



eBook

The Value of SMS Marketing

HOW TO INCORPORATE TEXT
MESSAGING INTO YOUR NONPROFIT
MARKETING STRATEGY



In the modern age of technology, nonprofits have endless ways to connect with supporters. Between email, social media, and digital ads, it can be difficult to pin down the best ways to reach your community—and make sure they act on your messages. How can your nonprofit ensure that it's investing its time and energy into the right communication channels?

In a crowded digital landscape where nonprofits are vying left and right for supporters' attention, SMS marketing is a proven way to break through the noise.

Your constituents are already spending most of their time on their phones. In fact, **studies** show that the average American checks their phone at least 96 times per day, or once every ten minutes. Leverage this opportunity by meeting supporters where they already are by sending your communications directly to their phones.

From sharing updates on your nonprofit's latest digital advocacy campaign to requesting donations for your annual fundraising campaign, nonprofit text messaging is a multi-faceted communication outlet that can easily be tailored to meet your nonprofit's needs and goals.

However, many nonprofits have yet to tap into the vast potential of SMS marketing. How can your organization supplement its existing marketing efforts with text messaging?

With inspiring text messages and a fresh contact list, your nonprofit can build strong supporter relationships, raise awareness for your cause, and boost revenue for your ongoing fundraising campaigns.

Unlike social media posts that supporters can quickly scroll by or digital ads that can be blocked, your organization doesn't have to worry that its SMS messages won't be seen. With an incredibly high open and read rate, text messaging can help your organization grow to new heights.

This guide will explore the basics of SMS marketing and how you can successfully power your nonprofit's goals with a robust text messaging campaign.

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What is SMS marketing?

SMS marketing is a tool that nonprofits use to reach supporters with their promotional materials via text messaging. With SMS marketing, nonprofits can share

- › Donation appeals
- › Upcoming events and registration links
- › Updates on recent projects
- › Petitions and alerts for their digital advocacy campaigns



Your organization can tailor your SMS marketing efforts to the current state of your nonprofit, whether you need to attract more attendees at your next event or generally amp up your supporter engagement. With a comprehensive SMS marketing strategy, your nonprofit can spread awareness of your mission, strengthen relationships with supporters, and directly engage with new prospects so you can retain their support for the long run.

Unlike other marketing platforms that require supporters to log onto an app to hear from their favorite nonprofit, SMS marketing reaches constituents in the most direct digital way possible. Supporters simply need to opt into your SMS marketing campaign. Then, they'll be able to receive communications from your nonprofit in the same way they receive quick text messages from friends and family members.



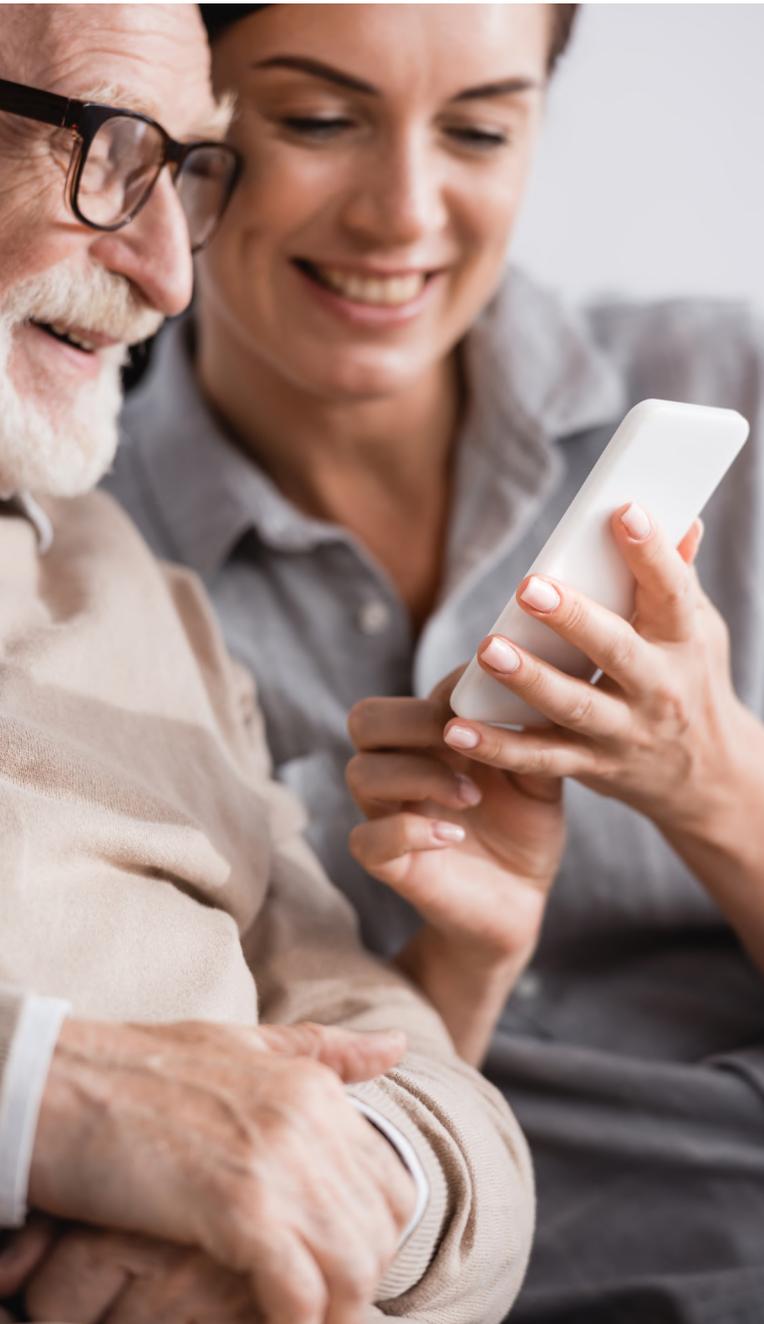
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Understanding text-to-give

