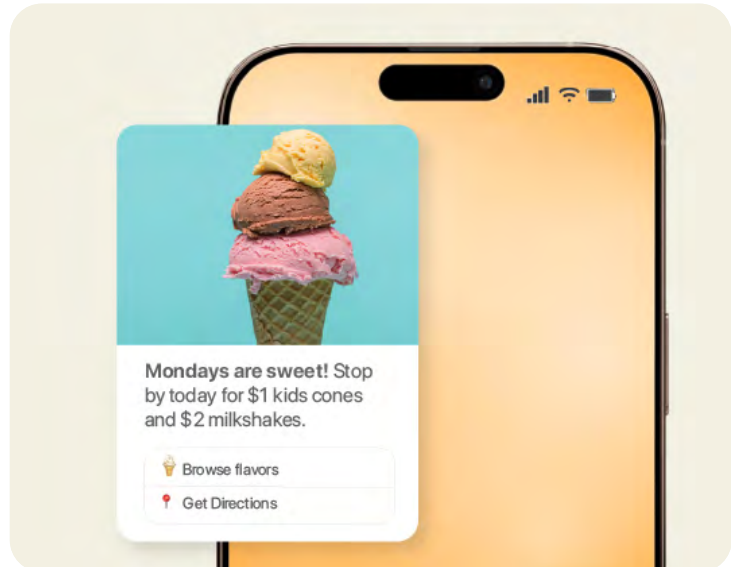
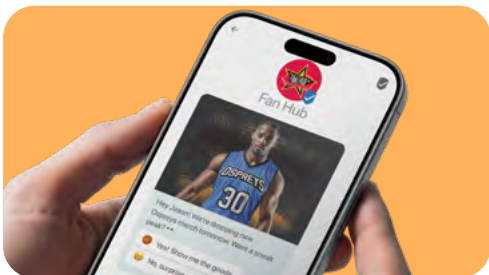
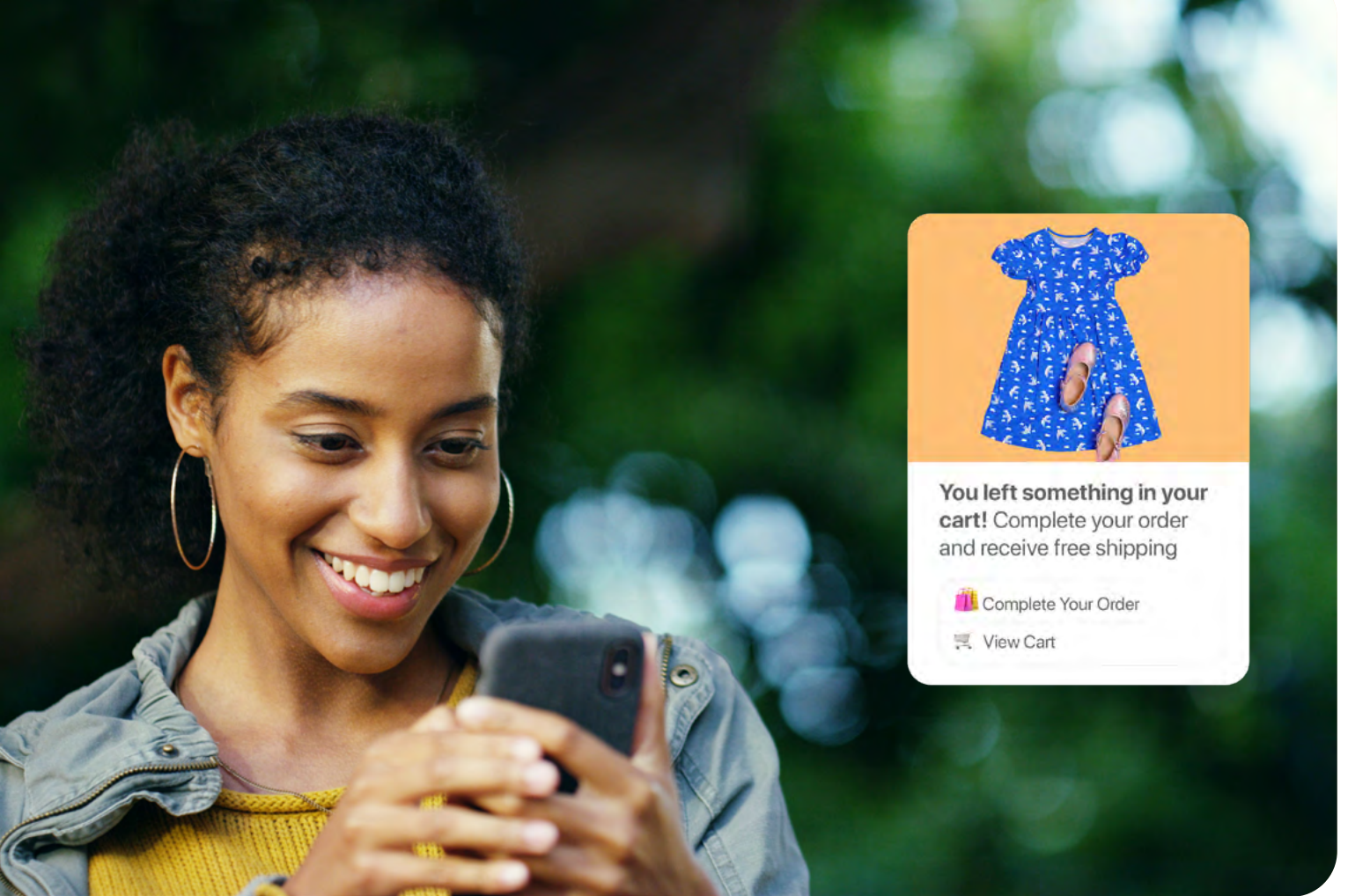




