



WHITE PAPER

A BUYERS GUIDE

The US Text Messaging Market Place

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OVERVIEW

This document seeks to explain the US market's text messaging services for business customers. It will explain how the market is structured, what type of players there are, and how to choose a supplier.

It will use the experience of 2sms who purchases messages due to the economies of scale in bulk from many of the suppliers in the marketplace. It will offer guidance on how to avoid the pitfalls, reveal common 'marketing' tricks, and explain why a humble text message is not a commodity item.

2sms is a provider of text messaging services. The author is the CEO of 2sms. 2sms therefore declares an interest in the subject matter. In so declaring, 2sms strives in this document to remain as independent and objective as possible.

COMMERCIAL TEXT MESSAGING FACTS

1. An SMS message is sent via a gateway directly to the wireless carrier, while an SMTP message, like any other email, bounces from server to server (this can often happen a half-dozen times) before it arrives.
2. SMS messages travel over a Virtual Private Network (VPN) and are thus secure, while SMTP messages travel unencrypted around the Internet.
3. Cell phone carriers (often reluctantly) deliver SMTP messages for free, while they charge a toll for SMS messages. Because they charge this toll, carriers have a much greater incentive to make sure SMS messages are delivered in a timely fashion. Furthermore, as these messages are routed directly through their computers, carriers can provide you with delivery information--messages that do not arrive are called bounces. With SMTP, you never know if your messages arrived.
4. Perhaps the greatest benefit of SMS messaging over SMTP messaging is its two-way messaging capabilities. This allows your subscribers to respond to messages you send them.

SETTING THE SCENE

So you want to send text messages to your staff, your suppliers, your customers or other stakeholders. Congratulations!

Some interesting stats you have probably considered.

1. For every Smartphone or PDA, with mobile email and internet capabilities, 30 devices cannot do emails.
2. Most Smartphones cost average 30% more than regular mobile phones, therefore organizations deploy Smartphones to upper level managers and mobile workers.
3. Regular mobile phones are in the hands of the majority of employee liable.

4. Most organizations provide only 15%-20% of their staff with corporate liable mobile phones. All remaining staff has personal employee liable mobile phones.
5. Most people spend most of their day away from their desk. They have their keys, their wallet, and a mobile phone. At home, in the car, on public transportation, etc.
6. It takes less time texting information to large group versus voice calls. (Calling 20 people takes approximately one hour. Texting 20 people takes approximately one minute)

Return on investment (ROI) - Use the free ROI tool at www.2sms.com/roi.aspx to learn how SMS can affect your company's bottom line.

HOW TO SEND AN SMS

You can connect into the SMS network in a number of ways:

1. Using your mobile phone
2. Connecting to a mobile phone operators SMS platform directly
3. Connecting to a SMS wholesaler (called aggregators)
4. Connecting to a specialist SMS provider
5. Using a free web based service.

Note: Only one organization can deliver a text message to your mobile phone, which is the mobile phone operator (wireless carrier) you subscribe to.

Note: If you are abroad, your mobile phone operator will pass on (where inter carrier agreements exist) the message to the mobile phone operator you are roaming with additional fees to the end user. These fees are based on international connection fees negotiated between inter carriers; therefore fees are differ by carrier to carrier.

The following table lists some of the attributes of the different types of suppliers in the marketplace. (This table is generated with an educated estimation on enterprise grade messaging only. Consumer messaging is not calculated in to the table. Numbers will vary by wireless carriers, limited to cell tower geography and capacity) and the Using this table should give you a fast track guide to the type of supplier most likely to meet your needs. Lists of suppliers are found later in this document.

Messaging Method	Message per Minute	Minimum Messages per Month	Maximum Messages per Month	Cost per Message
Your phone	45	0	Unlimited	Bundle price
Wireless carriers	300,000	50,000	Unlimited	Volume base
Aggregators	10,000	20,000	Unlimited	\$0.01-\$0.04
Specialist SMS provider	5,000	100	Unlimited	\$0.04-\$0.15
Free web based service	10	0	40? 50? 100?	0
Skype	60	0	Unlimited	\$0.10

Wireless carriers in the USA only permit direct access to a select number of aggregators and large volume customers. Wireless carriers do offer a 'free' service for SMS where customers can send emails that are converted to SMS messages, known in the trade as SMTP SMS (please refer to the SMTP SMS section later in this document).

