

# Liberation Technology

by Dan Youra

*The advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty.*

*Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.*

James Madison (1751-1836)  
"Father of the Constitution"

**Summary:** In *Liberation Technology* Dan Youra advances the cause for freedom with a vision of open communication and open access to information through the deployment of mobile messaging technology at all levels of government - federal, state and local - to empower individuals, build communities and support social problem-solving by the diffusion of public messaging applications.

## Text Manifesto

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

Liberated from land lines, cable boxes and network news, wireless warriors march to new sounds of freedom ringing on cell phones around the world. Flashing on hand held screens of the mobile generation, digital texts manifest a new notion, received in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all messages are created equal and they are endowed by their creators with certain alienable rights, that among these are life, community and access to happiness.

What is this text that is not shelved in a library, is sacred to youth and is a mystery to non believers? Text messaging, texting, text, txt, whatever its label, is a force, little understood by non aficionados, maligned by parents and teachers, and illegal for drivers in some states.

People who do not appreciate the value of text messaging think that it's all about the 'message'. Wrong! It is about the 'loyalty'. "It's the loyalty, stupid". It's the glue, the force, that binds the sender and receiver together.

Wireless messaging enjoys a unique mode of instant access, whereby a cell phone user chooses to join fellow texters and subscribe, or opt in, to the offerings of the sender. Once subscribed, the cell phone user receives regular messages and can easily opt out any time with the flick of a finger.

Other examples: NASCAR's loyal fans want to receive text messages from the pits. Fans of a rock band eagerly await texts from the tour. Baseball fans are jazzed to get text scores from the park. The messages are not SPAM. Fans opted in for the messages and can't wait to receive the next one.

Text messaging is credited with opening new channels of communication, expanding access to information and creating new models of community. As messenger-in-chief, a cell phone enthusiast can manipulate a phone pad to mobilize a personal command center, access libraries without walls, join social clubs and enjoy unlimited entertainment.

Limited to 160 characters, a text message by definition is short. How can such a seemingly innocuous message, blinking on a cell phone's tiny screen, be so revolutionary? Could Thomas Paine have shortened *Common Sense* down to 160-character messages in 1776 and still rallied the rebels to influence the American revolution?

The impact of this new medium derives from a number of its qualities: speed, interactivity, ubiquity, low cost and targetability.

**Speed:** its speed is faster than email and even faster than a phone call.

**Interactivity:** the communication is two-way. Its interactivity allows for immediate response.

**ubiquity:** wireless messaging is global,

**Low Cost:** a few hundred dollars sets up a system to send out messages for a few cents each.

**Targetability:** cell phone users chose to be targets for messages they want.

43% of 266,000,000 estimated current U.S. subscribers to wireless services are actively engaged in text messaging. And these aren't "just kids". Text messaging is an integral part of many professions, including law, medicine and finance.

## Text To Politics

This is a technology that enables massive social organizing in 160 characters or less. In the 2008 presidential election over 3 million people registered their cell phone numbers to receive text messages from the Obama campaign. If text messaging had been available in 1776 to the followers of Tom Paine, he could have rallied the revolutionaries with daily installments of one-liners from *Common Sense*.

As loyalists text into the campaign's publicized keyword and short code, they receive a message. They can opt in to receive regular messages. They become subscribers. This is not SPAM. Text messaging creates an army of fans, loyalists, who can't wait to get the next message. From the campaign's point of view it has millions of numbers logged into its database under the category "faithful followers". When the campaign needs money or votes, it sends out a simple, 160-character message, and, "voila", bank accounts fill or votes are cast.

The interaction between cell phone users and the campaign command center becomes an interactive Who's Who, a fluid phone book with mobile addresses of loyal legions, deployed, ready for action and awaiting orders. With messaging software such as YouraMedia, campaign operatives can send messages to hundreds, thousands and even millions of loyalists who opted in with their simple text requests.

McLuhan observed that a new medium introduces a "change of scale or pace or shape or pattern into human association, affairs, and action": this is the real "meaning or message" brought by a medium, and it depends solely on the medium itself, regardless of its 'content'. This is basically the meaning of "the medium is the message".

