

# Easy Guide to Running A Successful SMS Pilot Program

White Paper | Smart Mobile Marketing

Written by Kean Tan

April 1, 2010

Published by  
MODISclub  
1528, 16 Avenue SW,  
Calgary, AB, T3C 0Z8 Canada

Tel: (403) 209.5988

Fax: (403) 245.6535

[www.modisclub.com](http://www.modisclub.com)

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## Objective

The main purpose of an SMS pilot program is to demonstrate what new markets can be penetrated and what challenges can be overcome using SMS. To produce useful data and feedback from the pilot, the program requires a solid platform derived from careful planning, accurate measurement and constant optimization.

## The Platform

The foundation of your pilot program may be the basis of your future programs. This is the time to define your objectives and plan ways to measure the results. Careful planning will build you a strong platform that can withstand all the changes that are required to make it a successful pilot program. Leaving any aspect to chance is the main reason pilots fall apart and fail to generate useful results.

Part of careful planning includes allocating sufficient time and effective resources to your pilot, or else the results could be skewed by the unrealistic conditions. That small investment in your pilot can turn into a long term cost saving when you can get a sense of scale for allocating time and resources in your on-going program. More importantly, the pilot can also help you evaluate your potential ROI.

## The Drive

When defining your objectives for the pilot, one of the key components is your target audience. It is important to identify whom you are trying to reach and design a strategy that will help you capture and retain that database. Your audience is already constantly bombarded by various distractions; hence, what you are offering via SMS has to be valuable and unique. The following are key factors that will drive your SMS pilot:

- 1. Incentives** – Offering unique content that is only available via SMS is one way to bring value to your offerings. This can include coupons, special notifications, exclusive sales, contests, and more. Providing mobile coupons or promotions ensure customers have them in their pockets at all times, ready to redeem when the time is right.
- 2. Subscriptions** – An add-on SMS feature or service to your products and services can be turned into a subscription-based mobile revenue. Mobile subscriptions allow your audience to conveniently subscribe anywhere, anytime and can easily generate a viral effect.
- 3. Informational Alerts** – Providing time sensitive information in a timely manner can make a big difference in your audiences' life. Getting a mobile alert about a practice cancellation is a good example of saving time and money. Or, a safety alert about a toxic gas leak in the vicinity can save someone's life.

4. **Link-based Calls-to-action** – Drive traffic to your traditional online offers and promotions using calls-to-action strategically placed in your SMS messages to your targeted mobile database. Your products and services will be more noticeable by an audience that may otherwise have missed them. The immediacy and high open rate of SMS bring higher than average click-throughs to websites, especially if the recipients are using smart phones that can allow them to visit a site with an instant click from their phones.
5. **Reminders** – Providing SMS-based reminders encourage customer loyalty and retention. Also, it reinforces your brand. For service-based industries like institutions, health care, salons, and other appointment-based services, providing SMS reminders drives ROI by reducing the number of no-shows and hence, lost revenue. It can also foster a more productive and profitable relationship between customers and their service providers.
6. **Interactive** – Engage your audience via a poll, trivia contest, or a text-to-screen promotion can further reinforce your brand. Such SMS-based interactivity may work well in venues like restaurants, bars, or other places where offering active entertainment may keep people on site longer. It is important to measure sales with and without the promotion when choosing this path.
7. **Limited-time offers and promotions** – When messages are sent at just the right time and contain information your audiences seek, there is an ultimate sense of relevancy that they appreciate. Hence, timing is crucial in getting someone to react to your messages. Also, accompanying your messages by an attractive limited-time offers should drive quick revenue. Promoting “today-only” or attaching a short-run expiry date is a very effective way to build business by invoking a sense of urgency.

## Measuring Success

In order to proof the viability of potentially converting your pilot into an on-going program, design a strategy that is measurable. Also, choose a strategy that can be easily measured within the pilot time and resource restrictions. Limiting, categorizing, and organizing the programs in phases will allow you to test a variety of programs to see how SMS can be best utilized for your goals:

**Phase 1** – Launch the programs you feel are easiest to measure and the most likely to achieve results as soon as possible. Having more than one program to compare results may be a good idea.

**Phase 2** – Find out which programs perform better or worse than the others. At this point, you would have learned enough to be able to give the less obvious programs a better chance of success. This is when you can optimize your programs to maximize their potentials.

**Phase 3** – The success or failure of the pilot should not matter if this phase was introduced. You may only consider this phase if things move quickly. At this stage, you would have been in a better position to understand how well your strategy works and judge whether or not you want to plan to evaluate this phase in the future.

## Optimization

Besides careful planning and designing a strategy that works for the pilot, having a regular schedule to review results with stakeholders during the project is also crucial. The stakeholders should include the project manager(s), partners or vendors involved in the pilot and those who will benefit from the end results as well.

When reviewing statistics and data coming from the pilot, the following are some areas of optimization that should also be included:

- How well are the text messages composed and communicated
- When to send the text messages
- When should the promotions be active
- When to promote a text-in or any other recruiting activity
- To whom you are directing your text messages

Optimizing your messaging throughout the pilot provides you an opportunity to reveal any variables that may potentially have a huge impact on your program in the end.

In addition, other important questions may arise from your review. What are the weaknesses and strength of the program? Do you need more resources? Do you need other forms of measurement? It will be easier to fix anything that requires modification at this stage than later once the actual program is launched.

## Taking Action

Once the pilot is completed, information collected may soon become out-dated due to unpredictable variables. Therefore, the plan to move forward based on the results has to be determined promptly. Otherwise, you risk losing momentum in your campaign and progress within your audience, wasting the results you have worked hard for.

There is a multitude of factors that go into driving a successful SMS pilot program. As suggested, the key is careful planning mixed with a high degree of creativity. Examine your business and identify what objectives are most important to you, then design a campaign that addresses those areas. SMS can produce a level of ROI that is largely unmatched by other marketing channels. Start opening up your frame of mind on how consumers are able to interact with your brand and put those ideas into action. That is the difference between an idea and a million dollar idea.

## About MODI\$club

MODI\$club is a product of nexusV as a result of the recent explosive growth in the mobile sector. For the past decade, the company has remained ahead of the curve in the concept of applying technology in marketing. nexusV has successfully serviced premier customers, such as International Society for Complementary Medicine Research, Chicagoland Apartment Association, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Husky Energy and Greater Vancouver Home Builder Association. Continuing on that path, nexusV has created MODI\$club, a turnkey mobile platform backed by world-class support and international experience. nexusV is at the forefront of the digital marketing revolution, offering you solutions that to reach your customers via print, email, website and mobile. For more information, please visit <http://www.nexusv.com> or <http://www.modisclub.com>.

### Contact Information

Kean Tan

[keantan@modisclub.com](mailto:keantan@modisclub.com)

**T** 403 209 5988

**F** 403 245 6535

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