# 50 Tips to Build a Strong SMS Marketing Strategy in 2026





**People have embraced text messaging like few other communication trends in history.** [98% of people](#) in the United States own cellphones, the vast majority of them smartphones. And [85% of U.S. adults](#) say they send text messages or use messaging apps multiple times a week. While still a relatively new technology, text messaging became a mainstream norm fast.

For businesses, that means it's a form of communication your audience now expects from you. [Over half of consumers](#) have said they're fine with receiving text messages from brands, and [19% say](#) it's their preferred way to hear from brands.

A huge part of successful marketing is meeting your customers where they are. Today, where they are is on their phones. Text message marketing is no longer a nice-to-have, it's a necessary component in any good marketing strategy.

But as with every channel, how successful text marketing will be depends entirely on how you do it. Whether you're new to text marketing or wanting to improve your current approach, this guide will provide 50 of the most important best practices to turn your business text messages into customer relationships that last.

# Phase 1: When Starting Out with Text Marketing

If your business is new to text marketing, you want to take some time at the beginning to start your program out strong. There are a few main steps to help you get started right.

## 1. Create a text marketing plan

Before you send your first text, you want to establish a [text marketing plan](#). Start by clarifying what your goals are. What do you hope to get out of SMS (short message service) marketing? How do you see it fitting into your larger marketing strategy?

Think through the types of text messages you want to send. Will you stick with transactional messages to start (things like order confirmations and tracking information), or do you want to send promotional messages (like coupons and product release announcements)?

It's OK to have big ambitions, but it's smart to start small. Don't try to do too much on day one, dip your toe into text marketing before you head for the deep end.

## 2. Learn from past marketing campaigns

Even if text messaging is an all new frontier for your brand, the analytics you've gained from marketing on other channels are a valuable starting point. There's probably a lot of overlap in what works for your audience across social, email, and online advertising and what they'll respond to via text. Review your past results to identify takeaways you can apply to your text marketing plan.

## 3. Listen to your customers

Data can provide some valuable information about what your audience may want from a text messaging strategy, but you'll always benefit from going straight to the source to fill in the fuller picture. The easiest way to hear from your customers is to send out a survey that specifically asks them what they'd like to see from a text marketing program.

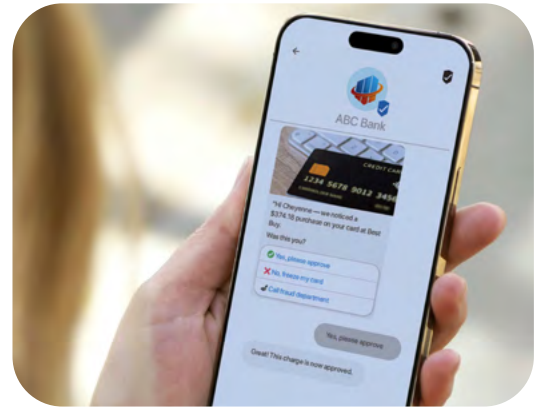
Then go a step further and set up customer interviews so you can hear directly from customers in their own words. You can gain valuable intel on what kind of marketing texts they like getting, which annoy them, and what messages most consistently get them to take action.

## 4. Clarify who your audience is

You have to know who you're talking to before you can figure out what to say to them. Analyze who your customers are and what kind of messaging they respond to. The surveys and interviews from the last step will be valuable here. If you haven't yet, create a [buyer persona](#) (or multiple buyer personas, if relevant) so you can better visualize who you're talking to when writing each message.

## 5. Learn about relevant regulations

Business text messaging must comply with government regulations. [Text messaging regulations](#) focus on limiting behaviors like spam, unwanted contact, and data misuse – in other words, things that would be bad for business anyway. You want to stick with texting people who actually want to hear from you with the kind of messages they want to receive. That, plus using a text messaging platform designed with compliance in mind will go a long way toward keeping you on the right side of the law.