Requesting donations during time-sensitive campaigns is one of the most common uses of nonprofit text messaging, and it's done through a process commonly known as text-to-give.

Traditionally, text-to-give involved donors texting their chosen donation amount to the nonprofit's designated code. Then, the amount would be billed to the donor's phone bill and the phone carrier would transfer the total donations to the nonprofit.

But with the rise of smartphones that can easily access the internet, there's no need for this complex middleman process. Today, text-to-give is a much simpler and more direct form of mobile fundraising. In this process, nonprofits send their donors a mobile-friendly link to an ultra-streamlined version of their donation page.



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What are the benefits of SMS marketing?

An effective SMS marketing strategy can take your nonprofit to new heights and deepen your impact. Let's take a closer look at its various benefits:

It can help expand your reach.

In today's digitally-reliant world, it's hard to find someone who doesn't own a cell phone. In fact, **97% of Americans** have a mobile phone, and more than **5 billion people** own a cell phone worldwide. By targeting mobile users, your nonprofit can reliably expand its reach and reach constituents where they already are.

Your nonprofit can also feel confident that your messages will be seen and read by supporters. The average **open rate** of a text message sits at about 99%, with 97% of messages being read within 15 minutes of delivery. Whether you need to send an urgent fundraising appeal or ask supporters to register by your event's deadline at midnight, SMS messaging can help your organization get in touch with supporters quickly to inspire action.



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It's convenient for donors.

With a modern text-to-give campaign that uses form-based fundraising, donating to your nonprofit is easier than ever. Rather than having to find the nearest computer and navigate to your website, donors can simply click on the mobile-friendly link directly from your text message and reach your nonprofit's donation page.

This saves donors time and energy that would otherwise go into digging around your website to locate your organization's donation form. As long as they have their phone in hand, mobile users can complete the donation experience in just a few moments, from anywhere in the world. This increases the likelihood that they'll want to give again to your organization.

Studies find that **mobile giving donations have increased 205%** in recent years, making mobile fundraising a viable way for your organization to bring more revenue to your organization so you can power your meaningful programs, events, and services in the community.

It drives your nonprofit's advocacy efforts forward.

Digital advocacy is becoming an increasingly popular way for nonprofits to bring awareness to important causes and translate online calls for action into offline change. A strong digital advocacy campaign relies on the efforts of its supporters, so why not tap into the power of SMS marketing to take your campaign to the next level?

By leveraging SMS marketing, your nonprofit can easily send educational resources related to your campaign, requests for volunteers at your next protest, and mobile-friendly links to your **petitions** to increase signatures.



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It's simple for nonprofits to run.

Armed with the right tools and strategies, your nonprofit can easily run an engaging SMS marketing campaign. SMS marketing tools like automation, segmentation, and schedule-send reduce nonprofits' efforts and make it easier to personalize donation requests. As a result, your nonprofit will save time that will be better put towards advancing your mission.

