Providing Text to Toll-Free Services: It's as easy as 1, 2, 3!

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For most people, texting is an essential part of day-to-day life. Texting connects friends, family, co-workers and now, even businesses. With texting's ability to provide everything from payment notifications to appointment reminders, both consumers and brands are enjoying the benefits of business texting.

Unsurprisingly, it's no longer a question of if enterprises will implement texting services, but when. With a staggering number of enterprises seeking to text-enable their numbers, Responsible Organizations (Resp Orgs) that provide texting services are better positioned to retain their customer base and stay competitive in the marketplace. For Resp Orgs that don't offer texting services for their Toll-Free Numbers, the risk of losing customers to the competition is an eye-opening reality. Moreover, adding texting services can provide Resp Orgs with a new source of revenue. Fortunately, depending on business goals, budget and requirements, there are several ways for a Resp Org to approach adding texting services to its service offerings portfolio.

Texting: It's No Longer Optional

It's a proven fact these days that texting can benefit almost everyone – consumers, enterprises and Resp Orgs alike. For many consumers, texting is a fast and convenient way to connect with a brand. In fact, up to 85% of consumers would prefer to text a customer support agent instead of calling or emailing, and 75% said they think texting could help prevent miscommunications. This is in large part due to the fact that text-enabled Toll-Free Numbers allow companies to turn a monologue into a dialogue – a two-way conversation that can help better serve customer needs.

As consumers turn to texting to communicate with their favorite brands, enterprises and small- to medium-sized businesses are adding text-enabled numbers to their communications strategy to better engage with customers and make contact centers more efficient.

In fact, contact center agents can handle seven text conversations at once, compared to a single voice call. Thanks to its increased efficiency and multi-functionality, texting has become an essential piece of a comprehensive omnichannel strategy.

With such demand for business texting, the fact that more Resp Orgs are not currently offering texting is both surprising and perplexing. Fortunately, the barrier to entry is easier to overcome than most organizations realize. Below, we will cover the three most common ways to implement text to Toll-Free: partnering, white labeling and building an in-house solution.

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75% think texting could prevent miscommunications

7 text conversations can be handled at once by contact center agents

Three most common ways to implement text to Toll-Free:
1. Partnering
2. White labeling
3. Building an in-house solution

Partnering with a Certified Messaging Provider

For most Resp Orgs, partnering with a certified Service Registrar, also commonly known as a Messaging Provider, is the simplest way to add texting to your service offerings portfolio. Through partnering, a Resp Org can quickly and rather seamlessly implement a turnkey texting service hosted by a partner's platform. This way, enterprises receive a proven texting solution authenticated by an established provider.

For Resp Orgs, the biggest benefit to partnering is faster activation that requires little to no overhead costs. Additionally, when a third-party is responsible for platform hosting, maintenance and support, the Resp Org minimizes the risk, internal workload and financial planning it must take on. Since most messaging partners offer contracted payment plans, Resp Orgs won't experience surprise hits to their budget either. One consideration for partnering, however, is that full ownership over the texting solution and its functionality lies in the hands of the texting partner, not the Resp Org.

To find a messaging partner, Resp Orgs can visit Somos' website for a full list of certified Service Registrars that compliment most every company structure, resource load and budget. Once you find a match, the partner will work with you to activate your texting solution. This may include verifying systems requirements, conducting software implementation, performing platform training, or doing other small tasks.

White Label a Texting Service

White labeling a partner's texting service is also a quick way for Resp Orgs to offer texting and maintain consistent branding. Similar to partnering, white labeling a partner's platform gives Resp Orgs access to a proven, turnkey texting solution that can be quickly implemented with little to no overhead costs.

Perhaps the greatest benefit to white labeling a texting service over partnering is that it allows Resp Orgs to maintain a consistent brand identity across all offerings, without the work that goes into hosting and providing support for a platform. One thing to keep in mind when considering white labeling is cost. Since there is some level of branding, i.e., customization, the implementation and/or maintenance fee is usually higher than partnering.

Similar to partnering, Resp Orgs can visit the Somos website for a full list of Service Registrars. Currently, the following Service Registrars offer white label services: Aerialink, CSF Corporation and Midori Interactive. For a white label texting service, Resp Orgs may have to have systems requirements verified, have software implemented, perform platform training, or take care of other small tasks.

Both partnering and white labeling are good strategies for Resp Orgs to pilot texting without a significant upfront investment. Additionally, gaining experience and gauging compatibility with a platform and process is a good way to test out a texting solution while building a business case for developing a custom, in-house platform in the future.

Build a Proprietary, In-House Texting Platform

Building your own texting platform is the most advanced approach to offering text to Toll-Free services. While building a custom platform requires greater upfront costs, resources and planning, it also provides significant benefits, as it allows for greater control over the platform.

By building your own texting platform, you can customize it to meet your exact business specifications. This includes building in the features and functionality that you and your customers prioritize and desire. An in-house platform will also lower your long-term maintenance and operating costs, as you won't have to pay a marked-up premium for outsourced servicing.

When building an in-house texting platform, keep in mind that your overall project schedule will be much longer than partnering and white labeling. Project planning specifically adds a significant investment in time and money by way of research, procurement, contract negotiations, QA/QC and more. However, the result is a custom-tailored solution to your needs over which you have complete control.

An in-house texting platform offers an additional, unique advantage over partnering and white labeling in that it can produce a profit. When you build your own proprietary platform, you have the option of registering with Somos to become a certified Service Registrar. This allows you to offer your platform to other Resp Orgs yourself – thus making you the partner and/or white label provider. This option can add a new revenue stream and potential competitive advantage to your organization. Visit the Somos website (www.somos.com) to learn more.

Expand Your Service Offerings Today

Texting is a win-win solution for Resp Orgs, enterprises and customers alike. It allows Resp Orgs to enhance the capabilities of their Toll-Free Numbers, which in turn allows enterprises to implement a powerful, omnichannel strategy so customers can enjoy the best user experience possible. In addition to being a critical component of the 360-degree customer experience, adding text to Toll-Free services allows Resp Orgs to remain competitive in the marketplace and even gain a new source of revenue. With a little bit of research, Resp Orgs of any size can eliminate barriers and find a texting business model that fits their needs, budget and business goals.

To learn more about the benefits of text enabled Toll-Free Numbers
and for a current list of Service Registrars, visit :
www.somos.com/serviceregistrars

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Kathy Stuart joined Somos in October 2018 as a Senior Product Manager. In her role, she manages the Texting & Smart Services (TSS) Registry. Kathy has over 13 years in product management and is deeply embedded in the telecommunications industry bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to the field. In product management, she has focused her efforts on building telecom SaaS products and services.

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