Texting:
The Secret Sales Tool for Your Gym

Why texting?

Let's start with the obvious: Texting is popular. Today, texting and multimedia messages like photos, graphics, and video can all be sent and received by most modern cellphones. If you send a text to someone, there's a very high probability it will be read. As a matter of fact, even way back in 2009 the New York Times called texting "the closest thing in the information-overloaded digital marketing world to a guaranteed read." Wow, if only the writer of that article could have jumped forward less than a decade to see what "information overload" really is! However, before Instagram, Snapchat, or even before Facebook became so ubiquitous, there was SMS messaging, otherwise known as "texting."

Before you decide to download a list of all your prospects and client phone numbers to start texting them, you must know how and why to yield the incredible power of texting with care.

With open rates as high as 100%, texting can be a guaranteed way to delight and earn trust. However, it can be even easier to do the exact opposite. It's because of these incredibly high (seemingly by default) open rates that you need to ensure you're sending the right message at the right time to the right people.
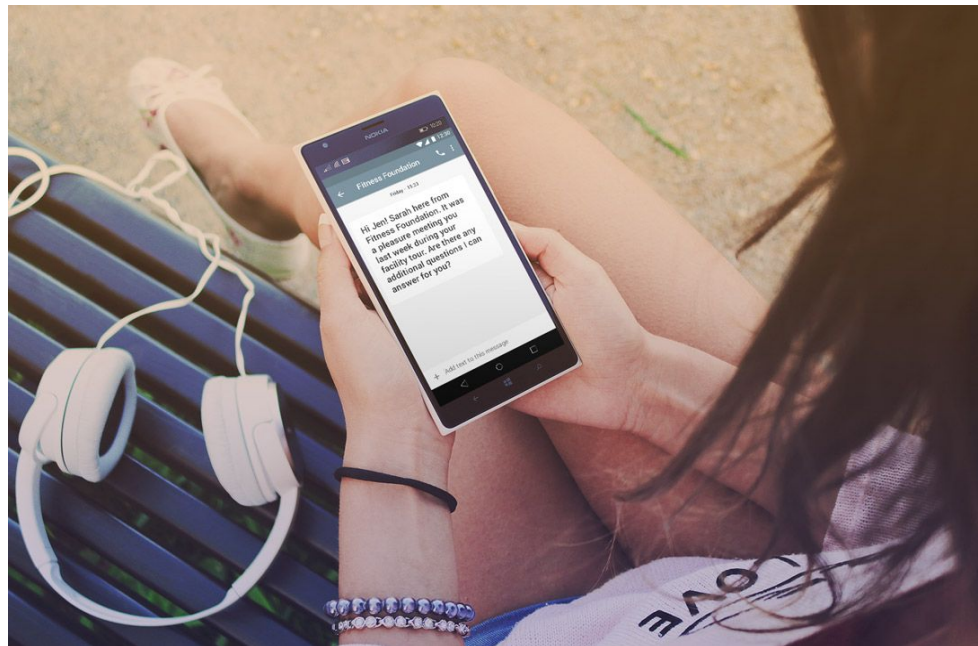
Warning: Think before you text. This is going to be a recurring theme of the e-book. By sending someone a text, you are entering into the recipient's personal space. A text is more intimate and immediate than email, it happens on a device that rarely leaves the recipient's side.

A good rule of thumb is to think of texting a member or client as if you're knocking on their front door at home or car window. No matter what, you will get their attention… you just need to make sure they're happy to be hearing from you.

That being said, don't be afraid. Have a read through this e-book as it will help to demystify B2C texting so that you can start benefitting from something only the smartest gyms and fitness businesses do.

Getting Started

Even deciding to implement texting as an outbound and inbound communication tool can make the most technical gym or fitness business owner want to unplug from the internet and go live in the woods for a while. "Another @#%$ thing I need to setup and manage and deal with?!"

Yes, you are right. Any texting campaign or initiative is yet another thing that has to be set up and managed. However, with just a little forethought, texting can become an integral part of your organization, and a huge part of how you close deals and ensure that your revenue graph is always going up and to the right.

Texting at gyms or fitness businesses can be used in many different ways. You may want to give your salespeople another tool in their arsenal for following up with prospects. You may want to provide your members with a number they can use to text you when they have questions or comments. It's obvious that there are numerous ways of implementing, and effectively using, texting at your gym.

