

A recruiter's guide to SMS messaging

How to use SMS messaging to stay connected, be more efficient, and place more candidates

FastSMS 





Introduction

The mobile phone has changed many things in our everyday lives, from how we entertain ourselves, to how we carry out our daily tasks. Businesses in every sector are now effectively communicating with their customers through their mobile phones, and customers now expect businesses to have a mobile communication channel.

The recruitment sector is no different, and is one of those sectors that has really grabbed SMS by the horns, using SMS to enhance their business and work placement process.

Every business sector is fierce with competition, with businesses constantly trying to find not only ways to improve their business, but also areas they can really excel in, to get ahead of their competition. The recruitment industry is now bigger than ever, worth over £35 Billion to the UK economy, meaning that the recruitment sector really is competitive.

The mobile phone has become our best friend, a device that we cannot live without. It is now the method that we want to be contacted on, because of its convenience, speed and simplicity. This means it has become an incredibly powerful tool for businesses.

73% of job seekers said they want to receive targeted jobs via text messaging

In this guide, we will take a look at the challenges that the recruitment sector faces and how SMS can answer them, how SMS is being used and some tips and advice on getting the best results from SMS.

(Source: Nexxt)



What are the problems that face recruiters

With competition so high, recruiters need to be lightening fast. Not only to beat other recruiters and agencies, but also in communication with their candidates.

So what is the best way to reach candidates?

You can, of course, use email, or regular post. But when's the last time you met someone that read all their email? Studies have shown that 90% of text messages are read within the first three minutes of delivery, with 98% of all text messages getting read.

Email and post can be relatively slow too. SMS messages are delivered almost instantaneously, and generally guaranteed to be delivered within 10 seconds. Email can be that fast, or it may never be delivered at all. With the huge amount of spam emails sent every single day, lots of emails end up in spam folders and not being opened.

Calling is effective. However most candidates will already be in a working role so will not be able to talk freely and would prefer a more discreet method of communication. Also with so many roles to fill and so many candidates to call, calling can be very time inefficient and unproductive.

As a recruiter, this all adds up to SMS being a great option to deliver timely job information to your candidate list, easily and quickly. It also means they can send you replies quickly. You'll be communicating so fast you'll have happy candidates and filled jobs in no time.

90% of recruiters surveyed report contacting job seekers by SMS. And 90% of recruitment companies received a response in three minutes.

(Source: Dialogue Communications Study)



Why SMS is so important

When was the last time you didn't have your mobile? Chances are you can't remember (because it's never happened), or it was such a traumatic experience you'll never let it happen again. Either way you're not alone. A Nielsen study discovered 91% of adults have their phone in arms reach 24/7. We use our mobiles for all sorts of activities beyond just making calls, so we keep them close all the time.

In the UK, at least 92% of people own a mobile phone according to Ofcom. The vast majority of those will be smartphones, however every single one of those phones, even the basic phones, have the capability of receiving a text message, if you're wanting to reach out to people, there isn't a much better way to do it.

65% of job seekers use their phone at least once a day for job search purposes

On average people check their **mobile phones 150 times per day** and spend 177 minutes using them

(Source: Nexxt)

(Source: Device Atlas)



How to use SMS for recruitment

Here are some ideas on how you'd use SMS messages with candidates:

New job posting announcements sent to all qualified candidates

SMS is great for sending out messages to lots of people, so it is fantastic at being able to send out new job announcements to potential candidates. By creating and managing contact groups in industry sectors or by job roles, it will enable you to send out messages to the right candidates quickly and easily.

Appointment reminders so you'll never be stood up again

SMS appointment reminders are incredibly successful, and the last thing anyone wants is to miss an appointment, from both a candidate and business point of view.

Status updates on job applications to keep candidates informed and up-to-date (so they'll nag you less often)

Not only will this be helpful and time efficient for recruiters, but also provides a great customer experience to all your applicants and will be greatly appreciated.

Application deadline reminders

Remind your candidates of upcoming deadlines, or outstanding information you need from them, quickly and easily with SMS.



How to use SMS for recruitment

Once you start thinking about it, you'll probably find many different ways you can use SMS to keep your candidates informed, streamline your application process, and to save time following up leads. Have a brainstorming session and see what sort of things you can come up with.

Now do the same thing again, but focus on your own organisation. Can SMS messaging help you coordinate internally? Could you send a text to a recruiter letting them know there's a new candidate on their roster? How much time can you save by keeping everyone informed and current on job postings, candidates, and meetings?

Now that you've had your creative fix, it's time to start thinking analytically. Get ready to calculate some numbers to answer the following questions:

- How many messages will you send?
- How often will you send?
- What is the total number of messages you expect to send per calendar month?
- Will your candidates be replying to your messages?