Like other nonprofits, you probably have a marketing presence across different channels and may be wondering how to motivate these supporters to opt-in to your texts. But building your contact list doesn't have to be difficult. Include a prompt in your donation form, event registration forms, and other materials that allows supporters to fill in their phone numbers and check a box consenting to receive text messages from your nonprofit.

How does SMS marketing work?

SMS marketing is a simple process for both your nonprofit and its supporters, but it will require planning to set up. Let's run through the general process of how your organization can begin SMS messaging its supporters.

1. Nonprofits work with a text messaging platform to set up a shortcode or long-code and create a keyword for their campaign.
2. Nonprofits advertise their new SMS campaign online to grow their contact list using their existing marketing platforms like email, social media, website, and more.
3. Donors opt-in to an SMS marketing campaign by texting the keyword to the nonprofit's shortcode or long-code.
4. Nonprofits send donation requests, event reminders, and other marketing messages via text message.
5. With form-based text-to-give, donors can click on the mobile-friendly donation link and donate right from their phones.

Do your research to find a strong SMS marketing platform that will meet your nonprofit's needs and streamline your supporter communications. The right SMS marketing platform will allow your organization to reliably message hundreds to thousands of subscribers at once without worrying that your communications won't be seen.

What are some common SMS marketing challenges?

Just like with other marketing tactics, SMS marketing requires time and effort and will evolve over time as your nonprofits' needs change. As a result, you need to be proactive in creating a robust SMS marketing strategy that supports your overarching goals.

One of the biggest challenges in developing a quality SMS marketing campaign is drafting effective text messages. After all, you don't just want supporters to read your messages. You want them to feel inspired and take action to support your cause, whether that be through signing your petition, registering for your next event, or contributing \$20 to your annual fundraising campaign.

Another significant challenge is determining how SMS marketing will fit into your existing marketing strategies and digital presence. You don't want to confuse supporters with different messaging and tone between your SMS messages and other communications like email. Rather, your messaging should be consistent and each marketing channel should work together to promote the same goals.

To navigate around these issues, you'll need to back up your SMS marketing efforts with best practices and tools for success. Let's explore tried and true ways to lead a successful SMS marketing campaign.





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Best practices to run an effective SMS marketing campaign

Crafting a powerful SMS marketing campaign can give your nonprofit the extra push it needs to drive engagement, revenue, and support over time. Use these best practices to put together a winning campaign suited for your nonprofit's specific goals.

Understand your target audience and goals.

When your text messages are framed to your target audience, you'll be able to drive much better results. You can better understand your supporter base by looking at your social media demographic metrics or CRM to assess larger trends in donor behavior. This will inform how you can craft a solid, concise case for support that will motivate your supporters to act.

You'll also need to reflect on your overarching goals and how your SMS marketing strategy functions in your greater fundraising and marketing plans.



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Create a memorable keyword.

When donors opt-in to your campaign, they'll text a keyword to your nonprofit's designated shortcode or long-code. A memorable keyword is easier to market and simple for your donors to text correctly on the first try to sign up for your campaign. Make sure your keyword is brief and relevant to your marketing campaign's purpose.

Use a multichannel strategy to build your contact list.

You can't reach your supporters with your messages if no one opts into your SMS messaging campaign. Advertise your SMS campaign widely across different channels to get the word out:

- **Email**
- **Social media**
- **Website**
- **Phone/direct mail**

If supporters have given your nonprofit their phone number in the past, you can also add them to your contact list. However, make sure you always give constituents the option to opt out of your text messaging campaign at any time. Not only is this legally required by the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, but it also promotes trust between your organization and its supporters.



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Diversify your text messages.

In your SMS messages, you don't want to inundate supporters with donation appeals. Receiving these over and over can cause constituents to lose interest in your campaign and opt out altogether. Instead, diversify your messages to keep supporters actively engaged and informed about your nonprofit's progress.

For example, you can provide general updates, volunteer opportunities, reminders about your upcoming events, or overviews of new projects you're rolling out. Plus, remember to share results of your fundraising campaigns and how these funds will be used to power your mission. This will help donors understand the tangible impact of their support, making it more likely that they'll give again.



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Leverage segmentation to create highly specific messages.

Segmentation allows you to personalize your text messages to different subsets of your audience. This way, you can tap into each supporter's unique motivations for contributing to your organization.