THE SMS INTERCONNECT FEE

In the US, SMS messages at the wholesale level are accepted by wireless carriers free of charge. This is because US wireless carriers charge their subscribers to receive SMS messages. While this configuration of charging is attractive to organizations that want to send SMS messages, SPAM issues arise because mobile phone subscribers will not want to be charged by their wireless carrier for messages they did not want to receive.

In Europe, Asia and the rest of the world, the wireless carriers charge to deliver messages to their subscriber, rather than charging the subscriber to receive the message. This is known in the trade as 'calling party pays'. For example, UK wireless carriers charge \$0.06 to deliver a message to their subscribers. The interconnect fee prevents the SPAM issue since organizations have to pay for all sent messages.

CONNECTING INTO THE US WIRELESS CARRIERS

The US wireless carriers only allow a few organizations to send messages to them at the wholesale level. The organizations are either SMS wholesalers, known in the industry as 'aggregators', or very large corporate accounts, sending over a million messages per month. A customer wanting to send a few hundred or few thousand messages per month cannot send to the wireless carrier's wholesale platforms directly. Wireless carriers do offer some other services, but these tend to be aimed at the consumer market.

AGGREGATORS

Connections to wireless carriers

The wireless carriers allow the aggregators a free access to their networks, but they do require the aggregators to certify that the message traffic they deliver meets the requirements of the wireless carrier's standards. There is a certification process called 'Provisioning,' which all aggregators are required to undergo. An aggregator who connects a corporate customer is required to cascade the provisioning requirements onto the corporate customer. The rules are very strict, subject to regular audits, the rule is designed to prevent spam, inappropriate messages, and unethical business practices.

Connections between carriers

Aggregators also serve a second function, which is providing connections between the wireless carriers. Unlike Europe, Asia and the rest of the world, where wireless carriers connect to each other over an international network called SS7, US wireless carriers

employ the aggregators to connect with each other (i.e., route messages 'off network' from one carrier to another).

PROVISIONING

To send a message into the US at the wholesale level, a customer will need to engage the services of an aggregator, and need to complete the provisioning process. This is a bureaucratic exercise, which takes approximately 16 weeks. The customer needs to identify how SMS will be used, provide a toll free customer support line, details of terms and conditions, and has to send an 'opt out' message to the receiver's mobile phone. The rules are designed to ensure correct business behaviour, prevent spam, and protect the consumer. The rules are rigid because the working assumption in the rules is that all SMS services are premium rate marketing campaigns. Adapting the wireless carrier's mindset to the business use of SMS for internal communications has been an interesting learning experience. Rules differ slightly between carriers, and all the large Tier 1 carriers require provisioning before you can send SMS messages. Your supplier will be able to help you with this process.

TWO WAY MESSAGING

Unlike Europe, Asia and the rest of the world, there is no concept of long numbers in the USA. For this reason, while sending messages to mobile phones is easy, processing replies is not. In order to process replies, a customer needs to rent a 'short code.' This is a five (5) or six (6) digit number, which is either unique (vanity*) or a randomly assigned number (non-vanity). A short code allows the carriers to route reply messages from mobile phones back to you.

**e.g. vanity license plate (I LUV SMS), googl (46645), yahoo (92466)*

SHORT CODE

Short codes are available for rent. Expect to pay \$650-\$2,000 for a short code setup and \$1,000 - \$1,500 per month for rental, depending on whether you select a unique (vanity) or randomly generated number (non-vanity) short code. Once you have a short code, you still need to get it provisioned with the carriers.

Once you have a short code, all your SMS messages will be sent from this short code number, all messages will arrive on mobile phones with the 'from' number showing as the short code. All replies from the mobile phones will route back to your SMS supplier, who will route them back to you.

SMTP SMS

In the US marketplace, most wireless carriers offer an email based service to allow consumers to send SMS messages to mobile phones as emails addressed to special email

addresses in the format of <mobile phone number>@<wireless carrier.com/net>. For example, sending a message to a Verizon Wireless mobile phone 123-456-7890 can be achieved by sending an email to 1234567890@vtext.com. (Note: You need to know what wireless carrier a mobile number is connected to in order to identify @<wireless carrier.com/net> variable).