## 6. Invest in the right SMS platform

A [good text messaging platform](#) will provide you with features that make many of the other tips on this list much easier to manage. That includes (but isn't limited to):

- Managing opt-ins and opt-outs
- Maintaining your list
- Using segmented lists for personalization
- Tracking analytics on campaign performance
- Including rich media, suggested responses, and CTA (call to action) buttons in your texts
- Maintaining compliance with minimal effort

The right platform can make a big difference in what feels possible for your text messaging campaigns.

➔ *For a head start on this step, [set up a demo](#) to check out TrueDialog.*

## 7. Register for 10DLC

Any business sending A2P (application-to-person) text messages (another way of saying mass texts) in the U.S. needs to register for a [10DLC \(10-digit long code\)](#). 10DLC distinguishes your brand from scammers. Businesses are expected to register your brand and each campaign you launch with the Campaign Registry, so they can ensure brands stay within required guidelines when texting consumers. You can often do this within a portal on your text messaging platform.

## 8. Get registered for RCS

[RCS \(rich communication services\)](#) registration isn't required like 10DLC, but using it opens up new features that create better opportunities for connecting with your audience. RCS messages can include rich multimedia features, like images, videos, and audio. You can also include elements that encourage recipients to take action, like CTA buttons and suggested responses.

Plus, [RCS messages are fully encrypted](#) (unlike SMS), which brings a higher level of security to your communications — that's good for all businesses, but especially important for anyone in regulated industries, like health care or finance.

## 9. Always get an opt-in

Always obey the golden rule of text messaging: only message people who have consented to hear from you. If recipients see your messages as a nuisance, that hurts your brand reputation and your relationship with that particular customer. That's already a good enough reason to abide by the opt-in, but it's also legally required.

Even so, [84% of people](#) say they've received SMS messages from a company they don't remember signing up with. Don't be that guy (er, business). Only message someone after they've opted in.

## 10. Connect your SMS platform with your CRM

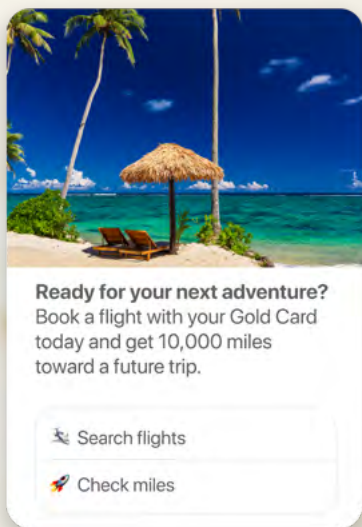
A strong text messaging plan is good; one that connects natively to your larger marketing campaigns is better. [Integrating your text messaging platform](#) with your other marketing software products, particularly your customer relationship management software (CRM), lets you run omnichannel campaigns.

It also gives you more tools for personalization. If you can easily pull information about customers from the CRM when setting up your text campaigns, you can tailor your messages based on what's relevant to them. For example, when you make a big update to a product, you could easily text everyone on your list who previously trialed that product with the news.

## 11. Promote your text messaging program and build your list

You know to only text people who opt in. But for a business new to text messaging, that creates a problem: how do you go from zero opt-ins to actually having people to text?

You have to build your list. That means promoting your text messaging program everywhere you can: your website, your social feeds, your loyalty program, and your email list. Start with people you already have a relationship with — that's your low-hanging fruit. From there, you may need to try out some different strategies like running contests or offering incentives to add new people to the list.



## 12. Provide an incentive for sign-ups

People have a lot of brands and publications competing for their attention. Handing over their phone number isn't a small decision. For anyone who may be hesitant, you can give them an extra nudge by offering something valuable in return.

Often that means a financial incentive like a discount on their next order. [49% of consumers](#) say discounts are the main reward they consider worth sharing their data for. And the discount amount doesn't necessarily have to be high. 50% say 10% off is enough to get them to sign up.

## 13. Be transparent with your audience

Tell people upfront what they can expect when they sign up for your list. That can include information on how often they'll hear from you, what kind of messages to expect, and how you'll use their data. Or more importantly, how you won't use their data – be clear that you won't sell or share it without their permission.

## 14. Establish consistent branding

You want your text messages to align with how you present your brand across your marketing strategy. Some of that falls to having a clear style guide that clarifies your overall tone. But if you use RCS, you can also add your logo, website, and brand colors to your account. Your text messages will visually look like all your other marketing materials, while also being clearly linked to your familiar online brand properties.

