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Use marketing SMS to increase customer engagement

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Introduction

Our phone is now an integral part of our daily lives. We always have our phone in hand and we rarely go out without it. For many, it is also a working tool that allows direct, simplified and almost instantaneous communications.

We use SMS every day for the same reason, both in a personal and professional way. So why not take advantage of this opportunity to send messages directly to the device of your contacts? In terms of customer relations, SMS are made indispensable. A simple SMS sent can be much more effective than your other means of communication.

They are, indeed, excellent for objectives of loyalty, promotion or information on your company. They must be well mounted and respect some basic rules to be optimal. Follow these tips and you'll be on the right track to succeed!

SMS messages have an immense potential and can reach a very reactive audience. Indeed, the SMS opening rate is 98%; it's huge! So many opportunities to connect with the consumer right at the fingertips... literally.



The SMS base



What is a SMS?

The word SMS means Short Message Service. As the name suggests, this is a short message that can only contain 160 characters sent to the cell phones of our recipients. However, since the law requires the inclusion of a STOP statement to allow unsubscription, the limit would be more 149 characters.

Why use SMS?

- The text message is the fastest and most effective means of communication. **We read a text message on average within 3 minutes after receiving it, compared to 48 hours with emails.** So it's an effective way to invite your customers to interact with your brand quickly.
- The costs of using SMS for your marketing campaigns are low. Most of the time, SMS is not expensive to use. And if you have a platform like Dialog Insight, you can manage multiple communication channels in one place (SMS, email, web push notifications, forms, etc.).
- By using SMS, you will optimize your ROI for sure as these are very effective messages, **with a reading rate of 98%**. Chaque personne consulte fréquemment son cellulaire et lit systématiquement tous ses messages textes.
- The implementation of SMS does not require graphics creation, so it is simple and instant, which saves you time but also money.





SMS can be used to support several types of campaigns, including:

- For promotion
- Appointment confirmation (hairstylist's salon, restaurant, dental centre, etc.)
- A proximity campaign with geolocation (local commerce)
- Loyalty (discounts, abandoned cart)
- In events (unsold tickets, new dates, etc.)
- Welcome campaign
- On the contact's birthday, or other anniversary (ex: subscription anniversary)
- To announce a novelty (new store, new product/service, etc.)



Rich SMS

We now know about SMS marketing, but what is rich SMS? A relatively new concept for some but one that can really optimize your SMS campaigns.

Basically, in a normal SMS campaign, there are not many options: it stops at what you normally see, that is, a simple text on a white background, which is quite basic!

Rich SMS goes far beyond that; it allows you to enrich each of your sending with interactive content that will appeal much more to your contacts.

You can add a countdown, to create a sense of urgency in your campaigns; add a barcode to facilitate purchases or registrations; put boxes to be turned or scratched to make discover offers... in short, you can let your creativity run wild and create very personalized messages according to your needs!



Back to SMS!

To be consistent, we'll talk about SMS in the rest of the white paper, but everything that follows applies to Rich SMS as well.

SMS marketing tips and tricks



1. Obtain consent

Requesting permission from your customers before sending them text message communications is the basis. It's also a factor that influences their loyalty to your brand.

In Quebec especially, text messages are perceived by most people as an intrusion into their private lives. Therefore, if you send SMS communications without consent, there is a good chance your contacts will feel betrayed and never buy your products or services. So, for the sake of your reputation and your brand credibility, do not abuse people's trust.

Do things in order and this will only benefit you!

When to ask for the phone number? Not everyone is comfortable leaving their phone number on the first visit on your website. This is why you have to ask yourself under what circumstances is it well seen to ask for this information so as not to scare your contact.

In general, it depends on where your prospect is in the sales funnel. The more advanced your contact is in his shopping process, the greater his buying intention and the more willing he is to give a little more personal information.

For exemple, if it's a brand new contact, better not ask its phone number immediately. Wait until he is a little more mature and he knows a little more about your business before asking him.



1. Obtain consent

Only then can you ask him if he wants to receive your offers by text message. You will have a much better chance of being told yes.