The Two Types of B2C Texting

Inbound Texting - When members or prospects *text you* or something related to your business.
Some examples of inbound texting:
- Incorporate texting into your sales process by allowing prospects to contact your sales team via a dedicated text number.
- Offer a text-only number for your existing members that they can use to ask questions. This will give the sender a feeling of connection and make them feel heard, which translates into even more evangelists for your business. Just make sure to respond to their messages or it could make things worse.
- Run a contest where the person has to send a text to a specific number in order to enter.

Outbound Texting - When *you text* prospects or members.
Some examples of outbound texting:
- Notify all members that the facility will be closed due to weather.
- Appointment, class, or event reminders.
- Send out a text to a segmented list regarding a limited time offer.
- Cut down on your sales cycle by setting up targeted text messages that your salespeople can use to follow-up with prospects.
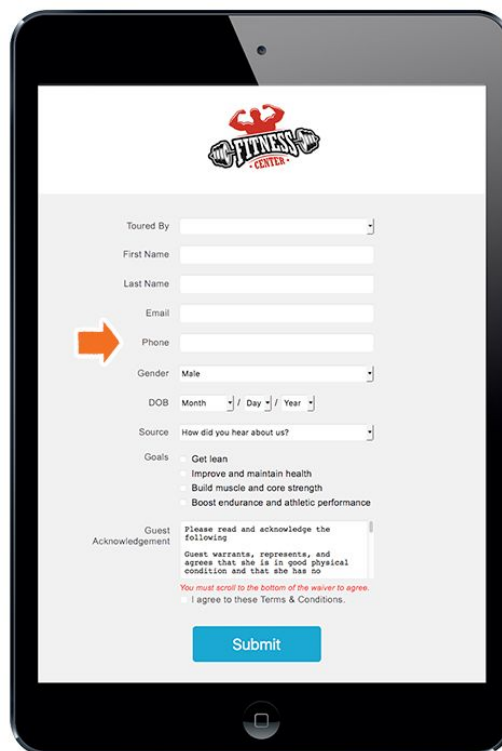
This e-book is focused on outbound texting in regards to sales and increasing revenue. The main reason to use outbound texting as part of a sales and marketing initiative is to communicate something you'd like the recipient to take immediate action on, or be made immediately aware of.

Getting Phone Numbers, Creating Your Lists, and Segmenting

So you're ready to implement or improve your very own outbound texting program for your gym or fitness business. Excellent! Just the act of considering to do this means there's a good chance you're already ahead of your competition, but even if you're not we're going to help you understand the best practices and tips and tricks regarding B2C text messaging for your gym or fitness business. Our goal is to make outbound texting a staple of your revenue and retention strategies.

That being said, before you can really do anything with B2C texting, you need some phone numbers to add to your lists. We're not going to go into detail as to where to find those phone numbers as we're assuming you already have some to work with.

If you aren't already collecting phone numbers on your intake or prospect lead forms then you should implement them immediately. Since the way in which you acquire phone numbers needs to be mostly organic, you're missing one of your greatest phone number collecting opportunities if you don't make it a part of your prospecting and sales flow. And if you're going to start collecting prospect phone numbers, you'll want an intake system that can help keep everything organized and is ready for texting initiatives from day one.

Example of Club OS's Digital Guest Waiver

Segmenting Lists

It is ~~almost~~ never appropriate to send a mass-text to your entire member or prospect lists. Just because you're running a special on a new class doesn't mean your entire member list will be interested.

We've said this before, but it bears repeating since we love analogies: Would you send the same birthday card to your grandma as you would your 3-year-old niece? No? Well, why not? They're both having a birthday, aren't they? Oh, you mean because they're about 80-years apart in age that they might appreciate different messaging on what you send them so that it has the greatest impact?! Makes sense to us!

Once you've gathered together some phone numbers to work with, you'll want to start thinking about how you will divide, or "segment," them. Since segmenting can get very complicated very quickly, we'll focus on just a couple examples and then once you take on your own texting initiative you can expand as you go along.

The reason segmentation can get complicated so quickly is not because the act of segmenting is in and of itself is complicated, but rather that when a business owner or marketer sees the potential in segmented text lists it can be hard to stop coming up with segmentation ideas! This is what truly separates growth-focused gyms from the rest. (And hey, if you love segmenting lists as much as we do, don't forget to [check out our other free e-book on email marketing](#)).

