



Answering Customers Questions Before They Telephone You!

In March 2006, we wrote about the benefits of 'texting' (using SMS messages) to both generate efficiency savings and improve customer service. For example:

- By reducing missed appointments by 'texting' customers reminders, e.g. for housing repair visits, special / bulky collections, pest control visits, etc.
- By pre-empting questions customers may ask, and proactively 'texting' information, e.g. informing them of their bin collection days following a Bank Holiday, thereby avoiding the higher costs associated with staff answering customers phoning in or visiting in person.

This newsletter presents the results of a 'texting' pilot recently undertaken by one Council:

- The pilot area comprised 2,000 households on one particular waste round.
- A personalised letter, produced by merging the addresses from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, was sent to all the targeted households, asking them whether they wanted to opt into the pilot service. To opt-in customers simply 'texted' their house number and postcode to the number provided.
- 212 households (over 10%) subscribed to the text notification service, aptly named 'retext'.
- 2 days prior to their scheduled bin collection, all 212 participants received a text message 'Please remember to put your Black Bin out on Tuesday'. This cost the council approximately 2.7p per message, i.e. under £60.00.
- Subsequently the council experienced a 33% reduction in calls associated with bin collections ('when will my bin be collected', 'my bin wasn't collected today') in this pilot area. To gauge the success of the pilot the council did a check of bins put out on the wrong day in this round and found only 1 green bin and 7 grey bins compared to 24 on a similar round without text service.
- This savings in reducing the number of calls to the contact centre alone has been estimated by the council at £633; this excludes the considerable costs of revisiting a missed collection.
- Assuming the same results across the District, and taking account for each bank holiday, the total savings each year would be approximately £137,000.
- The Council is now looking to extend the 'texting' more widely.

With waste collection high on most customers list of service that their local council provides, the pilot is on-the-face-of-it an all round win-win.

To find out more please contact us:

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