Some situations, however, are more acceptable than others:

- Customer call
- Requests for information
- Demo requests
- Purchase at a point of sale
- Making appointments
- Form using progressive profiling

You understand the idea?



Additional tips!

Given people's reluctance to provide their telephone number, be clear about the benefits, how often you will contact them, and registration instructions.

Plus! In order to get your target audience to agree to receive your promotions, including a discount is an excellent incentive.

Don't forget to...

2. Identify yourself

Many companies do not think about identifying themselves in their SMS sending. Yet, it is essential if we do not want our customers to suppress our message without even reading it. You can use #keywords that allow people to easily connect your message to your business.

3. Make room for creativity

You have access to a very personal part of the life of each of your contacts. Now, try to stand out to have the most impact possible. As mentioned earlier, SMS have a reading rate of 98% on average, take advantage of it to exploit all possibilities: contest, promotional code, packages, link to the online store, new event, in short, there is no limit.

Keep in mind though to always offer something to your contact in exchange for his attention.

4. Make personas

Knowledge of your target is very important. The more you know about your customers, the more you will be mastering the sending of personalized messages, sent at the right time. Create a typical portrait of people who are likely to use your products or to use your services.

It also forces you to research the market in which you work and to know your element of distinction according to the interests of your personas. This way, you can better adapt your messages and optimize your impact on your target.



5. Segment your list

Segment your contacts into several groups based on social, demographic and behavioral criteria. This will allow you to create a more personalized relationship with them. The more specific you are in your segmentation, the more you will be able to customize your messages accurately.

You can also create dynamic segmentation lists so that your lists change automatically when contact information changes. Which would save you a lot of time!

6. Find a happy medium

When sending text messages, there is always a risk related to the sending frequency. Either we send too much and the customer gets tired or we do not send enough and the customer loses interest in your brand. Adapt, find your rhythm. Once you find it, try to be as consistent as possible.



7. Have a sense of timing

When sending SMS, the timing of sending is always very important. Since the interaction is almost in real time, the moment of sending will be, within minutes, the moment your contact reads your message.

As you have done personas, you know the lifestyle of your contacts. So you know when they will be most attentive to your messages.

Also, use the timing of one-off events. For example, if you are a local business, you could make a discount depending on the temperature: it is 28 degrees, get 28% on ice cream. Your business celebrates 15 years of existence, promote to thank your customers. You are a landscaper, the beginning of spring is a good time to announce your services. Et cetera.

The time of the day is also very important. **For example**, if you are a neighborhood restaurant, send a message to promote your 5 to 7 on Thursday around 13h after lunch. If you are a family store, send your promotions on Friday afternoons for the weekend.

By using these techniques, you create consumption habits and your customers will come to expect your promotions before buying elsewhere.



8. Adjust your time zone

It is very important to target our contacts according to their time zone because unlike an email, receiving an SMS in the middle of the night is irritating and can create frustration with your recipients.

Be careful when sending to a segment that is not in the same time zone as you.

9. Be concise

Avoid confusing an SMS with an email. You only have 160 characters to pass your message, so you must be concise and direct.