Your First Two Segmented Texting Lists
- Current members/clients
- Prospective members/clients

Obvious? Yes. Do some businesses still insist on sending the same communication to both members and prospects? Yes. That's why we think it's important to start simple.

Current Members and Clients

Although it may seem odd, the majority of your texts will be sent to current members in the form of appointment reminders, monthly check-ins, etc. This is also a great outlet to remind your members about the ancillary products/services you offer such as PT and group classes. Having your trainers or salespeople individually reach out to your members adds a personal touch and increases the likelihood that they will sign up for these other offerings.

Also, retention is just as important as sales. If you have a great sales month, but lose over half your members, then it wasn't such a great sales month after all. Keeping in touch with your current members on a personal level allows you to increase your retention rates and in turn, increase your referral rates as well. A simple text to each member every other month makes your gym seem more personal.
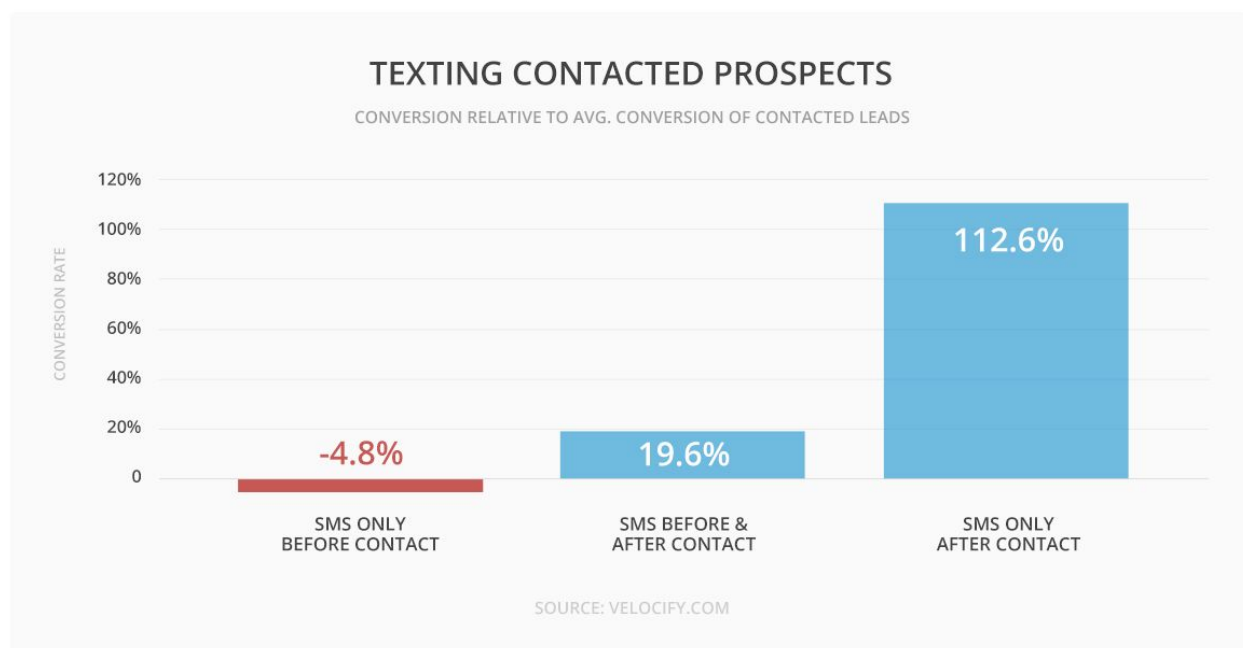
Prospects

Using texting to reach your prospects should really be used in a way to grow the relationship and talk with your prospect in their preferred method. For example, when a web lead comes in, you immediately give them a call. After talking for 10 minutes about what you offer, what they are looking for, and their schedule, you ask if it's okay to text them about their appointment coming up. Once you get the OK, you send a thank you text, and a reminder text the next day about their appointment. **You might find that**

some prospects will only text you back, and hate phone calls or emails. This makes texting all the more worthwhile, because you have found a great communication method with your prospect that your competition isn't equipped to handle. As we always say, you want to be where your prospects are, but your competition isn't.

