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A Trio Of Myths, Facts And ???

Text Messaging

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 while driving. Society’s elders treat phone text as a threat to public order.

Entertainment media and daring politicians embrace text messaging in their marketing strategies. Texting is a money maker for FOX-TV’s American Idol, which can tally 10 million text votes, at \$1 each, for an easy \$10 million in the two hours following a national broadcast. Obama’s presiden-

tial campaign sent text messages to three million dedicated fellow texters to get out the vote, send donations—and cinch the election.

What is it about texting 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 break down as follows: 34% under age 24, 25% ages 25-34, 20% ages 35-44 and 20% over age 45. (Source: mmetrics.com Oct 07.)

Myth 2. Text is SPAM. Unlike e-mail, 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 involve 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 shorthand messages:

1. 2.5 billion text messages are sent

daily the United States. The rate of growth was 160% from June 2007 to June 2008. (Source: The Wireless Assoc.ctia.org.)

2. 92 million 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, 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’s missing is *your* invitation!

My personal observation is that the

biggest obstacle to more widespread implementation of text messaging applications is old people. Decision makers, who aren’t familiar with it 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 offerings?

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, long a leader in the niche tabloid business, also designs Web and wireless messaging systems for businesses and government. You can contact him at dan@youra.com or 360-379-8800.