## Text Marketing

The new messaging medium is causing a revolution in the world of marketing. It is so radical that we don't have words to describe and explain what it is. Yes, we have labels, such as "mobile marketing", "text messaging," "mobile web," "SMS", "Short Messaging System". But, what are these concepts? What do they mean? And then, more importantly, what can we do with the new reality that they describe?

One example: This new reality enables a business person to type a short message onto a computer screen, hit "Send" and shoot it off to 1000 cell phones in the hands of 1000 customers, who are actually looking forward to receiving it. This is not like sending off an ad through a newspaper with 100,000 readers, hoping to receive a phone call from 10 of those, and being willing to subject 99% of readers to eyeball abuse, looking at an ad in which they have no interest.

The text message arrives directly in the customer's hand. Right now! Not tomorrow! Not hidden on page 16 of a newspaper. It is not lost in SPAM. This is a major shake up to the marketing of goods and services from merchants to customers.

What is this radical new way to reach out and touch someone?

Is it advertising? yes and no

Is it auctioning? yes and no

Is it "SMS"? Yes, but what does that mean?

Is it "text messaging"? Yes, but what does that mean?

Is it "mobile marketing"? Yes, but what does that mean?

We know what it is "not":

It is not "broadcasting" screaming over TV to millions who aren't interested.

It is not "mass marketing" one ad in a paper sent to subscribers who don't read it.

It is not "direct mail" sending cards in the mail to people, who don't want them.

It is not "telemarketing" unwanted calls during dinner.

It is not "web marketing" to the World Wide Wasteland

It is not "email marketing" winding through spam filters to a few who didn't trash it.

It is not "cold calling" to a prospect who doesn't want to talk to you

The problem for business owners trying to figure out what this is and what to do with it is much bigger than simply, "how much does it cost?" This is a new technology that, in one sense, makes communication too simple, too direct, too cheap for business owners, who, in most cases, do not know what their messages are, who their market is or how to access the market, even if they had some idea of what to say.

For fifty years business people have been at the mercy of the "mass media machine", the massive advertising and media conglomerates, whether big TV, radio or local newspapers, telling them, "just give me your money and I'll "mass message" you to millions of people who don't know who you are, don't care who are, don't want to hear from you, and 99% of whom, will never walk into your store. But pay me anyway".

In the old world of "mush marketing" business people didn't have to think, just pay the media machine, who'll "create an ad" and "mass message" it in mumbo jumbo land.

Now with this new media of “text messaging” and mobile marketing presented to the business owners, it is not surprising that they are skeptical and don’t quite know what to make of this new kid on the block.

In this new media, business people are confronted with the following questions: what is my message? Not, simply run some boring ad week after week in the local rag, that no one sees. But, rather, what is my message today, tomorrow, next week? The owner is thinking, “O my God, I have to actually say something. I can’t just yell some garbled gibberish from the roof top into the night.”

Who am I yelling my message to? Mass media has trained business people to think in terms of “howling at the moon” and hoping a customer walks through the door. Now the owner is confronted with an identifiable group of people who actually want to subscribe and receive special offers, coupons, alerts and VIP treatment. Subscribers sign up. They Opt-in. And they are willing to receive a message on the most personal communication device they have, the one they use daily, minute by minute, the one they carry in their pockets or purses, wherever they are, roaming around the planet.

This is so revolutionary that business owners, who are numb from a half century of supporting Big Media, do not know what to do or say, so, they say what they always say, “it costs too much”, which, ironically is exactly what marketers of the new technology want to hear, so that they can sell the owner on why it really doesn’t cost too much and why the real cost is in waiting any longer to incorporate this personalized technology into their business communication mix.

A few years down the road, business people will be using text messaging, SMS, mobile marketing, whatever you want to call it, in ways that we can’t even image today. They will have thrown out 90% of the useless ad programs that they got suckered into in the past century. The old media are losing readers and viewers. Their ultimate demise will come when they lose the advertisers, who are no longer going after their lost readers and viewers, but who, more importantly, have learned how to use smarter, more effective and cheaper ways to reach their actual customers and not some amorphous market that only exists in the mind of an ad salesperson at the local MonopoMedia.