## 15. Do testing

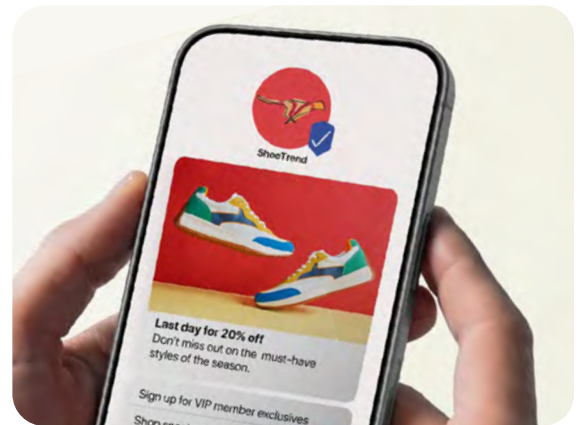
Before you start contacting customers, do some internal testing to make sure everything works the way it should. Test out your opt-in and opt-out systems as well to make sure they work correctly. Send some test text messages to internal devices to see how they look. Ideally, you want to check how they show up on different types of devices and with different carriers, to get a full view of what your audience will see.

# Phase 2: Once You've Earned Their Trust

Once you've gained your first sign-ups (congrats!), it's time to start sending messages. Earning consumer trust is hard to begin with, but keeping it is harder. Following a few main best practices can help you keep the subscribers you've earned, while keeping the workload of a text message marketing program manageable.

## 16. Develop message templates

You don't have to start from scratch with every message, templates give you a head start that can save you time and help you re-use what works. Look up messaging templates and examples of what worked for other brands to use as a starting point in writing your first messages. Your text messaging platform may also let you [create custom templates](#), so you can easily re-use messaging formats that worked well for you the first time.



→ **Writing promotional text messages? Use our list of [50 promotional text message templates](#) as a launchpad to get started.**

## 17. Be careful how often you text

Staying in touch with your customers is good. Subjecting them to a barrage of irrelevant messages is not. [49% of consumers](#) who expressed annoyance with business text messaging specifically complained about frequent messages as a problem. And 56% said they'd stopped buying from a brand because of annoying messages. Your subscribers don't need to hear from you multiple times a day. Reaching out weekly or monthly is generally a more reasonable cadence.

## 18. Aim for consistency

While you don't want to text too often, you also don't want to disappear for months at a time. If customers go too long without hearing from you, they could forget they had a relationship with you. You want to get in touch often enough to stay fresh in their mind. Aim for a consistent cadence that keeps you in their thoughts, without becoming an annoyance.

## 19. Provide options

If those last two tips have you scratching your head wondering how any brand is supposed to figure out how often to text, there's a hack for that: let them choose. [97% of people](#) want the ability to control the frequency of messages they receive from brands. 81% say it would make them more likely to do business with the brand.

When people sign up for your list, give them a chance to select how often they'll hear from you. You might also let them choose what to hear from you about (e.g. which products, whether they want messages about sales and promotions or just order updates, etc.). Giving consumers some control over how you interact with them over text is good for them and for you. They're less likely to feel annoyed by your messages, and you're more likely to maintain their loyalty.

## 20. Use segmented lists

Giving subscribers that level of control may sound complicated to manage, but it doesn't have to be. As long as your text messaging platform supports segmented lists, it's easy to make sure you're getting the right types of messages to the right people.

Brands that use one big list are more likely to send at least some people messages they're uninterested in, increasing the likelihood that they'll unsubscribe. But when you set up segmented lists, you can ensure people only receive messages about the products and services they're interested in.

## 21. Make opting out easy

Obviously you don't want people opting out of your text messages, but messaging people who don't want to hear from you accomplishes nothing. If someone wants off your list, make it easy. All they should have to do is respond to any text you send with one word (like "stop" or "unsubscribe"). Making it easy to opt out is required by law, but it's also a good business practice. If you want a positive relationship with your customers, respecting their preferences is vital.

## 22. Keep your messages concise

SMS has a 160-character limit, which forces you to get good at keeping things short and to-the-point (although RCS lets you go longer). But even if the limit wasn't a factor, aiming for brevity is a smart strategy on mobile. You're competing with all the different apps and distractions people encounter on their phones. You have a limited window to get their attention. All your messages should be straightforward and cover the information you need to communicate as quickly as possible.

## 23. Be conversational (but professional)

Text messaging is an informal medium. You don't want your messages to sound literary or academic. Generally speaking, the tone you use in your messages shouldn't be too far off from how people text with friends, but with caveats. If your messages with friends frequently contain slang or profanity, leave that part out. You're still representing a brand, so try to find the right balance between conversational and professional.

## 24. Follow standard mobile etiquette

Text messaging has its own rules of etiquette, just like other forms of communication. Understanding what's standard (and what's considered rude) can help you avoid putting your foot in your mouth. Some of the main text messaging norms to keep in mind when crafting your messages are:

