

The Short Code 411

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We've all seen and heard about them. They're advertised on the back of cars, on billboards, as entry points for most radio and reality show competitions, used to drive magazine subscriptions, and retailers use them to share billing and in-store promotions. The Premium Rate SMS or Short Code, as it's commonly referred to, is that five digit set of numbers we've all used at one time or another. But, as with most techno-driven trends, how familiar are you with how the Short Code system actual works, and all its associated benefits for your company, brand or service?

Well, you must already know that there are key benefits to using the Premium Rate SMS if so many companies and brands use them recurrently. And you would be right.

A successful Premium Rate SMS campaign will easily expand your brand's exposure, increase sales and deliver on your strategic marketing goals - if done well that is.

So here are five important steps to consider when putting together a Premium Rate SMS or Short Code campaign:

1. **Know your short codes:** There are two kinds of short codes: shared and dedicated.

Dedicated short codes are just that - dedicated to one client. It's more costly to set up, but the benefits are that you hold the same short code for multiple campaigns. What this allows is easy brand association. Your customers will automatically associate this short code with your company and allow them to enjoy a single digital touch point with your company.

A shared short code, while less costly to set up, doesn't offer the same assurance that your customers have a direct digital touch point with your company or brand. If they miss the associated keyword, their messages and personal data will end up in someone else's report. Your customers have lost out on communicating with you, lost money in the process, and you have lost those customers messages to you.

2. **Know the rules around the short code:** The rules of using a short code are fairly straightforward; they're mostly tariffs based. A short code tariff can range between 50c and R30, depending on the type of campaign, but if you are running a competition, by law, your tariff band may not exceed R1.50.

Most short codes used for donations work well with a R10 tariff band, while the trend for dealerships, which regularly have customers requesting information, will generally have a R1 tariff band associated with that short code service. South African law demands that all tariff bands be advertised clearly to all potential customers.

3. **Good supplier:** It's important to contract a supplier who has your company's interest at heart. A good supplier will offer your company a great revenue earning rate, a reporting system that includes all the responses to the short code you advertised, and all the respondents' mobile numbers. A good supplier will also offer you a support team to troubleshoot any errors or problems along the way in a speedy and efficient manner.
4. **Keywords are the key:** Whether you're using a dedicated or shared short code, the keyword you use is of key importance. Remember to keep it simple; e.g. text the keyword: Channel Mobile accompanied with your full name to 40178. By keeping it simple, you allow easier reporting on data captured and you minimise any errors that could possibly occur.
5. **Push to text:** A successful short code campaign goes hand-in-hand with good marketing material. A bulk SMS to notify and allow people to text the short code works like a bomb. Clever marketing material, such as in-store posters and posters and/or flyers at your event, makes the success rate much higher.

ABOUT CRAIG ROSSOUW

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