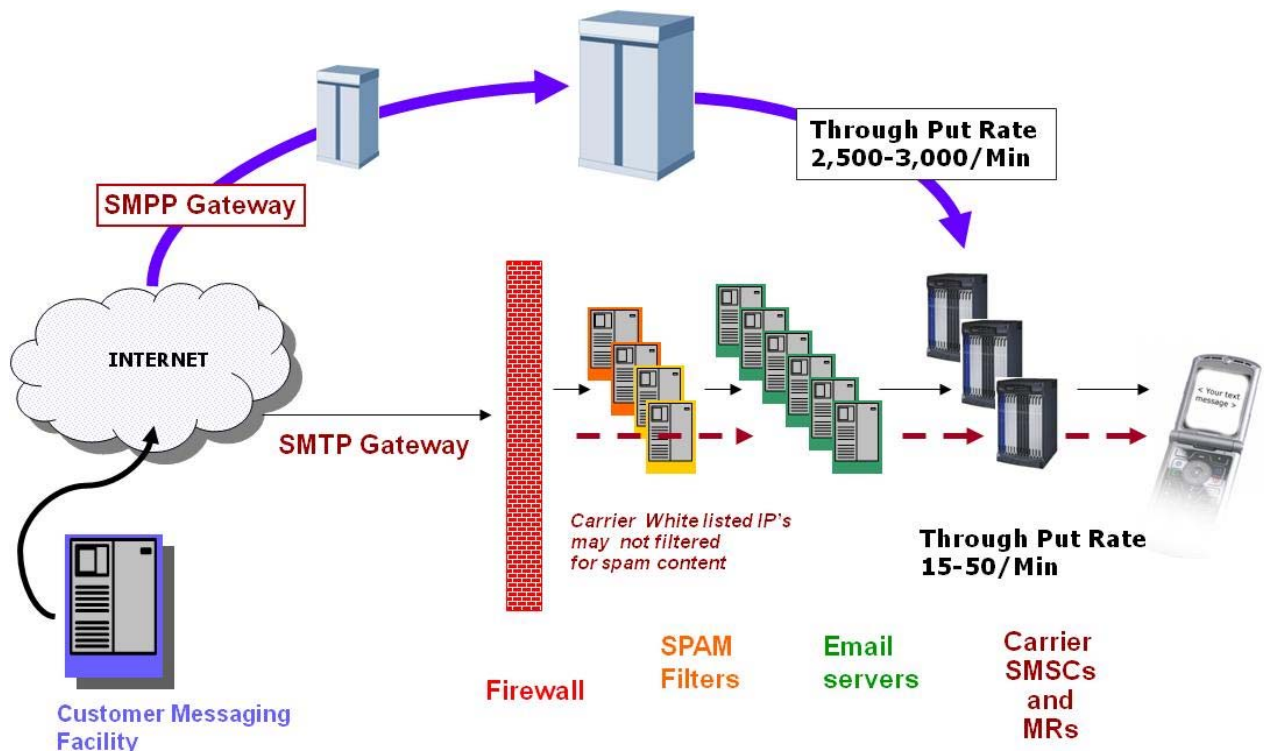
This service is typically free and popular, but has been a victim of its own success. Many suppliers leveraged these gateways to provide services, to organizations such as Airlines, banks, and marketing houses.

With SMTP SMS, two problems arose:

1. The sheer volume of traffic, which generated zero revenue for the carriers from the message senders, caused network congestion.
2. Since mobile phone subscribers pay for messages received, they complained to their service providers when unsolicited messages are received.

In summary, if your business is sending mission critical messages, do not rely on SMTP to deliver SMS messages. Messages can take a few seconds, a few days or never get delivered.

SMPP vs. SMTP



WHY DO SMS PRICES VARY?

Prices vary for five reasons:

1. The cost of SMS price faced by the supplier, e.g., how much the supplier pays their suppliers (aggregators) for SMS delivery.
2. The cost base of the core business of the supplier, e.g. the cost of people, premises, and operations.
3. The additional items chosen by the supplier to improve service, e.g. two technology platform sites not one, or two firewalls not one.
4. Additional services offered, e.g. customer support, software, hosting services, data retention, and ISO27001 certification.
5. The volume of messages you wish to send. Large volume customers need less support per 100,000 messages sent than small volume customers. In addition, large volume customers drive down the cost price in reason #1 (above) for the supplier.