It's also a great idea to consistently follow-up with prospects using text. If there is a missed appointment, a special going on at the end of the month, or a free training session, let them know! A short and sweet text that is to the point will get more attention than a long, drawn out voicemail.

Warning: Don't text prospects unless there is an established relationship. According to a [survey](#) by Velocify, "texting in the sales process can lead to conversion gains of more than 100% *when used after the first contact*." What this means is that if a prospect fills out a form on your website, the first communication method you use to contact them should not be texting.

Legalities of Texting

Although texting as a sales and marketing communication tool is becoming increasingly popular, many companies don't use it out of fear of the legalities that surround the act of texting prospects and members.

The Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) states that as of October 16th, 2013, you must get written consent to send mass marketing text messages to consumers. If you are sending out one mass message, you need written consent. If you are just sending individual appointment reminders, you don't need consent. The rules around texting may seem complex, but there is a fairly simple step you can take that makes sure you have covered all of your bases:

Have every single prospect and customer check a box or initial a form that shows they acknowledge that they will be texted by your company. There are a couple of ways you can do this that don't sound as scary to prospective members:

- "Sign up to receive our specials and appointment reminders."
- "Receive club specials and club announcements through text."

> ✅ Sign up to receive our specials and appointment reminders.

By adding this language to something like a Digital Guest Waiver, you're ensuring that your business is compliant and won't get in any legal trouble later. Better safe than sorry!

The above language and contents of this e-book are not intended to be legal advice or relied upon for compliance with privacy laws. Readers should consult an attorney to determine how the law applies to their particular circumstances. Also, please understand that the law in this area constantly evolves and changes. Certain of the recommendations and strategies set forth above may be out of date or superseded.

Buying Texting Lists

Don't buy lists. Don't share lists. Don't even look in the direction of someone else's lists. Ok, that's a bit extreme, but we do mean it. You will not find success by acquiring a list of random phone numbers and sending them a text message about an incredible offer you're running. It's not going to work and it will actually do the opposite of what you're intending it to do.

"When you look at the dark side, careful you must be. For the dark side looks back." – Yoda
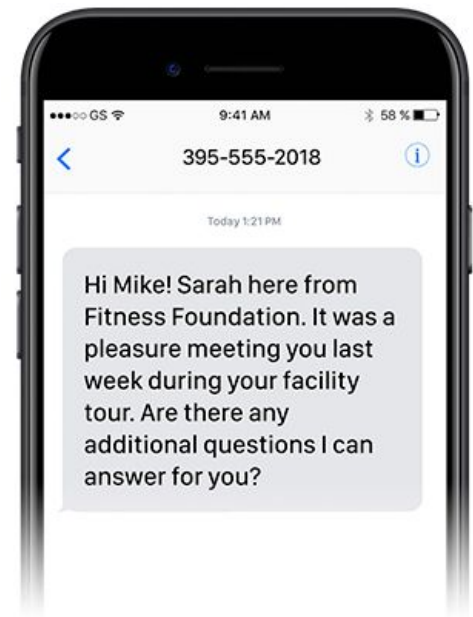
What to Send Each Segment

As discussed in the previous section, in order to have a real effect with outgoing text messaging you'll want to segment your lists to ensure each text you send is received by the right person at the right time and for the right reason.

For example, if you want to get started very simply you could create a rule that reminds you or your salespeople to send a text to any prospect that has taken a tour of your facility, but not yet become a member.

To write that out in "marketing speak" and to get more specific you'd say something like, "If a prospect takes a tour, but doesn't become a client within 1-week of the tour, send them a text message that says, *"Hi [name]! Sarah here from Sarah's Gym. It was a pleasure meeting you last week during your facility tour. Are there any additional questions I can answer for you?"*

Setting up a workflow like that can be incredibly easy if you're using software that's made to facilitate such texting activities, but if you're going to try to go the DIY route things will get complicated.

The problem with trying to handle this type of sales-based texting campaign yourself is that it's nearly impossible to scale as a manual system. The same goes for smaller gyms, clubs, or studios. Inevitably, an opportunity is lost due to a texting follow-up not being sent or the same text going out multiple times. Note: We don't like to toot our own horn (yes we do), but [Club OS can solve the lack of follow-up](#) problem just like it does for 2,000+ gyms already.

But what if you still feel like you simply have no idea what to send your recipients regardless of what fancy segmented list you've put them in?