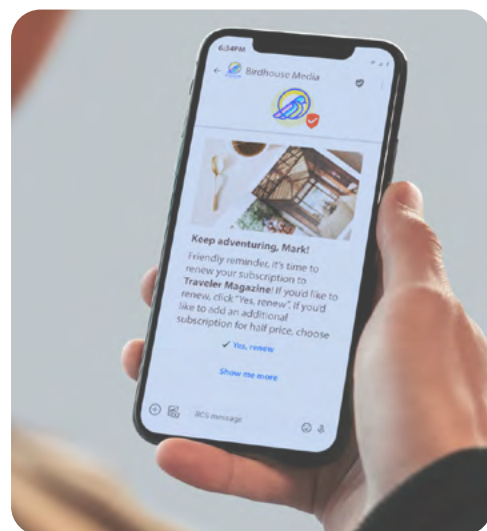
- Avoid sending texts in all caps (it seems like you're yelling)
- Avoid abbreviations (e.g. "u" for "you")
- Be careful how often you use emojis (while they're common in text messaging, coming from a brand, they can quickly become cringe)

## 25. Send coupons and promote sales

[45% of consumers](#) named sales and promotions as their preferred type of text to receive from brands. [Sending coupons](#) or special offers is a good way to reward customers for signing up for your list and give them a reason to stick around, especially if offers are exclusive to subscribers.

## 26. Announce new products

The people who sign up for your list are precisely the ones who care about important business updates like new product launches. Any time you have a new item to announce, sharing the details with your text list is a good way to keep them in the loop and drive purchases at the same time.

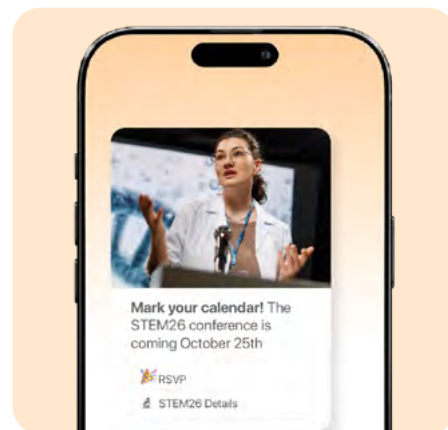


## 27. Offer shipping notifications

Shipping notifications make it easy for customers to track when they'll receive their order. They provide practical utility that customers care about. No surprise then that [52% name shipping notifications](#) as a major reason they sign up for marketing text messages — the most common answer, no less. 22% also say it's the SMS message type that makes them feel most valued as a customer. For any brand that sells a physical product, offering shipping notifications by text should be an obvious decision.

## 28. Send event invitations and reminders

If your company ever hosts events, text messages can be a good format for an invitation. In addition to including key details like the date, time, and address within the text, with RCS, you can also include features like map and calendar links. That way, adding it to their calendar and pulling up the location are easy to do on the same device they received the invite on. You can also text automated reminders when the date of the event or the deadline to RSVP is coming up.



## 29. Make taking action extremely convenient

Between the small screen and competing distractions, convenience is crucial on mobile. Every time you write a new message, consider what action you want the recipient to take next. Then think about how to make it as easy as possible for them to take that action. When using SMS, that may mean including a link or urging recipients to respond to your text with one (short) word. With RCS, it can mean including CTA buttons and suggested responses.

## 30. Always proofread

No matter what type of message you're sending, you don't want an embarrassing typo to get through. Always take the time to read over a text before you schedule or send it – ideally twice, just to be safe. You might be surprised how many small errors you'll catch on a final proofread.

## 31. Stick with daytime texts

TCPA (Telephone Consumer Protection Act) specifies “quiet hours” when brands aren't allowed to send promotional texts: 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. (in the recipient's local time zone). But even if there wasn't a rule, late-night texts are just rude. Many of your recipients will be sleeping, or otherwise trying to rest. If your text about a great deal wakes someone up at night, they're more likely to get upset with your brand than make a purchase. Plus, our [own research](#) found that the highest number of unsubscribes come from texts sent after 9 p.m. ET, so you also increase your risk of losing subscribers.

## 32. Test out different times

Nighttime is the worst time to send texts, but when is the best? [Our research](#) suggests Tuesdays at 11 a.m. ET are the sweet spot for many businesses.

But that doesn't mean you should start scheduling all your text messages for that time. Different businesses have different audiences, and yours may respond better to receiving texts at a different day or time. Test out different times and pay attention to your analytics to figure out what works best for your audience.

### 33. Use multimedia elements

One of the benefits of RCS is that brands now have the option to include more multimedia features in your text messages. Instead of being limited to plain-text messages, you can include visual elements like images and videos to make your texts more engaging.

Take advantage of that. Adding a GIF to your message can add some personality, high-quality images can illustrate the products you're promoting or show people interacting with your brand, and videos can impart helpful information like how-to tutorials.

### 34. Use rich cards

Another valuable feature of RCS, rich cards let you combine multiple media types in one message. You can include rich media, title text, description text, and suggested replies and actions all in one text to help really get your point across.

You can also use carousels, which combine multiple rich cards in one message that people can swipe through. For users, carousels can be a good way to easily compare different options, like the details for different plans or packages you have available.

Arguably the most valuable rich RCS features for brands are CTA buttons and suggested replies, which make it very easy for recipients to take the next action you want them to. CTA buttons can be for actions like "add to cart" or "view on map," and suggested replies can be options like "book appointment" or "view product recommendations." When customers only have to click a button to take the next step, they're much more likely to do so.