WHAT IS THE PRICE RANGE

Expect to pay \$0.01 to \$0.04 per message for 1,000,000 messages a month up to \$0.20 if your volumes are in the 10's per month. The table below should give you a guide.

Messages per month Up to	Min price	Max price
10	-	\$0.20
1000	\$0.06	\$0.20
10,000	\$0.05	\$0.15
100,000	\$0.03	\$0.10
1,000,000	\$0.01	\$0.04

Use the above table as a guide, and understand that there are usually good reasons for why the price can vary. **Focusing on price alone is an easy mistake to make**, and with text messaging, the old saying of 'buy cheap, buy twice' is very relevant. We experience many customers coming to 2sms after exiting a 12-month contract at a cheap price, looking for the benefits of additional service levels, and realize that a higher price needs to be paid.

BUT EMAIL IS FREE!

Email is free I hear you say!

- No, it is not!
- Email yields less productive working than SMS.

A common misconception is that email is free. This is not the case. Any business' meeting its obligations will have an email server(s), anti spam software, antivirus software, network administrators, email software at the server end, and email software at the end user. Add to this the cost of internet connections, power and hosting, and you are looking at \$0.05 per email. Mobile email requires mobile devices and wireless data plans. Add another \$0.02-\$0.05 to the cost, more if email attachments are used.

Finally, consider this, "which will get a faster response?" A long email sent to a mobile device, or a short SMS message? SMS will win every time. It is faster to deliver, faster to read, and faster to reply.

PRICING 'TRICKS'

I will never forget a new customer who said, "The thing that really upset me was that my first message sent using your competitor cost me \$16,000 – which I was not expecting."

As a major customer of several SMS providers, and a supplier to the market itself, 2sms comes across some interesting techniques for presenting a 'value proposition' to the customer, or in non-marketing speak, 'masking the true cost'. This section will identify many hidden costs your supplier can add on to your final bill.

Item	Description
Set up fees	A setup fee can be used to claw back a low headline price or pay for sales commissions
Monthly or annual account fees	Account fees provide regular and certain income for suppliers, irrespective of customer usage. The supplier has to maintain expensive computer equipment, pay its staff and cover its overheads.
Per user fees	A small per user fee per month, for each customer user, soon adds up. If a customer overestimates how many active users it will have, it will pay for service not used.
Per recipient fee	Very low message costs, but a monthly fee for every mobile phone you send a message.
Customer service fees	A fee for access to a customer's tech support or customer support teams.
Enhanced customer service fees	A fee for premium customer support, e.g. outside office hours, or a fee to have your trouble ticket given a higher priority.
Premium rate support lines	You need support for a product or service that does not work, and you have to pay for the privilege of getting help. SMS providers support phone lines range from toll free to \$1/min. Remember, as the purchaser, you may not call the support line, but your users might.
Software license fees	A supplier may offer additional software, but with a one time or monthly/annual software license fee.
Customization fees	Perhaps you want an additional feature, a new bell

	or whistle. Some companies will charge for this, some will not.
Monthly minimums	Being required to commit to a monthly minimum is a good method for raising the headline price. If you commit to 10,000 messages, but only send 8,000, you lose your balance.
Monthly overages	A twist on monthly minimums. You are quoted a price for an agreed volume, but you will be charged a penal rate should you exceed your agreed volume.
Charging for delivery receipts	You send a message and the mobile phone operators then confirm the message delivery. Some supplies offer this, some do not.
Charging for message reporting	You send a message then you want to run a report to determine if a message has been delivered. Some suppliers offer this, some do not.
Message credits	You purchase a message credit for a very low fee, but it requires more than one message credit to send a message. Examples of one messages credits at \$0.07, and 2 message credits required to send a message can confuse a purchaser who may believe that they are buying a \$0.07 per message.
International pricing	Charging for delivery of international messages where no wholesale premium exists. Not strictly a trick, but be aware some international destinations cost less at wholesale prices than domestic US messages!