Well, for one thing you will quickly learn what you can and can't send because your recipients will tell you one way or another. Even if they don't opt-out of receiving your texts (and we'll get more into handling opt-out requests in a moment), a non-action with your text can be just as bad since it could mean the recipient has mentally opted out but not actually gone through the motions of literally opting out. Unfortunately it's rare to annoy someone into buying from you, so if you're sending texts that aren't being read that could someday soon contribute to being reported for spam or at the very least create a negative connotation of your brand.

"Ok, but like, literally, what can I send?"

Oh, so you want to know what you can actually send in a text messaging campaign. Well, as you are probably aware, most cell phones can receive texts, emoji, images/photos, videos, and now even songs and previews of web pages right within the text window. However, the problem is that feature capabilities of smartphones vary incredibly. The only surefire way to get your texts delivered is to send text-only messages and under 160 characters.

Fun Fact: Why do older and non-smartphone cell phones have a 160 character per-message texting limit? We're glad you asked. Back in 1985, a german communications researcher named, Friedhelm Hillebrand, completed some self-designed, unscientific tests to figure out the typical number of characters in order to send the most efficient message possible. The number he came up with was 160 characters and telecommunications, and some say the world, has never been the same. Heck, even Twitter's 140 character limit is based around cellular's 160 character limit. 20 characters for your Twitter username and 140 characters for you to describe how delicious the parfait you had for breakfast was.

All that being said, it would require the recipient of your text messages having a non-smartphone to experience any sort of character-receiving limitation. So if the service you use to send texts allows for it, you should be safe sending more than 160 characters per message.

"2 lol or not 2 lol?" That is the question.

It may seem like the cool, modern thing to do, but we highly suggest avoiding the use of "internet speak" in your text communications. Even if your ideal clients are millennials, internet speak can come across as condescending. However, we still leave it to you to know your audience. If you know they will respond positively to a few uses of "imo" or "lolz" then you'd be doing yourself a disservice by *not* utilizing them.

And let's not forget… it doesn't matter if every other word is "lol" or if you send a very serious, thought out text, **every single word you use in your outbound sales/marketing text communications should encourage the recipient to take the specific action you want.**

Using Emoji 📈

While we do discourage you from using internet speak, we encourage you to explore using emoji in your text communications! Since emoji can only load on modern smartphones, we advise you to use emoji sparingly and only to increase the visibility of what you're sending and not be the actual message itself. While it is fun to make emoji sentences (💡 + 📱 = 🤳), if someone doesn't have emoji all they'll see is a bunch of weird characters that mean nothing. So if you're going to use emoji, make sure they compliment your main message. "Hi, Bob! Come in today, or tap this link (http://link.com), for 50% off those juices you love. 🍊🍇"

How to Inspire the Recipient Into Taking An Action

As we mentioned earlier, the main goal of an outgoing texting campaign is to get the recipient to take the desired action that you've defined as quickly as possible. Whether that action is to text you back or tap a link and signup for something, you'll want to put a huge focus on ensuring everything within the text you send points the recipient towards completing that action. Completion of the action then leads to the conversion which typically leads to $$$ and the realization that you've accomplished the goals you've set. **See how it all comes together so beautifully?**
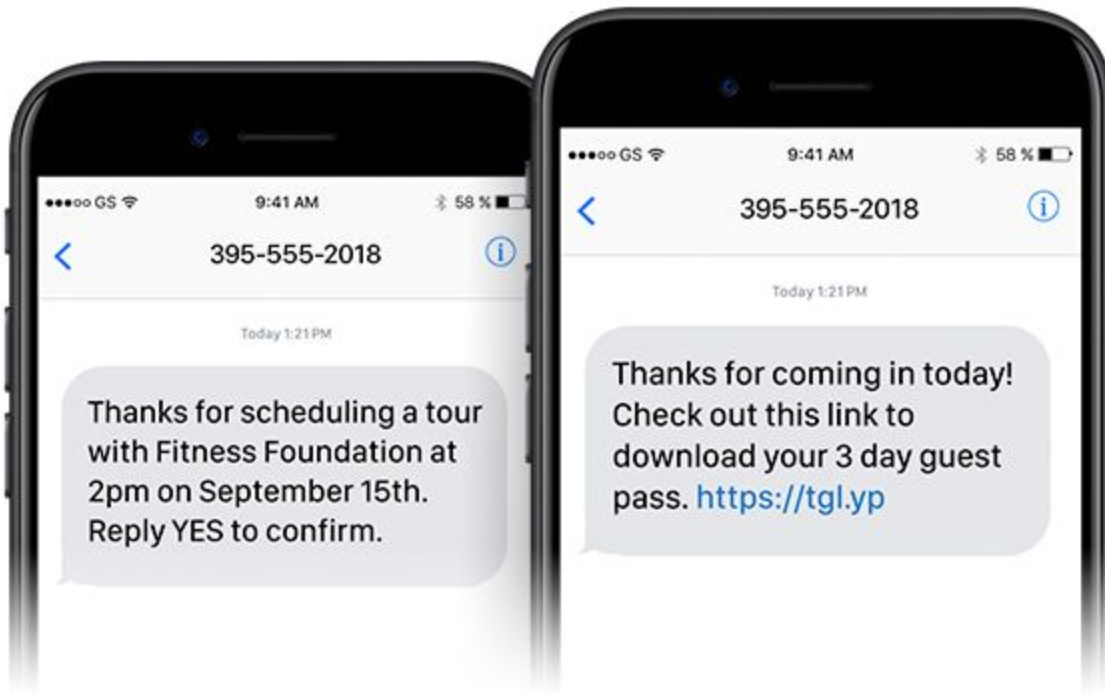
What are some ways in which you can inspire your text recipients to take immediate action? Give a sense of urgency. If the recipient has been going back and forth trying to decide whether or not to signup, consider sending them a "today only" type of offer. Of course, you can't forget to actually mention that the offer is for a very limited time.

