



MAY THE TEXT BE WITH YOU

By Dan Youra

Digital dreamers of the world, mobilize! Throw off your chains.

Liberated from landlines, cable boxes and network news, wireless warriors march to new sounds of freedom ringing on handsets around the world. Digital texts light up the phones of a mobile generation with a new message, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all messages are created equal.

Texting is reported in the mass media as a “teen thing” and the bane of school administrators, who conspire to kick cell phones out of school. Legislators ban texting and driving. Society’s elders treat phone text as a threat to public order.

Entertainment media and daring politicians embrace text messaging into their marketing strategies. Texting is a money maker for FOX-TV’s American Idol, which can tally 10 million text votes, at one dollar each, for an easy \$10,000,000 in the two hours following a national broadcast. Obama’s presidential campaign sent text messages to 3,000,000 dedicated fellow texters to get out the votes, send donations and cinch the election.

What is this text that is sacred to converts, anathema to leaders and a golden egg to marketers? Let’s look at three myths, three facts and three questions to help decipher the mobile code.

Myth 1. Text is for kids. Ages of texters break down as follows: 34% under age 24, 25% ages 25-34, 20% ages 35-44 and 20% over 45. (Source: mmetrics.com Oct 07)

Myth 2. Text is SPAM. Unlike email, the unregulated free-for-all for SPAM, text messaging is rigorously monitored and controlled by the wireless carriers. Cell phone users subscribe or opt-in to messaging services. Premium messages charge monthly fees and require double opt-ins. Messaging subscriptions must provide a way for users to quit or opt-out.

Myth 3. Text messages are only sent from cell phones. Any computer with a browser and online access can send thousands or millions of messages to cell phones with one click.

Three facts about text short hand messages:

1. 2,500,000,000 (that's billion) text messages are sent daily in the United States. The rate of growth was 160% from June 2007 to June 2008. (Source: The Wireless Assoc. ctia.org)
2. 92,000,000 U.S. consumers actively engage in text messaging. (Source: mmetrics.com)
3. Texters are extremely loyal customers. They opt-in to receive messages, coupons, discounts and sales from businesses by texting a keyword, for example, MONEY, to a short code number 77007. Standard rates apply. The software automatically enters the texter into the database. Subscribers can opt-in on a web page, Text2Money.com. They can opt-out anytime.

Text messaging is easy to use, competitive and effective. It generates revenue for agencies, media and businesses. Tens of millions of aficionados are standing by with their handsets out, waiting for an invitation to opt-in to new programs. What is missing is the invitation - your invitation!

My personal observation is that the biggest obstacle to more widespread implementation of text messaging applications is old people. Decision makers, who are not familiar with text messaging as a communication and marketing tool, ignore the technology or are afraid to include it in their marketing mix. As loyal texters lock in with their favorite services, latecomers will find themselves locked out.

Consider three questions to indicate your level of acceptance of the sacred texts. Are you an agnostic, a believer or saved.

1. How many texters opted in today to send you money to receive your offerings?
2. How many text messages did you send out today to handsets eager to receive your offering?
3. How many text messages are being sent and received today by your clients?

Answers: zero texts, agnostic; 1 to 100, believer; 10,000+, saved.

May the Text be with you!

Dan Youra, 38-year resident of Washington State, designs web and wireless messaging systems for businesses and government. Dan designed the Global Village exhibit at EXPO 74 in Spokane and published the Official Guidebook for the Washington State Pavilion at EXPO 86 in Vancouver. Sunday Times of London praised Dan's website as "potentially life enhancing." Dan's credits include "public relations whiz" in The Seattle Times, "computer whiz" from Emmett Watson, "pioneer in the global village" by Governor Dan Evans, and "trail blazer in the niche-tab-biz" in Marketing. Contact Dan at (360) 379-8800, dan at youra.com, YouraMedia.com. Youra.mobi. Txt YOURA to 77007. Std. rates apply.

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