FIXED RATE PRICING PLANS

If you are offered a fixed rate-pricing plan, alarm bells should sound. Suppliers offering fixed rate plans are often relying on the free SMTP gateways for service (see section on SMTP SMS). The cheap prices offered by suppliers may be enticing, but you need to do your due diligence to ensure that service can be delivered. Tip – Ask for a 30-day trial.

THE EFFECTS OF THE EXTRAS ON PRICING

You are offered a price of \$0.035 per message for a commitment to 50,000 messages per month. This sounds great, but there are additional fees, such as:

- \$1,000 setup fee
- \$250 monthly account fee
- \$100 monthly fee to access customer service 24/7

Let's model these prices in a spreadsheet. (To make it easy on the eye, I have left out April – August from the table below, but include their numbers in the annual totals.)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Full Year
Messages sent	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	600,000
Per message fee \$	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	
Message cost \$	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	21,000
Set up fee	1,000							
Monthly fee	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	3,000
Customer service fee	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	1,200
total cost	3,100	2,100	2,100	2,100	2,100	2,100	2,100	26,200
Average message cost	0.0437							
Average message cost cents	4.37							

50,000 messages at \$0.035 per message costs \$1,750 per month, or \$21,000 per annum. The additional fees, add \$5,200 to the bill, turning the \$0.035 message into a \$0.0437 message.

Now let's take this one stage further. Let's assume that you sign a contract to send 50,000 messages, but your monthly usage falls short. You are still billed for 50,000 messages.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Full Year
Messages sent	43,000	25,000	48,000	48,000	50,000	37,000	42,000	490,000
Per message fee \$	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	
Message cost \$	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	21,000
Set up fee	1,000							
Monthly fee	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	3,000
Customer service fee	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	1,200
total cost	3,100	2,100	2,100	2,100	2,100	2,100	2,100	26,200
Average message cost	0.0535							
Average message cost pence	5.35							

In this example, you send a total of 490,000 messages per year, but are billed for the contracted 12 * 50,000 = 600,000 messages. The result of 'losing' the messages you do not 'use' is to put the real price up from \$0.035 to \$0.0535 per message.

OTHER PRICE DRIVERS

Core platform

Setting up a service to send text messages can be done using a \$2,000 server, broadband connection and a free database. Web pages on a hosted web site and a connection to a bank of GSM modems, and you have a service from your bedroom office. At the other end of the scale, multiple redundant web and database server farms sitting behind multiple firewalls, with enterprise software and remote monitoring using multiple leased lines and multiple connections to SMS suppliers will provide the same 'visible'

service as the bedroom. The difference is in scalability, speed, reliability, resilience, failover, and information security.

There is a wide range of choices within the supplier market of SMS services. Some surprises have cropped up as 2sms looks for suppliers. Some use free open source databases and free operating systems; some have no protection to SQL injection attacks (A common way for hackers to gain access to databases).

Value adds

Are you looking for a simple SMS service, confident that your IT team can master the underlying SMS language, SMPP (only for a higher volume customers which requires an extra connection to the aggregator), or are you looking for a supplier who can provide software to join your IT systems to the SMS network. Your choice over how much of the SMS technology you want to learn, and how much you are happy to outsource, will drive the price you pay for service.

Some suppliers will give you free software to connect to your platform. Some will charge you. Some will leave you to learn the SMPP (SMS) language on your own.

Certifications

Does your supplier have industry Certifications? If your supplier can point to membership of Partner programs, e.g. Microsoft, IBM, Oracle, and can demonstrate that their solutions have been certified by those partners, then you will have reassurance that you are dealing with an organization you can trust.

Information security

ISO27001 is an international standard for information security. If an organization has this certification, it has passed an initial external examination by an independent tester of its Information Security Management System. This certification is tested bi-annually. ISO27001 is not cheap or easy to implement and maintain. It requires a complete re-think on how to handle information. All SMS suppliers handle sensitive information for customers. Are they in control of that information? Ask if your supplier is ISO27001 certified. (Tip... Certified, not registered!) Ask for their certificate to prove it.

Hackers

The SMS networks are a natural target for hackers. Access to the SMS networks allows for mass spamming to mobile phones. The good news is that the SMS industry is very good at preventing hackers.

I would recommend you ask your potential supplier to demonstrate that they have paid for an independent third party penetration test, and ask to view the report.