When to Send

After you've decided what you can send that will assist you in achieving your goals, it's time to decide when your texts will be sent. Of course, you've already done some thinking on this in the previous section since knowing what you're going to send can depend on when you're going to send it. However, because deciding on the "when" isn't always clear, we felt it deserved its own section.

In our opinion, unless your clients are mostly vampires there is no need to be sending text messages outside of normal business hours (+/- depending upon your current or ideal clientele). You must also keep in mind that if you're a larger gym with locations all over the country that your business hours may not be the same as the person you're contacting. 7am in LA is 10am in NYC, don't make the mistake of texting people before their first cup of coffee.

The more you know about your texting lists, the more you'll know about when it's appropriate to text them. Of course, it's impossible to know for sure that your targeted recipient isn't in the middle of enjoying an apple and can't respond to your text, but if you've done even some basic segmenting and targeting, there's a good chance they'll be happy to be eating their apple with a side of whatever awesome text message they just received from your business!

Sending Time and Day Ground Rules:

Not everyone keeps their phones on silent. Especially, as we already stated, something to consider if you have clients across multiple timezones. Also, think about the reason for the message. What is the action you'd like them to take? What goal does it help achieve? Is it more appropriate to send it on a weekday morning or afternoon?

The Other "When"

"When" doesn't just mean date and time, it also means "when" in your prospect or member's buying journey. For example, did you know that if you send a prospect a text before you ever speak with them on the phone there's a 39% chance you'll never hear from that prospect again?

You may have also noticed that we included members when talking about the buyer journey. Just because someone has gone from prospect to member doesn't mean you should stop selling to them. If anything, your best clients will be the ones most likely to buy from you repeatedly. Keep that in mind when deciding what texts are important and valuable enough to send to them based entirely on where they are in their buyer journey. Of course, this doesn't apply to notification texts such as your facility closing due to weather etc.

How to Handle Opt-Out Requests

Part of the goal of this e-book is to prevent as many people from opting out of your text communications as possible. To do this you have to really focus on understanding the person you're messaging and what the purpose and goal of the message is.

How you will literally handle opt-out requests can be simple and automated. It can also be a more complex and manual activity thus creating another project for you or someone on your staff to have to closely monitor and deal with.

If a text recipient decides they don't want to receive your texts anymore 🙁 you must provide them with a way to remove themselves from your text communications. You can see how handling this manually could become a real headache even for smaller gyms and fitness businesses. Of course, one of the main points of this e-book is to help you keep your opt-out rates as low as possible by following our tips and focusing on what's important - your end goals.

If you'd rather use software that can do most of the complex and tedious work for you, using a system like Club OS can not only automate some of the process, but also help you navigate the fine print texting legalities. By using the Club OS texting feature you are automatically prevented from breaking any communication laws. Imagine that! You can run a successful outbound texting campaign without having to worry about breaking any laws or becoming a communications lawyer.

