevents phone numbers of your customers from being shared unintentionally.

7. In short code SMS, keyword is a commonly used. For example, text "PIZZA" to "12345" is a common usage of texting a keyword to a short code. When a customer text "PIZZA" to the short code, the SMS system can return a response with texts, pictures or links. Keyword can also be used on 10 digit business numbers, such as "DIRECTION" for directions of the office or "HOURS" for business hours.
8. Auto reply can automatically reply to canned response to a customer when they are texting your business line.

A sample implementation of business texting – WikiPro



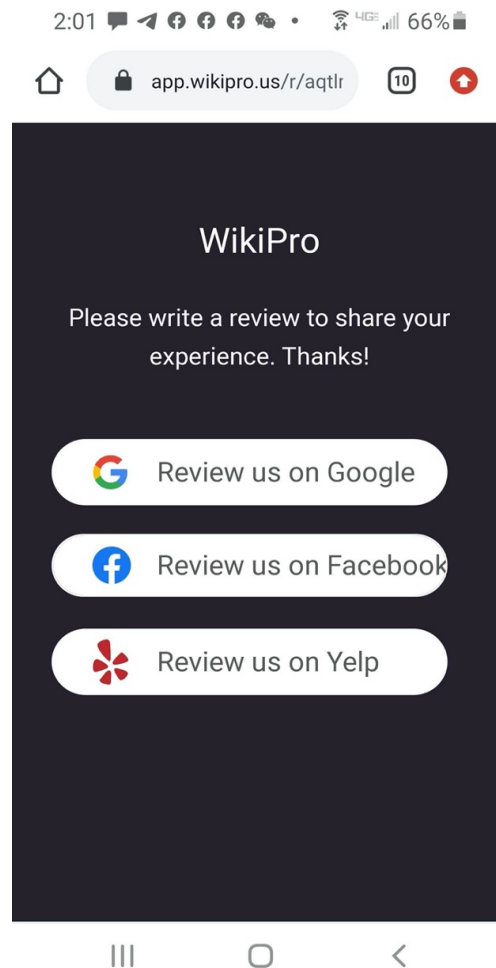
WikiPro Business Texting Platform

At WikiPro www.wikipro.us, the most powerful features of business texting are at your fingertips.

1. Send multiple pictures to customers as a text message.
2. Send multiple files such as word, excel, pdf documents to your customers. These files can be sent as a web link. Some carriers can filter out word, excel or pdf documents, with web links, we ensure maximum deliverability.
3. WikiPro's "Text to E-sign" allows any PDF file to be signed. With the speed and convenience of text messaging, business owners don't have to wait for customers

to check their email. Customers can sign with their fingers anywhere in the world, right on their mobile device.

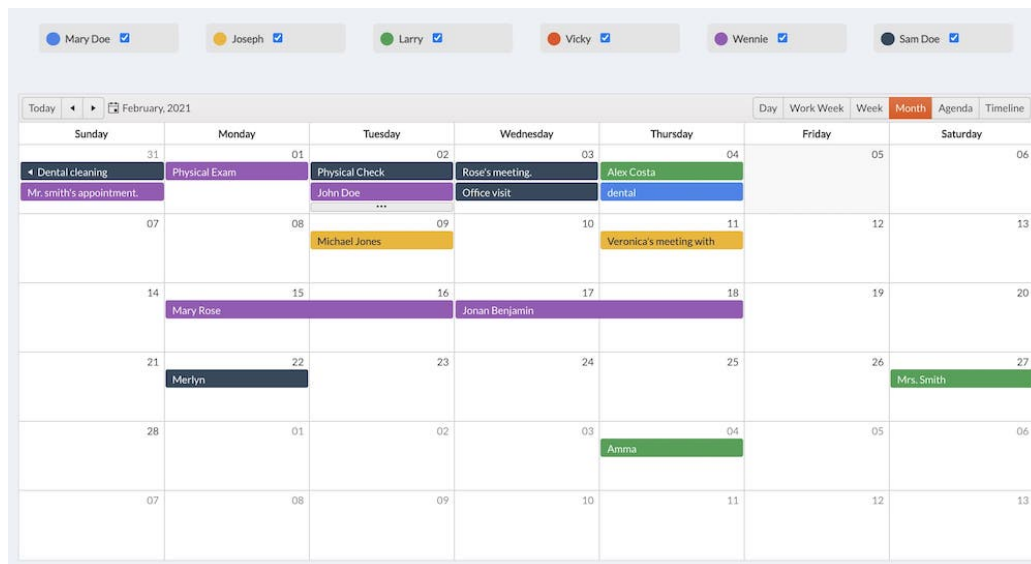
4. When all else fails, you can always email your customers from WikiPro's web platform.
5. Send templated replies for quick response. You can send a predefined welcome message, follow up messages within seconds. WikiPro's pre-built templates can be customized with custom fields such as the name of your company.
6. Send a text to request a review from your customer in real time. Customer can submit Google/Facebook/Yelp reviews right through a text message.



WikiPro's "Text to Review" Widget

7. Get paid instantly via an invoice text message. Consumers can input their credit card information and WikiPro will process that payment instantly into your account.
8. Business owners request customers for important files to be uploaded. Customers can send files from their mobile device using a link received within the text message from the business.
9. WikiPro enables businesses to send texts at a future date. You can schedule text messages to your clients with important messages.