Contingency planning

"We apologize for the loss of service due to unforeseen circumstances." How many times in business life do we come across this?

Power outages happen, leased lines go down, and servers fail. How much contingency has your supplier built in to their process? 2sms has experienced suppliers at all levels who lose service for the most unlikely of reasons; indeed, 2sms itself does not have a 100% record. Does your supplier publically declare its outages? Do you have access to that information?

2sms receives updates from its suppliers when outages occur. In aggregate, this is a weekly; almost daily; occurrence across the suppliers we use. What protection do you have if your supplier has an outage? What if you have an incident when they have an outage?

Almost all planned maintenance is done on non business hours. Depending on the time zone of your supplier, this may not be at a time convenient to you. I have had one supplier's CEO claim no outages in 18 months – despite our records showing contradictory information.

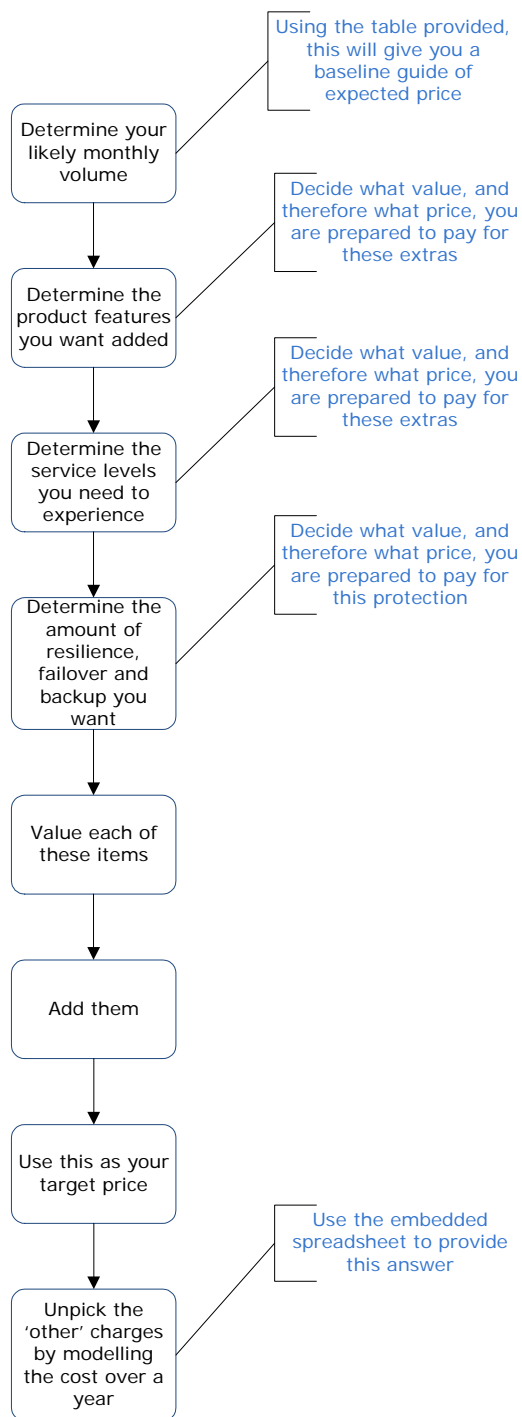
Please use your due diligence process to quantify this issue, and get your risk management department and your internal control department involved. You will experience supplier outages, regardless how small these might be, they may occur at times that impact your business.

Business resumption

Does your supplier have a business continuity plan? Has it been tested independently? Some will have a plan, some will not. When working at Citibank, the UK contingency site was destroyed by a terrorist bomb. A couple of weeks later, the London Aldwych bus bomb took off the front door of the main Citibank office. Lightning does strike twice at the same location!

WHAT IS THE RIGHT PRICE?

The right price is the price you believe represents value for the service you are receiving. As with all suppliers of services, the marketing departments will creatively explain why their offering adds value. Determine the value point you seek using the following flowchart.



DUE DILIGENCE QUESTIONS

Below are the range of due diligence questions we have been asked over the years. This list is not thorough, and we have only included questions that are relevant to a customer

seeking the supply of generic SMS services. However, the list will provide a starting point for your research.