How to Send Texts and How to Know If They're Helping Your Bottom Line

There are really only two ways of setting up a texting program at your gym: do it yourself (DIY) or use some software that can help you. There are, of course, combinations of the two options where some parts are automated and some aren't, but for the most part the real breakdown is deciding whether or not you want to handle everything from opt-out requests to manually or automatically managing segmentation to having the best data so that you can know which texting efforts are working and which are not.

DIY:

While trying to create a DIY texting program for your gym is going to be monetarily less expensive at first, you may find that it ends up costing you a lot of emotional currency and in the end actual monetary currency. With a DIY setup, there can be very little you can do in the way of tracking success. You'll have to come up with your own organizational system either way because you won't be able to track who needs to be texted what, when, and why. It's also a lot easier to end up on spam lists if you try to communicate with your list by sending random mass texts.

Using Software:

Take the best of both worlds and use a system like Club OS that gives you the power of automation and organization but alongside an organic personal touch. This is important because it means you'll still be giving your member or prospect the attention they deserve but without feeling overwhelmed.

As an example, let's say you're trying to get the recipient of the text message to visit a page on your website and sign up for something using a form. Your goal as a business owner and/or marketer is to find out the journey the buyer took after receiving the text. In order to be able to gather that type of data, you'll need to consider the following.

1. You'll want to ensure UTM information has been added to the URL that you included in the text message. What's UTM information? It's what allows the text sender (in this case you) to apply specific information to the end of the URL which in turn tells the web browser where the person came from when they tap the link. If you want to learn more about adding UTM parameters to the links you share in any of your communications (not just texting), check out Google's own UTM tool that explains the benefits and allows you to create UTM information on the spot.
2. If the web page you've sent them to is optimized and targeted to the recipient, there is a good chance they will fill out the form. Once they fill out the form you can count it as a conversion and know that your texting campaign was successful. Note: You can define what a "conversion" means in regards to each campaign. Typically, a conversion event would be when a prospect becomes a paying client, but in this scenario we're counting a conversion as someone filling out the form.

3. How will you know if the recipient has already received this message or one like it? Or that they received a different message, but just a few days ago and sending another one would be overkill? If you don't have a system in place like Club OS, it's going to be very hard to know and track this information.

If you're going the DIY route, it's going to be more difficult to analyze the effects of your outbound texting initiatives. Since you won't be able to consistently track open rates or click-through rates, you'll have a harder time knowing if what you're sending is leading to your goals being achieved. It also makes it nearly impossible to learn about the members or prospects that consistently engage with your texts so that you can improve and target accordingly.

If you choose to use a system like Club OS that can help you set up, organize, and monitor the success of your texting campaigns then you're going to find success a lot sooner and more consistently. If you can't analyze the texts you're sending then you can't learn from mistakes or improve upon what's already working.

Conclusion

With 98-100% open rates, you are sure to get just about anyone's attention that you send a text to, you just need to make sure it's the right kind of attention. **Incorporating texting into your gym's sales and marketing processes is too lucrative to be ignored.** However, because it also requires some emotional sensitivity, setting goals and testing, legal knowhow, and an understanding of your prospect/client segments it can come across as something too complex for most gyms or fitness businesses to take on.

We agree. Trying to incorporate a texting program at your gym can definitely be complicated and more of a headache than it's worth, *but that's only if you rush into it and try to handle too many things at once*. To alleviate those issues before they even start, we absolutely suggest using software that's not only been designed to send the most effective text messages and track what's been sent and to whom, but [software that's been made with gyms and fitness businesses in mind](#).

Checklist

We have created a short checklist that we recommend that you or your sales team run through before you send a text to a prospect or member. By checking off each of these items, you ensure that your text is well on it's way to being successful.

Either download this e-book and keep it handy, or print the e-book and post the checklist at your front desk or sales team stations.

Think Before You Send

❏ **What is the purpose of the message:**

_____

❏ **Who am I reaching: _____**

❏ **Why would they find this message interesting or important: _____**

❏ **What action can the prospect or member take based off this text: _____**

❏ **What time is it? Is this a reasonable time to be texting someone: _____**

Want to learn more about texting and Club OS?
Contact us today!

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