Business people don’t know how to approach this new technology. “How am I going to use this? Do I have to type a message into my cell phone? Who is going to type the messages? Do I have to hire a tech person? Do I need a new line? ” Plus, a hundred other questions.

The local butcher is so busy stuffing wienies that he or she doesn’t realize that the store’s advertising is so full of baloney that no one reads it anyway. And, now when the owner is confronted with the New Media that may make the difference in a pet shop’s survival, all the owner can say is that “it’s too expensive”.

What is too expensive is the way small businesses have been doing business up until now! What is too expensive is ignoring this new technology and not using it to realign the total thinking of the enterprise’s marketing away from mass marketing to targeted marketing! The mass marketing of the past 50 years has been basically “pay and pray”. All that is now changed!

**MyMarketing**

The revolutionary marketing of the Cellular Age is MyMarketing, MyMessaging, MyMedia, MyTargeting, NowMarketing, NowTargeting.

MyMarketing is personal. Direct from business owner to customer. And customer to business.  
MyMessage is short and sweet. It is more like a Telegram. Come shop. STOP. Spend money. STOP.  
MyMessaging is a system that I own, I control. No NBC. No Tribune. Rather MY Media Company.  
MyMedia is not "mass media". It is between my customer and me.  
NowMarketing is sent and received RIGHT NOW. No wait. No other media offers this.  
MyTarget is direct marketing to exactly the people who want to be targeted.

This is starting to define more of what this new thing is. It is describing text messaging in a way that is calling like it is. It is really "customer service".

The question is still not answered for the business person: What can I do with it? Give me some insights as to how it affects what I now call "advertising" and "marketing". These are the questions business owners need answered in order to get them to buy into this new technology.

"Are you saying that I can replace the TV station? I don't need to spend \$50,000 running worthless ads in local newspaper? I can replace the Post Office. I can save the \$2,000 I spend a year on stamps and envelopes? I don't need to spend \$5,000 on printing flyers? I don't need my Direct Mail house, where I'll save \$3,000. I can fire my telemarketers and save \$3,000?

Yes, that is what "advertising" and "marketing" are - huge black holes for small businesses and huge green holes for the Mass Media.

## MYCELLING

In order to describe this new world we have to take a look at new words. I like the word "celling". It is the verb form of the noun cell. An action word. It is at the heart of cell phone awareness. It is in the "cellular" world. What I like is its double meaning, "selling" as a commercial enterprise and "celling" as a communication tool. It has the instant goodwill of the carriers, the cell phone companies, and the 260,000,000 cell phone subscribers in the USA and tons more in other English speaking countries.

Now what do we have? From the business owner's point of view this is "MyCelling". This is the answer to mass marketing  $\neq$  using text messaging and cellular communication to reach customers. It is "My", not "mass". It is "celling" (think: "selling"), not marketing. MyCelling is NOT mass marketing. Celling is communicating directly to people who want to hear from you; whereas, marketing is spending money to communicate with people who don't want to hear from you, whom you wish wanted to hear from you, and who probably won't get your message, and if they do, will lose it or won't remember it anyway.

MyCelling is direct targeting. I like this word "targeting" in the context of what we are talking about here. It is like hunting deer, but a special kind of hunting. It enables me to hunt deer that want to be shot. I don't have to hunt deer that don't want to be shot at, as in the old mass targeting of the past 50 years. I don't wander around the countryside shooting my rifle here and there and everywhere. I sit in one place and aim at one spot in the bulls eye. I only shoot at deer that choose to walk in front of the target. And better than that, MyCelling technology is able to shoot one bullet that splits into 100's or 1000's and takes out an entire herd of 100 or 1000 deer. All with one shot!

MyCelling is the marketing context into which text messaging fits as the most immediate technology available to merchants. If you are selling text messaging, it is like walking up to a merchant in the 1920's to sell him a telephone. He says "what do I need that for? I can yell out the window to everyone I know in the neighborhood. It looks like something that will fall apart, will have to be fixed, and 'it is too expensive'. No thanks." You tell him that he can call across town and invite in new customers. "No, its too expensive. I don't know how to use it. I'd have to hire a telephone talker."

