



YOUR PRACTICE / BUSINESS

## SMS Marketing for Your Practice

Antonio Arias | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- If you've been looking for a way to communicate with your patients more regularly, SMS marketing might be your most effective and affordable option.
- SMS text marketing gives you a direct line to your patients to send updates, appointment reminders, or just follow-up with them about their most recent visit.
- SMS text-message marketing has a higher response and open rate than emails, and the click-through rates also rank higher.

Do you receive text messages from companies letting you know about offers or giveaways, or simply sharing news? If your answer is yes, then you have opted in for SMS (short message service) text-message marketing. SMS text-message marketing uses various platforms and software to send personalized, timely and sometimes interactive messages.

While your favorite restaurant might send you the latest buy-one, get-one-free entrée offer, is SMS marketing something you should do in your practice - and what would that look like? What are the benefits? If you've been looking for a way to communicate with your patients more regularly, but don't have the staff availability to follow-up by phone or direct mail, SMS marketing might be your most effective and affordable option.

#### Communicate Directly With Your Patients

SMS text messages have a high open rate, much higher than email, and don't often get marked as spam, which means the messages get delivered directly to your patients and will most likely be read. SMS text marketing gives you a direct line to your patients to send updates, appointment reminders, or just follow-up with them about their most recent visit.

One of the keys of SMS text marketing is that your patients will need to "opt-in" to this service.

One way to do this is to obviously make sure you have each patient's cell phone number. Most supply this easily as the best way to reach them anyway. After their appointment, simply send a text message that says something like, *Thanks for coming in today! If you would like to receive updates from us, please reply YES to this text. See you at your next appointment!*

### Efficient and Targeted Information

SMS text-message marketing has a higher response and open rate than emails, and the click-through rates also rank higher (approximately 45% and 35%, respectively). This allows you to efficiently deliver messages to your patients and direct traffic to your website.

SMS is also a great customer service tool. In the age of the internet, people can search your site and ask questions at all hours. You can't possibly provide 24/7 patient support, but with SMS text-message marketing, you can automate answers to your most frequently asked questions (FAQ), such as office hours, contact information, services provided, appointment availability, etc.

Allowing patients to text a question and get a response without tying up your office staff with a phone call means patients get the information they need quickly, and you save staff time for more important office needs.

### SMS Tips: Uses, Cost and More

SMS text-message marketing is a great way to establish a connection and build trust with your patient base. Probably the easiest and most effective way to use SMS in your practice is to send appointment reminders and/or reschedule appointments. Missed appointments are a common complaint in many practices. With SMS messaging, you give patients the option to cancel or reschedule before their appointment time, allowing you to offer that slot to another patient.

Another option is to use SMS messaging to send health tips and office updates. Sending weekly tips helps keep you connected and engaged with your patients, keeping you top of mind. Are you offering a new service at your practice? Let your patients know with a personalized SMS message. Do you have a new colleague joining the practice? Have your office hours changed? SMS messaging is an affordable, personal and efficient way to share this information.

A quick Google search will provide you with several options for SMS text-message marketing. Services like Textedly, EZTexting, SlickText, Thryv, and SimpleTextin offer a variety of plans and platforms, depending on your needs. You might want to start with a basic and inexpensive version that will allow you to scale your growth accordingly.

Many of these companies even offer a free trial period so you can get a feel for how it works and what features you need ... and what features you don't need. Prices range from around \$20 per month to as high as \$3,000 per month, depending on the number of messages sent.

For example, one plan offers 600 monthly text messages for \$26 per month. Depending on the size of your patient base, this could be perfect for you; or it could be more than you need, so make sure you do your homework to find the best option for your practice and patients. And most of these programs can be set up same day and offer support staff to help get you started. Make sure there is technical help available during your office hours (or even better, after hours), just in case you have an issue with the service.

Everyone likes convenience, so SMS text messaging just might be the best fit for you and your office staff, as well as your patients. Explore your options, choose the plan that works for you, and start reaching your patients with personalized and efficient communication that connects them to

you and your practice.

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