### 35. Use surveys and polls

[SMS surveys and polls](#) are a good way to both encourage engagement in your text messages, and gain valuable input from your recipients. There are a number of good use cases for text surveys and polls, like:

- Get input on your text messaging program (e.g. ask if you're sending too many texts, the right kind of texts, etc.)
- Ask customers to rate their order or customer service experience
- Let customers weigh in on product decisions (e.g. let them vote on which colors to release a product in, or which new features to add)
- Increase engagement around specific events (e.g. let attendees vote for their favorite performer or trivia questions related to the presentation)

With the right [SMS platform](#), setting up polls should be simple. You can even use automation to have polls or surveys go out automatically after certain actions, like right after a new purchase is made.

## 36. Use custom link shorteners

Link shorteners are a smart way to keep your character count down, but using the most common link shorteners (like [bit.ly](#)) can make your text message look more like spam to carriers. A custom link shortener offers the best of both worlds: it keeps your link branded, so it doesn't look scammy, while helping you stay within character counts.

## 37. Run contests

Everyone loves a chance to win, which makes [SMS contests](#) a great way to increase engagement with your audience and reward your recipients for their loyalty. You can run text-to-win contests where all people have to do is text one word to your number to enter. As a bonus, contests can be a good incentive to get new people to sign up for your list.

## 38. Deploy drip campaigns

You may be familiar with [drip campaigns](#) from email marketing, and they can play a role in text message marketing as well. Drip campaigns are when you set up automated text sequences in response to specific actions. For example, when a customer signs up for your list for the first time, you could have a "welcome" series of texts go out that provide useful information and offers to reward them for signing up.

## 39. Personalize

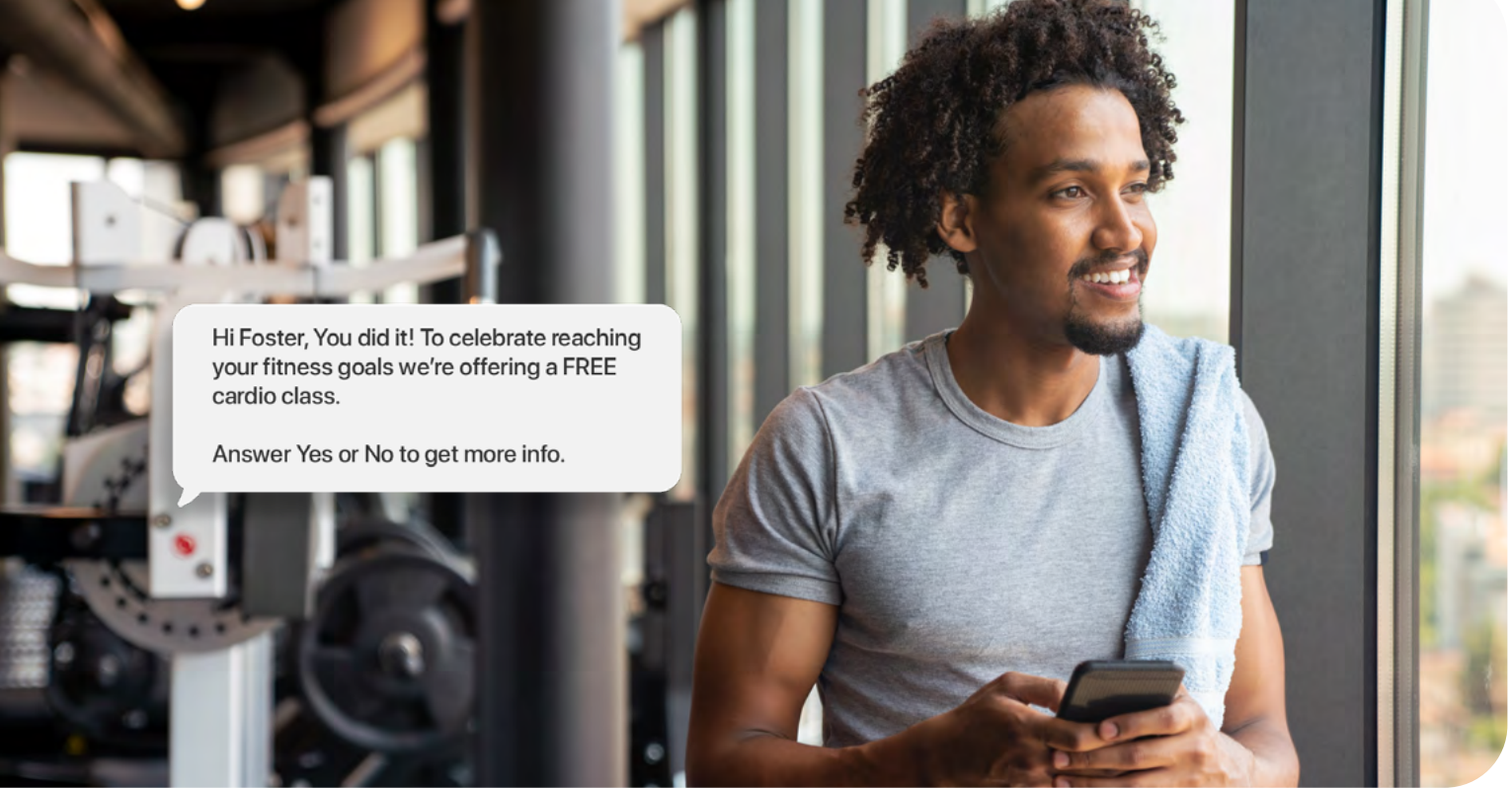
Personalization can help your recipients feel seen, and give them more of a reason to pay attention to your texts. If your text messaging platform is linked to your CRM, you can use your customer data to improve the relevance of your text messages. For example, you can make sure the messages you send line up with the particular products or services that customer has bought. And with the right platform, you can use dynamic fields to insert customer-specific details, like the recipient's first name into your messages.

