textanywhere
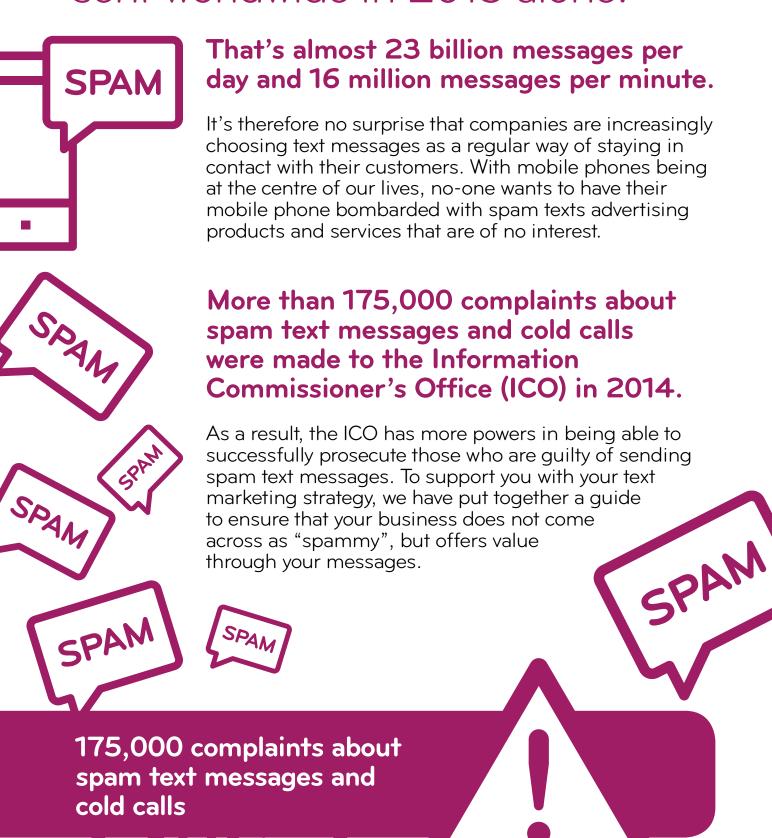
How to Stay Compliant with SMS Marketing

Ensure your text campaigns deliver value to customers and keep your business secure

GREAT TIPS INSIDE

Even legitimate marketers can fall foul of mobile spamming, without even knowing.

We've created this guide to keep you and your customers safe!

8.3 trillion text messages were sent worldwide in 2015 alone.

SPAM

That's almost 23 billion messages per day and 16 million messages per minute.

It's therefore no surprise that companies are increasingly choosing text messages as a regular way of staying in contact with their customers. With mobile phones being at the centre of our lives, no-one wants to have their mobile phone bombarded with spam texts advertising products and services that are of no interest.

More than 175,000 complaints about spam text messages and cold calls were made to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in 2014.

As a result, the ICO has more powers in being able to successfully prosecute those who are guilty of sending spam text messages. To support you with your text marketing strategy, we have put together a guide to ensure that your business does not come across as "spammy", but offers value through your messages.

SPAM SPAM SPAM SPAM SPAM SPAM SPAM SPAM

175,000 complaints about spam text messages and cold calls

What are spam text messages?

Spam text messages are unsolicited and unwanted adverts.

The majority of companies that send spam messages are lead generation firms. They mainly want people to reply to their messages so that they can sell on that number to another company. They are often looking for people who want to make PPI claims, personal injury claims or to consolidate their debts. Some may announce that you've won something, or you qualify for an offer, enticing you to collect your prize by going to a website or calling a number.

Why shouldn't organisations send spam messages?

Growing and building your opt in database can seem like a daunting task for businesses. It may seem like an easier option to purchase people's details from an unscrupulous third-party: however the consequences are fatal…

1. **It's illegal.** It is against the law to send people text messages without having received their consent first.

2. **Poor quality lead generation.** Because people have not agreed to receive your messages, your brand image could be damaged. Your business will be associated with spamming and the likelihood of any response will be low.

3. **Damaging the effectiveness of text marketing.** With the rise of spam text messages, people are becoming more hesitant to give their mobile numbers away freely.

There are many benefits in obtaining people's details legitimately and a number of simple strategies you can implement to generate them quickly.

PPI

FREE

NEW

WINNER

SPECIAL

SALE

What are the guidelines?