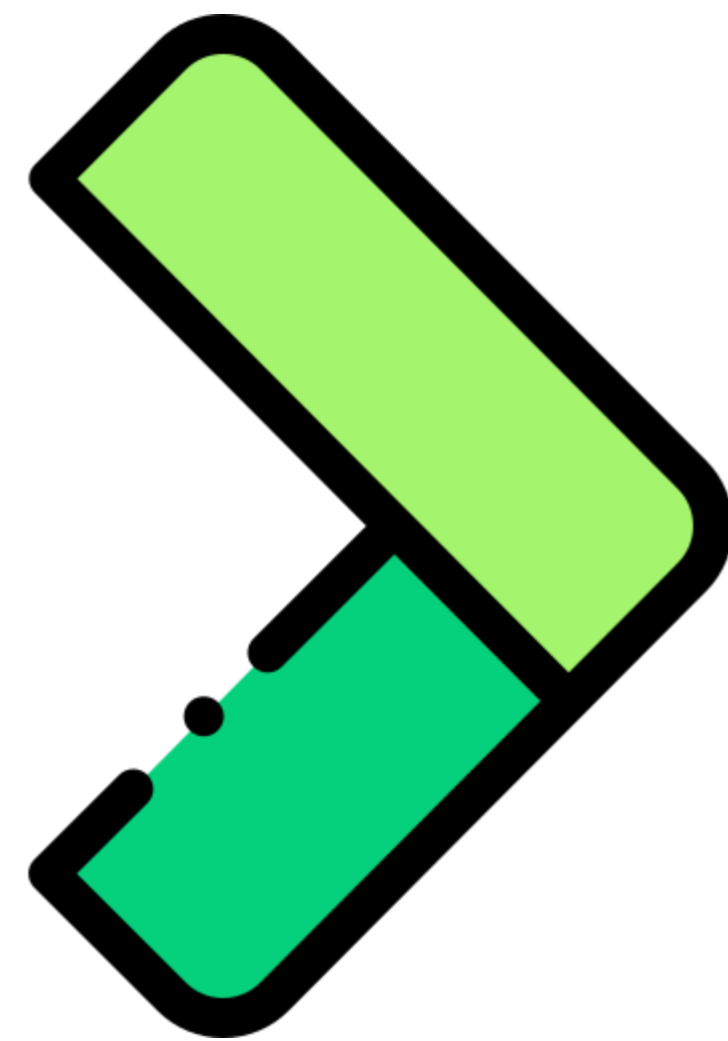
If you give instructions on how to access your offer or other, simplify them as much as possible. It must not be too complicated, otherwise your target will be discouraged instantly.

Do not forget your call to action so that your contact understands what you want from him. If you include a link to your website, consider shortening it to maximize the number of characters you are entitled to.

If you do not succeed in limiting yourself to 160 characters, use another communication channel that allows you to be more exhaustive or turn instead to rich SMS that allows you to associate your SMS with a landing page where your target can get more information.



10. Have a global strategy



Integrate your SMS communications strategy into your overall marketing strategy to strengthen it. Every contact you have with your customers must be optimized and each communication channel must be used in a complementary way to form a whole.

Your SMS messages must come to support your e-mails, to be in line with your social media publications and to be at the image of your website, for example.



11. Measure



How do you know if what you are doing has had the desired impact?

How do we know what works to repeat in our future communications?

The answer is simple: Measure.

Measure your results, compare it with previous results and note what works best. This will allow you to take a continuous improvement approach and you will simply be better at each sending.

With these 11 expert tips, you'll be well on your way to starting your first SMS marketing campaign. With the Dialog Insight platform, you'll be able to set up these elements easily and efficiently.



What is a good SMS?

Timing

Unlike emails, SMS messages evoke a sense of urgency. 95% of SMS messages are read within 3 minutes, so pay special attention when you send it. For example, if you want to announce your lunch special in the dining room, send it right before lunch to reach customers who are starting to think about a place to eat.

Tone

Let the robot style fall. SMS is a channel where people are used to have conversations with humans (digitally, but still humans!). Don't use jargon and acronyms that only you understand. Always keep a professional tone. Some exceptions may apply if you need to use abbreviations to keep the maximum number of characters to 160. Otherwise, you should use normal language at all times.

Call to action

Your message must contain a call to action to indicate to the consumer the next step. If it is aligned with your contact's needs and interests, you increase the chances of engagement. If you are asking for an answer to a question, offering predefined choices is a good practice to avoid the chaos of all the possible answers.

Disclaimer

Sending SMS messages may incur costs for the consumer. Indicate this in your message next to the unsubscribe mention.

Relevance

Spam is irritating. But unwanted text messages are simply unbearable. You reach the customer in a private part of his life. So personalize your messages according to his interests as much as possible. Make sure that your message always contains a value for your contact, otherwise he will not stay a subscriber for long.



Make your first campaign



Start on the good foot

The preparation of your SMS marketing campaign, whether it is normal SMS or rich SMS, is extremely important if you want to be successful and optimize your ROI. The following steps are the ones that will help you achieve this.

1. Define your campaign goal

Since an SMS has a very limited number of characters, it is essential to define the framework of your campaign. By clearly defining your main objective and target, you will be able to maximize the 160 characters allowed and optimize your ROI.

