

Best Practices: Text Marketing

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How to Gain SMS Subscribers and Maintain a Healthy Text System

1. Get HOG & Riding Groups Onboard

For Harley-Davidson dealers, a good place to start is the HOG group. (*Any other riding enthusiast group would work, though.*) Create a special HOG text group and tell members to "just text 'HOG' to our number to get all the latest event updates, birthdays, meetings, and more!" Get these members to join at the next meeting, ride, or event. Make sure the membership director is promoting your text system to new chapter members, as well.

2. It's Not Just About Sales

Texting just doesn't just have to be driven by specific sales or deals. Advertise your unique text number with a simple keyword so members can easily subscribe at any event. Put your numbers on forms, banners, flyers, etc. Tell customers, "Join our text club and rate this event." This would be done through a "text poll." Also, you have have people "vote" on an aspect of an event before it takes place. (They could even RSVP for it.) Ask what type of food you should have, what music should be played, or anything else.

3. Limitations Are Motivations

Have "timed deals," "first-come," or "limited-available" promotions exclusive to text-only communication. Dealers have done blood drives, "demo days," or other special events, and they'll text something like this to their customers: "The first 20 people who come in and show this text get a \$10 gift card." Of course, customers would have to sign up for your texts to be eligible to use these deals. You can also make your offers exclusive to text subscribers during a very specific time, such as between 10AM and 11AM Saturday.

When any of these types of text campaigns give little or no advance notice, it's called a "flash promotion," and it's generally saved for your most lucrative and surprising deals.

4. Use Simple Keywords For Signup

Make sure your text number and chosen signup keyword is on invoices, in-store signage, business cards, etc., and that staff reference it in conversations with customers as the best way to know about dealer events, sales, double point days, news, flash deals, etc. New bike owners and first-time service customers should be signed up, too, as they are generally more willing to take part in new promotions and give their opinions. Show people that the text club is part of the dealer experience and not just a marketing tool. When telling people about your text program, have a couple examples of texts in mind to tell customers so they know what they could be missing.

5. The Power Of Chance

You can have a fun monthly sweepstakes drawing through mass text marketing, too, and publish the winners on your website and social media. Many people can join your text list this using this strategy. You can raffle the same prize every month, like a \$25 gift card, or you can have an event-specific or themed drawing .

For example, for Valentines day, you could give away "matching his and hers riding boots."

6. Use Your Rider Rewards Program

Many dealers get sign-ups from reward members, you can create an exclusive list for them in the text marketing system. One idea is to inform reward customers that if they join your text club, they'll get 25 bonus points. You can further promote the idea by letting everyone know that the only way they'll know about "secret double point days" is to join the text club.

7. Advertise on Social Media

Make sure you text program number and keyword(s) are promoted on Facebook. Many signups come through here than via email, especially if you tie it in with something fun.

8. Have A Message Mix

Remember, texts just don't have to be about "special sales" or "giveaways," as they can be about informational dealer news, to promote social media, or to gather opinions. Try to mix some of those messages with your "marketing-type" texts so it doesn't get predictable or become just a routine. Think about new ways to grab attention, be helpful, and inspire customer action.

9. Send Consistently

Make sure your text sending rate stays mostly consistent so customers don't forget that they signed up -- if you send texts months apart, it can cause many customers to unsubscribe. But at the same time, you don't want people to get too annoyed with too many texts. At the most, send one outbound message per week, and at the very least send one mass text every two weeks. Although, you can still change your message content and sending time to surprise people occasionally.

10. Opting-In Is The Only Option

This is the biggest thing to remember: DO NOT try to add customer numbers manually or attempt to subscribe those who have not truly "opted-in" to receive your text campaigns. It's against the FCC rules and could result in thousands of dollars in fines. People can sign up digitally on your website or on your keypad, or they can sign up by texting a keyword to your unique phone number.

NOTE: More Than Rewards provides a Text Messaging platform to dealers which allows customers to sign up via website, keyword, and in-store using the Rider Rewards keypad. Please make sure that your available sign-up methods and text message content conforms with manufacture / brand marketing and sales rules -- such as Harley-Davidson's MAP policy -- to avoid any potential warnings, fines, and other sanctions.