10. WikiPro SMS appointment reminder helps your clients to keep track of important appointments and deadlines. WikiPro's multi-calendars function can be synced with Microsoft Outlook.



11. Full text search. All messages can be searched for. This is helpful for business owners to search for past message history.
12. CRM. Customers are managed by the CRM system. You can batch upload customers to the system with a CSV file.
13. Zapier Integration. WikiPro has a Zapier integration which enables WikiPro to work with thousands of Apps such as Salesforce, Outlook, Gmail etc.

Data and privacy regulation with text messaging

Text messaging is a regulated activity. Businesses interacting with consumers must adhere to all data and privacy laws and regulations. **Businesses need to have express customer consent to send them text messages.**

Here are some examples of regulatory requirements when sending text messages to consumers in the United States.

Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) <https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/tcpa-rules.pdf> is the regulatory framework in the United States and it is enforced by the FCC (Federal Communications Commission)

Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/E-1.6/index.html> is the correspondent compliance framework in Canada.

There are two types of SMS, transactional message and promotional message. Various regulatory bodies and laws treat these two types of messages differently.

Transactional messages contain the information that is necessary for your customers to use your product or services. A customer may receive a SMS confirmation for an online order. A dentist may send appointment reminders to their patients. Customers consent to transactional texts when they provide their phone numbers. In the context of business providing a service to the consumers, sending transactional messages is considered a complaint activity.

Promotional messages are marketing or advertisement of your business to customers and prospects. These promotional messages are intended to increase sales or promoting a product or service. A business may send a sales coupon to their customers or potential customers. A company may send newsletters to promote new product launches. These promotional messages require express written consent from the consumer to receive promotional texts.

Here are some do's and don'ts of text messaging:

1. Get express written consent from consumers
 - a. **Do** get express written consent to send text message. A written consent message can be: By participating, you consent to receive text message sent by [Company Name].
 - b. **Do not** send SMS to opted out customer for promotional messages. If a customer opts out and still continues to receive promotional messages, it would be considered a direct violation of consumer privacy laws.
2. Make it easy for consumers to opt in
 - a. **Do** have forms ready for customers to opt in. WikiPro has templated opt-in messages for all of our customers.
3. Make it simple for consumers to opt out
 - a. **Do** use keywords such as "STOP", "UNSUBSCRIBE" for consumers to opt out
 - b. **Do not** complicate the opt out process. It might be considered a violation of consumer protection laws.
4. Rapid response
 - a. **Do** respond within minutes of receiving a message. Auto-reply might a great way to let the consumer know that you are on top of it.
 - b. **Do not** let customers wait for a response. Your rapid response will receive a rapid response back from your client or prospect.
5. Personalize message
 - a. **Do** send personalized messages to customers and prospects
 - b. **Do not** send canned messages to your customers. It may appear impersonal.
6. Appropriate times to message

- a. **Do** send messages out during normal business hours
- b. **Do not** send texts early in the morning or late at night. Your customers don't want to be bothered and it may violate certain state and federal consumer protection regulations.

7. Message frequency

- a. **Do** send message, but no more than 3 times per week
- b. **Do not** send messages frequently. The messages may not be well received and considered SPAM.

Business Texting Trends in 2021

As more businesses benefit from business texting system, carriers such as AT&T, T-Mobile, Verizon are introducing new rules and regulations for business texting. Their goal is to build a healthy ecosystem to combat SPAM. SMS spam rate is lower because carriers are working together to block out unwanted messages being transmitted on their network.

One of the changes is to remove the short code SMS. Short code SMS is shared by many organizations and it has a high send rate. If a rogue organization sends a burst of spamming messages, this will affect the other organizations sharing the same short code. Since the code is shared, telecom companies can't identify the bad actors. Short code is on its way out.

There are more changes coming to long code text messaging. AT&T, T-Mobile and Verizon are increasing surcharge to business text messaging. The cost increase varies from \$0.003 to \$0.006 per message.

The future of business texting

According to Juniper Research, there will be 3.5 trillion business texts sent in the year 2023, up from 2.5 trillion in 2019. <https://www.juniperresearch.com/press/press-releases/a2p-business-messages-to-reach-3-5-tn-2023#:~:text=Technologies%20Gain%20Traction-,A2P%20Business%20Messages%20to%20Reach%203.5%20Trillion%20by%202023%2C%20As,2019%2C%20a%2040%25%20growth>.

Business with business texting enabled on their business phone line have seen a significant increase in leads and conversion rate. Some business owners did not realize the number of potential clients texting them for information and only after they turned on WikiPro's business line texting service this came into their knowledge.

AI powered chatbots can be programmed into business texting platform. Artificial Intelligence such as machine learning and natural language processing will play an important role to send customers instant replies and reduce cost with a personalized feel.

Conclusion:

Business texting has become a powerful marketing tool to help businesses to text, engage and convert customers. This tool brings businesses and customers closer together, which speeds up the customers service, increases customer satisfaction and greatly increases sales opportunities.

Additional references:

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