Define only one objective per campaign, it can be:

- A promotion
- The announcement of a new feature
- An invitation to an event
- An appointment booking
- An exclusive offer
- A transaction follow-up
- Bring traffic to your points of sale
- Build customer loyalty

And so on!

It is this step that will set the tone for your campaign, because it is on this objective that the next steps will be based. So take the time to choose the best objective for what you want to accomplish and the results you want to achieve in the end.





There are different ways to use SMS for a company, **selon ses objectifs spécifiques**. They can be sent in batches or individually.

Here are some examples of batch sendings:

- Sending promotions or discount coupons
- Invitation to an event
- Invitation to participate in a contest
- Survey

And examples of unit sendings:

- Reminders and confirmation of events or appointments
- Customer support
- Purchase or delivery confirmations
- Platform access authentication



2. Define your target audience

Bill Cosby

I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.



Now determine who your campaign is aimed at based on your objective identified in step 1. I must warn you that the success of your SMS campaign depends mainly on relevance of the targeting you will do. It is therefore worth taking the time to analyze our typical clients and create personas with the conclusions you will draw from them.

Of course, your targeting will be totally different depending on your defined objectives. Depending on the status of the contact in the conversion funnel, adapt your target accordingly. **For example**, if your objective is to promote your brand, your target audience will definitely not be the same as if you are addressing existing customers with the objective of re-engaging them.

In short, analyze your situation carefully and choose the segment that is most relevant to your needs.

3. Write the message

A SMS message must be clear and concise. You must be able to get your message across in just a few lines. That is why each word must be chosen precisely to achieve your objective. Your messages are generally divided into 5 parts:

1. **The sender:** must be easily recognizable to your contacts.
2. **The catch phrase:** must be very short and punchy. Considering the number of limit characters, choose only a few words that directly arouses the interest of your contacts.
3. **The offer:** It is important, when writing your message, to put yourself in the shoes of your contacts. Spending only a few seconds reading an advertising message by SMS, your contacts do not actually read your message, they do more a quick scan of your content. That is why your offer must be clear and answer the following questions: Who? What? Where? Quickly. Identify your keywords and try to highlight them, either by using capital letters and placing them at the beginning of your message.



Write the message

Also indicate all the information that is important to understand your message. For example, if you are running a time-limited promotional campaign, include it in your message.

You can also customize your message by adding variables such as name, address, age... In fact, the only limit is the contact information you have.

Finally, structure your message by skipping a line at strategic points in your message.