The process of selling SMS text messaging to a business person is a much bigger challenge than simply handing the 1920 shop keeper a phone and telling him he can do a lot of things with it. The challenge is to hand a new technology to America's current shop keepers, who have 50 years of hard wired software in their brains that was embeded there by 50 years of neural programming by the mass marketers themselves, who, by the way, really have no interest in helping to unwire the mass marketing addicts they have so effectively hooked. So, along comes this wireless guy, a salesman, who says to the shop keeper, "I can give you a way to unplug from the neural opiates that the mass marketers have hard wired into your brain, so that you can be free to run your own marketing program, selling to people who are volunteering to receive your message. The program is called 'Text2Join'."

## TEXT2JOIN

From the customer's point of view, the consumer's point of view, the program is one that he or she joins. To get the benefit of specials, discounts, VIP treatment, and product alerts offered by the merchant, the consumer becomes a subscriber to the business's text messaging program. The consumer voluntarily joins and becomes a member of the merchants outreach. The customer Opt-In to receive regular offerings received as text messages on his or her cell phone screen.

To help the merchant understand the power of this new media that joins the business to the most personal of all communication devices, the sales person goes on to say, "You will run your own program. You become your own media. The Text2Join program enables you to talk directly to your customers right now, any day, any time. No printing, no mailing, no ad agency, no radio, no TV. You shoot one bullet and hit 100 or 1000 deer."

The sales person tells the merchant that with the Text2Join program your business becomes the TV station, becomes the radio station, becomes the post office, and becomes the newspaper. You are the media and the media is you. It is just you and your customer, the two of you joined together in a story that unfolds in simple text messages sent back and forth between keyboard and cell phone.

However, in presenting the new world of Text2Join to merchants, they have to be shown that this new program REPLACES many of their current efforts, and much of their current costs. Merchants must see clearly that they are NOT adding additional costs onto advertising and communications budgets. The result is one of shifting dollars away from the ineffective media of the past and reallocating dollars to the personalized media of the future.

To be sold on this new technology business people must receive a DEMO at their place of business. Or, they can receive a DEMO online, with a sales person on the phone coaching them through the steps, so that they see first hand, how it works, how easy it is, and some examples of the new ways texting will join them to their customers.

I have a wireless PC card for my laptop, which enables me to carry it into any business, log into my Text2Join account and SHOW the owner first hand how to type a short message onto the computer screen, push 'SUBMIT' and have his or her cell phone ring, announcing the instant arrival of the message sent. Then I ask the merchant to imagine that message as "one bullet that just shot 100 deer".

That one minute DEMO is the heart of the sale. There is much that leads up to it. Much that follows to close the deal. But, unless owners can experience on their own desk the ease and simplicity of typing a message and receiving it seconds later on a cell phone, it is all talk.

Upon seeing the DEMO, the owner wants to be assured that he is dealing with the right people, the best company. Once the merchant gets it, he or she will want to know who else sells this service? Where can he get it cheaper? Business owners need to know that they will have password protected access to their own web site, from which to send out their messages.

Is the company that offers the service even in the United States? Many offers of lesser services can be seen on the Internet coming from overseas. The owner wants to see that the company providing the service is joined in with the big carriers such as Cingular and Sprint and Verizon Wireless.

Text2Join is an effective program that uses existing technology to communicate from computer to cell phones in a seamless process that joins merchants together with their best source of revenue, their existing customers. Once the consumer joins this new way of doing business and once the merchant joins in this revolution, it becomes apparent quickly that the revolution isn't so new or so radical, as much as it is a return or a revolving back to a time when merchants and customers were joined in a simpler relationship involving a handshake across the cash register, before the mass media meddlers got in between them.

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Are you searching for the meaning of meaning? Flip open a cell phone and out pops a genie to grant your wish. After all, it's not just a phone. It's a magic medium that melds together a computer, Internet, phone, music and video into

Sound of one hand texting.