## 40. Enable two-way messaging

Effective communication goes both ways. While some promotional messages may make sense as broadcast-only, in most cases, you want to give customers a way to respond. When customers know they can talk back and you'll listen, it improves your relationship. Enabling [two-way messaging](#) lets you turn messages into conversations.

## 41. Respond promptly

If you do enable two-way messaging though, you have to be prepared to uphold your end of the bargain and respond quickly. The last thing you want is to leave a loyal customer on read, feeling neglected. Obviously you can't be available all the time, so for messages that come in outside of business hours, you can set up auto-replies to provide an immediate response.



Hi Foster, You did it! To celebrate reaching your fitness goals we're offering a FREE cardio class.

Answer Yes or No to get more info.

## 42. Prioritize data privacy

Data privacy is both a legal issue, and an ethical one. When a consumer shares their data with you, they're trusting you not to take advantage of it. Yet [70% of consumers](#) worry that texts received from brands pose a data security risk.

Don't be the kind of business that abuses their trust. Do everything in your power to keep people's data safe. The right platform is important here. A [compliant text messaging platform](#) will have data security standards that meet all regulatory requirements, and help you maintain the trust of your list.

## 43. Use automation

As your text messaging program grows, trying to manage all your messages manually becomes impractical. Using automation can help you scale without burning out.

[Automated messages](#) are a good option for any situation where the same type of message should go out after a specific trigger, like order confirmation texts and drip campaigns for welcoming new subscribers. They can save you time, while ensuring recipients get the information they need right away.

## 44. Check messages for deliverability

Your messages have to reach the recipient to make an impact. If a message gets caught in a carrier's spam filter, they'll simply never see it. You can read up on [message blocking and carrier rules](#) to understand what to avoid. But you can save some time by choosing a platform that helps with deliverability. A feature like [TrueDelivery®](#) can screen your messages for anything that might ping a spam filter. And features like direct carrier connections cut out the middlemen and increase the odds of your message getting through without issue.

## Phase 3:

# Maintaining Long-Term Success

Once your text messaging program is off the ground, the goal becomes to constantly learn from what you've done so far and improve as you go. The best way to do that is to follow a few additional best practices.

### 45. Regularly audit your list

It may be tempting to judge your subscriber list based on its size, but quality is always better than quantity. With text marketing, that's especially true because you have to pay for every text. When you message numbers that don't receive texts or people who don't want to hear from you, you're wasting money.

Make a regular practice of auditing your list to remove landlines and fake numbers. Consider removing people who never respond or engage as well, or sending a check-in message to let them confirm if they want to continue receiving your texts. When you're exclusively contacting people who want to hear from you, your SMS marketing budget will go much further.

### 46. Learn from your analytics

For every campaign you launch, take time to review your [analytics](#) to better understand what works for your audience. Some important metrics to keep an eye on include:

- Delivery rate
- Opt-outs
- Response rates
- Click rates

Pay attention to which messages get the most traction (and which don't) and look for any trends in what they have in common.

### 47. Do regular testing

When you analyze your metrics, form theories about what's effective and why. Then run A/B tests to gain more data on each hypothesis. With time, you'll gain a better understanding of the types of campaigns and messages that deliver the highest ROI (return on investment), so you can focus your time and budget on what works best.