For example, you can segment your audience based on factors like:

- › Recency of opting into your campaign
- › Donation recency
- › Donation frequency
- › Donation amount
- › Location
- › Volunteer status

Segmentation will help you create authentic, one-on-one communication experiences that will inspire supporters to get more involved and take the intended next step. By leveraging automation, you can also make sure that every text message begins with the supporter's name instead of a generic "Hi Donor" opening.



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Closely monitor data and analytics.

Pay attention to unsubscribe rates, clickthrough rates, donor conversion rates, and other important metrics. This will help you understand what types of messages are most likely to inspire action as well as the ideal frequency of your messages. Work with a SMS marketing platform that provides real-time data reports for each text message so you can understand its performance in your greater SMS marketing strategy.

Essential elements of a strong text message

To fuel action and engagement with SMS messaging, you'll need to craft a strong case for support. Make effective text appeals by incorporating the following elements:

- **Include a single call to action.** Asking supporters to complete more than one step in a single message is confusing and can easily lead to a drop in support. Instead, stick to one call to action per message and make it clear what you're requesting. For example, if you're promoting your digital advocacy campaign, you might make a call to action that says, "Sign our petition by midnight to end animal cruelty at Milton's Fur Farm once and for all."
- **Add storytelling elements.** While you have limited space in your text message, there's still enough room to create a story arc and establish an emotional connection with supporters. For example, you can highlight an abandoned animal your welfare organization recently saved and briefly describe the care you provided it, all thanks to donor support.
- **Use impactful images.** Attaching related visuals can be a good move in many cases. Images can help supporters understand who their contributions are helping and

the difference their support makes in the community. Continuing with the animal welfare example, you could include an image of the dog before and after you stepped in to provide lifesaving care.

- **Add personalization.** Texts that are personalized to the recipients can help you form stronger relationships with constituents. Address your recipients with their first names with the help of automation and cite specific details relevant to their involvement in your organization. For instance, you can thank donors for the specific donation amount they gave and explain the impact of their contributions.
- **Give supporters the ability to opt out at any time.** Include in your text messages that supporters can text "STOP" or a similar word or phrase to opt out of your campaign. Before they go, consider directing them to your email newsletter or an alternative way to stay connected.

While these tips will get you started, the exact content of your text messages will depend on your nonprofit's audience and specific goals. Experiment with your messages over time to see which type of content excites supporters the most and increases engagement.

How SMS marketing fits into your existing strategies

Overarching marketing goals

SMS marketing is one piece of your marketing puzzle. Together, all of your marketing platforms should work together to amplify the same messaging and encourage supporters to engage with your nonprofit.

Let's say your organization is struggling to encourage supporters to opt in to your SMS campaign. You can leverage **email marketing** to introduce new people to your nonprofit and get them excited to connect with your nonprofit on multiple platforms, including SMS messaging.

By working with a consent-based acquisition source like **Care2**, your nonprofit can build a fresh, non-toxic email contact list. With these affinity-proven contacts, you can then direct supporters to sign up for your text messaging campaign to hear even more exciting updates about your organization's work.

You can also tap into multichannel outreach to set up different stewardship journeys. For example, configure your text messages so that responding to a specific text automatically puts recipients in a new email journey. Or, configure your messaging so that active email recipients who opt out of text can then be placed in a new email journey that provides ongoing updates on your nonprofit's impactful work.

Digital advocacy

Digital advocacy can include a range of activities, from circulating petitions to asking supporters to create social media posts promoting your cause. With SMS, you can reach supporters in a highly direct way to mobilize support for your campaign. For instance, use text alerts to encourage voting and notify supporters of urgent legislative developments, boost attendance at your next event or demonstration, and ask constituents to sign your petition and share it with friends and family.

Wrapping Up:

The power of SMS marketing

Whether you need to boost fundraising or drive support for your ongoing advocacy efforts, SMS marketing is a surefire way to propel your mission forward.

But you can't simply send generic messages asking for support and hope that they land. The best way to ensure your marketing campaign's success is with a cohesive strategy that closely aligns with your organization's goals.

SMS marketing continues to grow in popularity among businesses, so why shouldn't nonprofits tap into the benefits? With its inherent flexibility and ability to supplement your ongoing marketing efforts, SMS messaging can help develop stronger connections with supporters. Plus, you can advance your advocacy activities through effective text messages, allowing you to generate real change offline.

Learn more about how **Care2** can give your marketing and advocacy strategies an immediate leg-up. Care2 can help you grow your supporter base with fresh email addresses and give you access to a global network of passionate people to launch your advocacy campaigns.



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