The answers to these questions will help you determine the cost of using an SMS message service. Most services use a pay-per-message billing format with discounts for high volumes. If you need to receive replies from your candidates, you'll need either a virtual mobile number (VMN) or a keyword rented on your provider's shortcode.

Once you have the answers to your questions, you're almost ready to start sending. There's just a few more things you need to do.





Getting started with SMS

You probably have a list of candidates a mile long already. Now that you've hammered out the details of what types of messages you'll send, you're ready to just start sending them out right? Not so fast. There are some legal bits and best practices you need to know first.

SMS is legally considered an electronic communication. That means it's governed by the same laws as email. In short, this means you need to:

Always use an opt in

If you're gathering mobile numbers for the first time from new candidates, let them know you'll be using text messaging to keep in touch.

If you are using SMS as a marketing method to get new clients (who are not yet using your services) then you'll need to be more formal about the opt in. You can promote the use of SMS to new candidates on your website, printed adverts or in email – anywhere you normally advertise.

Always include a clear opt out method

It's always best to include a way to opt out in every SMS message you send. Make it easy for them to stop the messages if they want to. For example, tell them to reply with the keyword "STOP".



Some simple SMS tips

Avoid using txtspk

As short as an SMS message is, that's no excuse for using instant messaging type abbreviations. You want to be clear and concise, not cryptic. So avoid text speak, and be professional.

Always tell them who you are first

Your candidates probably have better things to do than to memorise your VMN or shortcode. In every message, make sure you start off by identifying who you are with your name, company abbreviation or something that lets them know it's you. You can easily do this by setting your Sender ID to your business name.

Simple call to action

Make sure you include a clear and simple call to action so your candidates can respond to your message, whether you want them to call, email, visit a webpage via a link, or simply reply to your text message. Make it clear what action you want them to take.





Choosing an SMS provider

You've got your plans, you know the lingo, now it's time to choose your service provider. A quick Google search will tell you there are probably more SMS service providers than you have candidates. But they aren't all created equal. Here's a list of questions you should answer before you decide which provider will best suit you:

How much does it cost to send 1 SMS message?

All providers define one SMS message as 160 characters. The base rate per one SMS message is usually listed on provider websites. When you compare between providers, make sure you're looking at the base price for a message in the quantity you plan to send. Prices can vary widely depending on the quantity of messages sent per month and any volume discounts that are applied. Just be sure you're comparing apples to apples and not apples to oranges.

When do the message credits expire?

Make sure you read the fine print of every provider to see if there are expiration dates on the message credits you purchase. Providers who don't use expiration dates usually advertise it openly so you'll know the credits you buy now will be good a year, or two, or ten from now. If you don't see any mention of expiration dates, read the fine print even closer. Chances are it's buried in there somewhere, and it probably isn't very long after you make your purchase.

Do they have a free trial or account to test the services?

There's really only one good way to know if a service is all it says it is: try it out. Once you've narrowed your list, don't be afraid to sign up and test each service that offers a free trial or free account. There's no substitute for first-hand experience when it comes to evaluating a new service.



Choosing an SMS provider

What sort of network coverage do they have?

Your SMS messages need to be able to reach all your candidates no matter what mobile service provider they use. Check to see how many UK mobile providers are supported. If you'll be sending Internationally make sure the countries you need are on the list too.

What is their network quality?

Network quality refers to the reliability, speed, and availability of the network used to send your SMS messages. The best providers get the message out into the mobile network quickly, so it's delivered fast and with the reliability people expect of text messages. These generally are called Tier 1 providers, or providers who use Tier 1 network connections. Other providers aren't as particular and use cheaper routes and less reliable SMS gateways. This means messages can be delayed or even lost on the way to your customers. Quality and delivery routes matter. A lot.

What type of support is offered and how good is it?

Great customer support is always important. Even if you never use it, you know it's there if you need it. But great customer support isn't always free. Some providers charge for different levels of support ensuring only "premium" members have access to the best service. Others offer support free to everyone and strive to be the best for each and every customer. But on the Internet, it's hard to tell what's real and what companies just claim is true about their support. Look for independent reviews either on the provider's website or via third party sites.

If you need it, do they have an API for easy integration into your software?

An application programming interface (API) allows you to integrate an SMS service into your existing POS, CRM, or other business applications. Most providers have APIs. The trick in the question is the word "easy". Research everything you can find about the API. The best providers give this information away free and are able and happy to answer your questions even before you have an account. Some providers may have already developed applications that will work with your software. For example, plugins for Microsoft Outlook are usually available.

Want to start your SMS adventure?

So if you would like to see how business SMS can enhance and improve your recruitment, then please do get in touch.

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