## 48. Check in with your audience

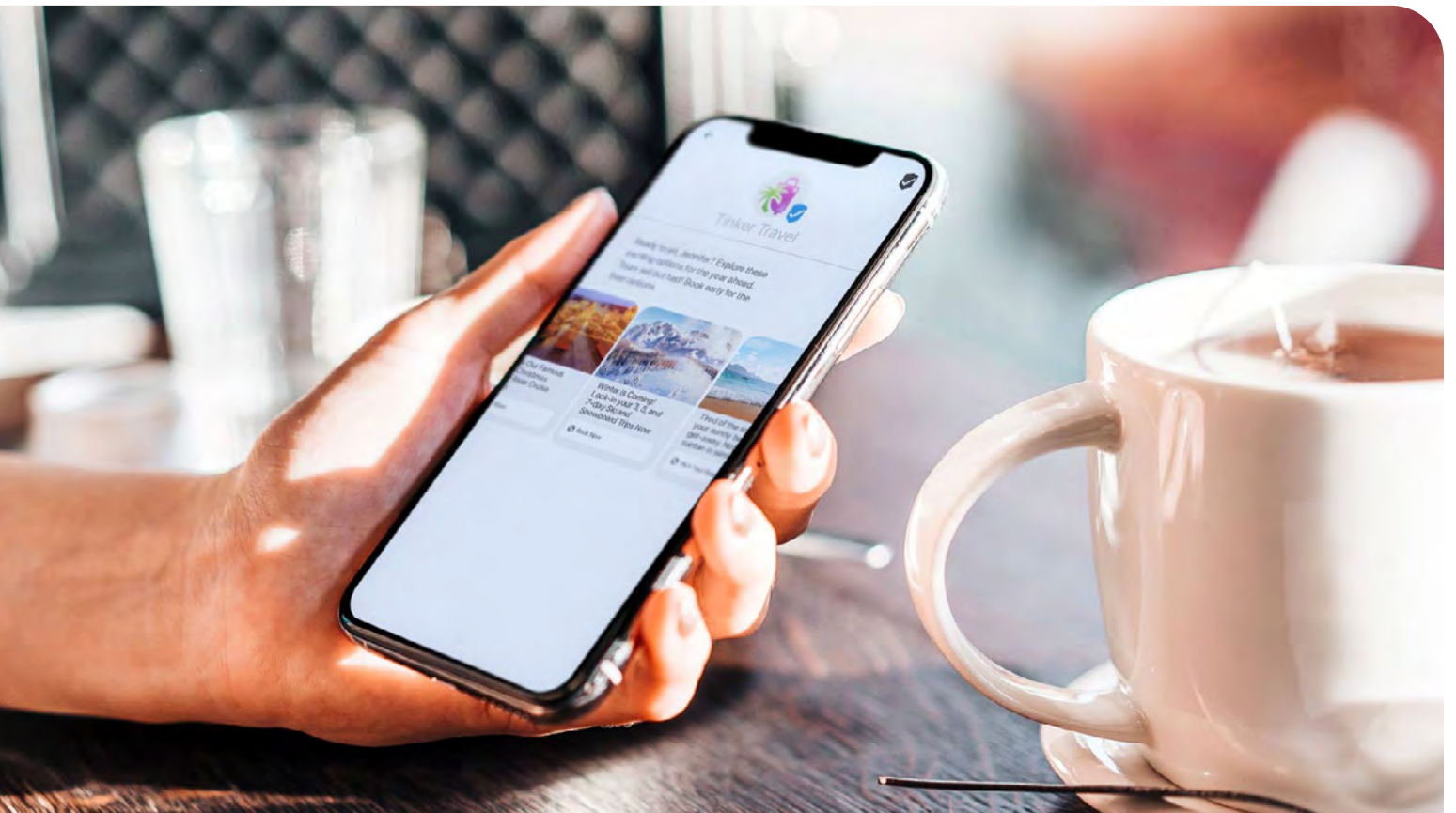
Don't just rely on your data to understand what's working, also ask your subscribers directly. You can use polls and surveys to gain data on how customers are feeling about your texts. But you can get even better insights by setting up customer interviews periodically as well – much like you did when setting up your program. Hearing from customers on a regular basis in their own words will provide richer knowledge about how to improve your program and keep them happy.

## 49. Stay on top of trends in texting

Text messaging technology is evolving, and customer expectations will change with the times. You want to continually upgrade your features and tactics to incorporate new trends and meet customer preferences. You should also keep an eye on any changes in regulations, to make sure you're always following the law.

## 50. Rework your campaigns based on results

Your text messaging strategy shouldn't be set in stone. Use your analytics and customer feedback to re-shape your strategy over time. Test out new technologies and trends as they arise to gain new data on what works, and incorporate what you learn into your plan moving forward. Aim to always be learning and improving.





## Power Your Text Message Marketing with TrueDialog

Building a successful text message marketing program takes work and planning, but it's significantly easier with the right partner behind you. TrueDialog can guide you through getting set up for SMS and RCS, maintaining compliance, and connecting the platform to your CRM. The product includes automation features to improve your efficiency, TrueDelivery® to make sure your messages reach their audience, and rich reporting tools to help you gauge success and improve over time. And when you have a question, you reach a tenured, U.S.-based support team that picks up the phone.

Choosing [TrueDialog](#) is the first step to creating a text messaging program that can deepen your customer relationships and help you boost your bottom line. [Set up a demo](#) to see how it works.