It is a personal project of the author to make these questions available as an XML document, in an attempt to submit into the public domain as a document that will assist customers in composing their due diligence questions. Visit the 2sms blog at www.2sms.blogspot.com for news on this project.

Service Overview

- Please use this section to give a brief overview of your service. Your description should include the key areas you believe give differentiation.

Delivery

- What options are there for 2sms customers to deliver messages to 2sms, either directly or via a third party, for onward distribution, e.g., leased lines?
- For each option, who will arrange, maintain and pay for the delivery channel?
- What protocol options are available, e.g. SMPP?
- What is your capability for 'two way SMS'.

Security

- How do you ensure the security of customer's data? Please state with reference to data integrity, confidentiality and availability.
 1. Physical security
 2. Server construction
 3. Web server
 4. Anti virus
 5. PC lockdown
 6. Server management
 7. Secure connection
 8. Firewall
 9. Restrictive access
 10. Database
 11. Data backup
 12. Code generation
 13. Unauthorised access
 14. Privacy of data
- What security accreditations do you hold?
- Has your service experienced any security breaches?

Performance/Service Level Agreement (SLA)

- Speed of use and consistency of performance are important considerations. Please describe the mechanisms put in place to guarantee continuity of service. As a

- minimum, this should include details of contingency, resilience, redundancy (to include details of physical location of hosting centres) and backup arrangements.
- What are your committed service levels? Your answer would be strengthened if you can supply data (3rd party audited if possible) to substantiate your SLA claims.
 - Please state any restrictions upon us conducting an audit of the service (including your and third party premises) prior and subsequent to launch.

Project Implementation

- Assuming no dependencies on the customer side, please state indicative time scales from start of project through to testing and subsequent launch.
- Could the customer launch the service today?
- Please list the key milestones in the project implementation (with elapsed time/'man days' of effort for each stage).
- If possible, give evidence of this project timeline from other implementations.
- Describe briefly the project team structure your organization would put in place to support the implementation. Please include details of technical, testing, legal and project management resource.

Management Information

- What information are you able to provide for customers to monitor customer service and performance against service levels?

Track Record and Scope for Growth

- Please state the number of companies to which you currently supply SMS distribution services and the total volume of SMS messages distributed. Do your arrangements with these companies differ to the proposals stated within this document and if so, how?
- 2sms customers are often global organizations. Please state your capabilities for this service to be extended to customers resident outside the US.
- How many messages are you able to deliver for us per month? If you are expecting this capacity to change over the next 12 months then please provide details.

Pricing

- Please state all costs for implementing and operating this service. Indicate which costs are one off up-front/set up costs and those that reoccur.
- If message costs vary by network operator then please explicitly state these costs.
- What is the minimum contract period your organization operates?
- Please indicate your support charges. What do these support charges cover?

Support

- Describe what your capabilities are for telephone and email support.
- Do you operate these support services yourself?
- What are the operating hours of your support services?

- Please provide SLA commitments for fault and question resolution

Certifications

- Please state all recognised certifications held by the company and any which are currently being worked towards.

SUMMARY

You are looking for a supplier for text messaging services.

- You can expect to pay between \$0.01 and \$0.20 per message.
- Beyond the text message transmission, there are services you may or may not want to purchase.
- Pricing can be complex.
- Cheap SMS has its risks.
- Do not commit to annual contracts.
- Understand what you are purchasing.
- Undertake due diligence.
- Try a supplier out before you buy. All should offer free trial accounts.

TOP 10 QUESTIONS CHECKLIST

1. **Can I (the customer) test the service with full features at no cost and with no obligation?**
Key Point: You should always test drive the product before you purchase without any obligations. Confirm SMS supplier's marketing claims before you send them a check. SMS suppliers who are confident with their product and their marketing claim will offer free test drive.
2. **Do you provide software solutions and integration tools with sample code? Do you charge for this service?**
Key Point: Many vendors can offer lower fee per message but will have to make up the margin somewhere. Software integration and tech support are the area where SMS supplier can charge for an additional fee. Watch out for hidden fees.
3. **Can I start sending messages through any of these methods, straight away, without having to talk to a salesperson?**
Key Point: You want the solution that is ease of use and simple to implement in to your business settings. You want the product that will implement immediately and SMS supplier who will provide you with additional technical support without an extra cost.
4. **When I do want help, do you offer 24/7/365 technical support and customer service with no charge? Is your phone number a toll free phone number?**
Key Point: User errors do occur and systems will run in to glitches, therefore, you want to look for an organization that will provide a technical support at all times. More and more business is opening their doors to customers worldwide. Global business cannot stop service due to US holidays and off business hours. You want to be able to get a live tech support anytime and any day.
5. **If your message price is below \$0.03, how are you making money?**
Key Point: You will see many offers. Every business must sustain their profit zone or economy will stop. Providing a quality service costs money for SMS supplier. Remember the common theory "buy cheap, buy twice". Read our buyers guide to learn how SMS fees are structured.