The ICO set the regulations for SMS marketing messages. If someone receives a spam message, it takes a matter of seconds for them to put in a complaint.

TOP TIP

They simply need to text '7726' (SPAM) with the suspected spam message.

The ICO can fine guilty companies up to **£500,000**. It's therefore important you know the guidelines! Here are the important points to remember:

Identity

Identity. You need to make sure the receiver can identify who you are straight away. Never hide your contact number or company name. Many companies tend to use a dedicated long number or a shortcode (5 digit number) which clients can save in their contact book. Others like to display their caller ID as a name such as "Bob's Motors" so the receiver is reassured the message is from a trusted company.

Opt in

Opt in legitimately. With any text campaigns you send, the recipient must have voluntarily opted in to receive your messages.

"STOP"

Ability to unsubscribe. It is imperative that you give your customers the option to opt out at any time and let them know how to do so. Most companies choose the word **"STOP"**, however you can tell them to text a chosen word to any number – this must be clear to the receiver.

How do I ensure my messages don't look like spam?

TOP FIVE TIPS

Even if you obtained your "opt in" database legally, this doesn't mean that you can't be accused of spamming. How your messages appear to recipients is crucial and here are five key things to consider when creating your campaigns.

1

Avoid "text speak". Messages that contain spelling errors and abbreviations are likely to appear in spam messages. A poorly worded text will make your customers feel your messages are unreliable and ignore them.

With TextAnywhere you can send a maximum of 918 characters. Text should be used to communicate clear and concise messages. If you want to send more information, then insert a URL link to a specified page where they can read more.

2

Avoid frequent messages. Unlike other popular marketing channels, SMS marketing is all about quality over quantity. There is no need to compete for attention as recipients have voluntarily opted in to your messages, therefore you needn't bombard people with constant messages.

Not only would this be classed spam but there would be little engagement. Sending a couple of messages a month gives a strong 23% conversion rate. If you are unsure how many times you should contact your customers, simply ask them before they sign up and provide them with the option to change the frequency.

3

Timing! It is important to consider the time you send your messages. No one wants to receive a reminder at 2am on the day of their appointment. As mobile phones are personal, be considerate and think when is appropriate to send your messages.

Getting the timing of your messages right will not only reduce the chances of them opting out but also increases conversion rates. Test and measure various timings to find out what works best for your subscribers. Success will entirely depend on your audience, your business and what type of message you're sending.

Provide a purpose/value. When creating your message you need to consider three key things; who, what and why. Is it clear who the message is from? Is it clear what is on offer?

Why are you sending the message? If you are sending a generic message with no value and hidden identity then receivers may think it's spam and delete it. It is vital that you have a clear call to action and your message provides something useful in order to keep them from unsubscribing. For example if you just launched a new redesign of your store, there is no point in simply texting them to tell them this. Add value by giving them a reason to visit e.g. is there an exclusive giveaway?

4

5

Allow recipients to opt out. Ensure that it is clearly stated how the recipient can opt out from any future messages.

For example:
"To opt out from future messages text back STOP".

How does TextAnywhere help clients stay compliant?

At TextAnywhere we take spam very seriously. First and foremost we never use or sell any of your details to third party marketing agencies in accordance with our Information Security Policy and our obligations under the Data Protection Act.

We consistently work very hard to ensure our systems are free from spam messages. When opening an account with us, every single client is vetted manually by our highly experienced customer service team, who are all trained in spotting potential spam accounts. Our robust platform has been built to ensure that spam messages are removed from our system with various alerts. We take pride in promoting ethical text messaging which is based on ICO regulations, through all our communication channels.

To support the promotion of ethical text message marketing we offer a free opt out service for all our clients who use our service.

Some quick tips on how to avoid coming across as a spammer

- Never hide your identity
- Make sure your consumers have opted in and allow them to opt out
- Sending spam can damage your brand's reputation, the mobile marketing industry and result in huge fines, so don't do it!
- The timing of your texts is important, so plan carefully
- Avoid the use of abbreviations and misspellings
- Quality over quantity – SMS marketing messages are most effective when they don't bombard recipients
- Communicate with your customers rather than try to constantly sell them your product/service
- Your texts should always provide value to the customer.

Need some help?

If you need some assistance with your mobile strategy, our friendly text messaging experts are just a phone call or email away.

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