6. **If you require me to buy messages 'up-front', do I have to use them in the current month, or do they stay on my account until used?**
Key Point: Business will go through a cycle of high and low traffic. Protect your purchase by choose a SMS supplier who will roll over unused message to the following month with a monthly plan.
7. **Do you provide delivery reports for all messages sent? Does this cost extra?**
Key Point: Watch out for hidden fees. Many SMS supplier will charge additional fees for instant reporting and storage of sent messages.
8. **How long have you been in business? Do you belong to any industry or trade associations?**
Key Point: If your supplier can point to membership of Partner programs, e.g. Microsoft, IBM, Oracle, and can demonstrate that those partners have certified their solutions, then you will have reassurance that you are dealing with an organization you can trust.
9. **Can you give an example of your customer list who is utilizing their service day-to-day during business hours as well as non business hours with references?**
Key Point: One time purchase (i.e. emergency planning) customers are NOT using your supplier's service every day, only every day users who are relying on their supplier's service 24/7/365 can speak honestly about how reliable and customer support experience.
10. **Can you provide evidence of your ISO27001 certificate for Information Security?**
Key Point: ISO27001 is an international standard for information security. If an organization has this certification, it has passed an initial external examination by an independent tester of its Information Security Management System. This certification is tested bi-annually. ISO27001 is not cheap or easy to implement and maintain. It requires a complete re-think on how to handle information. All SMS suppliers handle sensitive information for customers. Are they in control of that information? Ask if your supplier is ISO27001 certified. (Tip... Certified, not registered!) Ask for their certificate to prove it.

LIST OF SMS PROVIDERS

Supplier	Contact information
2sms	www.2sms.com
	877-276-7266
	Support-us@2sms.com

Wireless Carriers	Website
AT&T	www.att.com
Sprint	www.sprint.com
T-mobile	www.t-mobile.com
Verizon Wireless	www.verizonwireless.com

Aggregator	Website
Clickatel	www.clickatel.com
mBlox	www.mblox.com
MX Telecom	www.mxtelecom.com
Sybase365	www.sybase365.com
Verisign	www.verisign.com

CAPABILITIES MATRIX

2sms accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of this information, and will gladly correct any errors found by the reader. Send corrections to support-us@2sms.com. The SMS marketplace constantly changes, so services offered should be checked with the supplier for accuracy. The list of vendors below includes organizations that partner with each other. Where a partner's capabilities are provided under another's brand, a 'Y' is given to the capability of both partners. Where partner A does not supply a capability in the brand of partner B, only partner A is flagged as a 'Y'. A blank entry means the author cannot verify the information.

	Operator	Aggregator	Large volume	Mid volume	Small volume	Send from web site	Software	24/7 support	ISO27001
2sms	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
AT&T	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N		N
Sprint	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N		N
T-mobile	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N		N
Verizon Wireless	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N		N
Clickatel	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y		N
mBlox	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Fee	N
MX Telecom	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N		N
Sybase365	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N		N
Verisign	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N		N

	XML gateway	Online message reporting	Message storage > 1 month	Minimum dual site platform	< 3 suppliers	Outages listed online	Online service availability
2sms	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
AT&T				Y	N		
Sprint				Y	N		
T-mobile				Y	N		
Verizon Wireless				Y	N		
Clickatel	Y			Y	Y		
mBlox	Y	N		Y			
MX Telecom	Y			Y			
Sybase365	Y	Y		Y			
Win	Y			Y			
Verisign	Y	N		Y			

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

For questions or comments, please contact the author, Tim King, at 877-276-7266 or via email at tim.king@2sms.com.