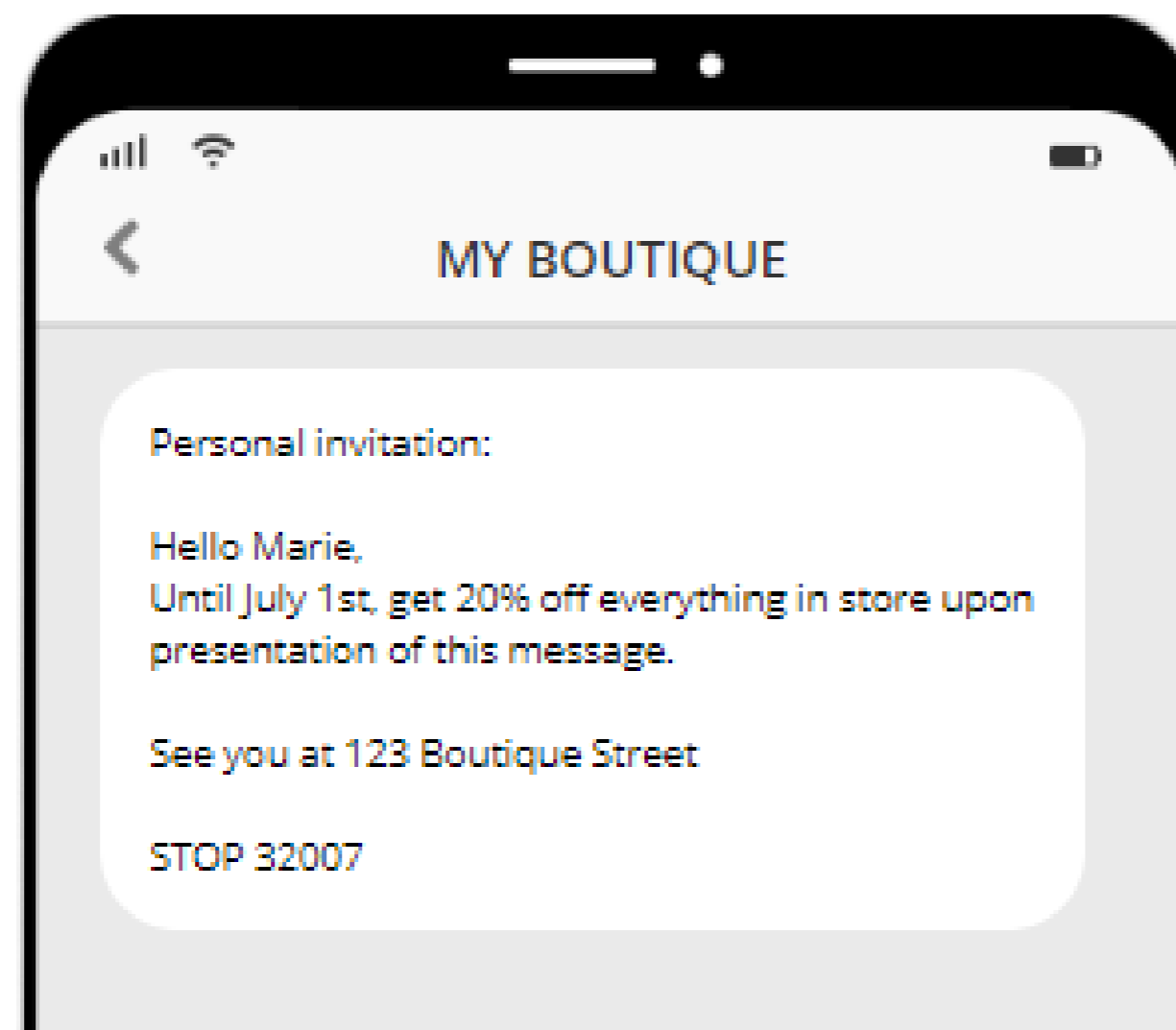
4. A contact link: it can be either a clickable phone number or a clickable link to a page on your website. This is a good way to encourage your customers to take action.

5. The STOP mention which is required: in the same way as email, SMS are regulated and must be marked STOP. This mention is automatically added to your messages to give your contacts the option to unsubscribe at any time.



Trick! Avoid mistakes

Always check for spelling errors before pressing send. This affects your credibility. The same applies to overly familiar abbreviations, which should be avoided.



4. Determine the date and time of sending

With SMS messages, customers are reached directly and the reading rate is often very high. Communication is almost in real-time. This is why the choice of date and time of sending is very important.

Choose a time of day when, based on your analysis in step 2, you think your target audience will be most willing to read your message and click.

At first glance, prioritize the times 08h30-09h30, 11h30 - 12h30 and 17h30-18h as these are usually break times for most people. Of course, these hours may vary depending on your analyses and your personas.



5. Analyze the results

And optimize processes for your next campaign!

Compared to email campaigns where it is easy to track the actions of your contacts, for SMS, it is quite different.

Behavioural monitoring is therefore easier to do if you use a SMS marketing platform such as Dialog Insight. This will allow you to directly manage unsubscribe options and obtain some tracking data.

Remember the impressive open rate of text message. A well-designed campaign can hardly fail. So if your campaigns don't achieve the expected results, ask yourself what you are doing that your audience doesn't like. Test different types of offers, different sending times or a different frequency. Test until you find out what works for you.

You can measure the success of your SMS campaign by various factors such as the increase in your number of subscribers, the offer claims rate and the unsubscribing rate.



Make SMS marketing messages with Dialog Insight



About the SMS module

It allows you to create and send short messages to your contacts, either individually or in batch. By combining SMS messages with your other daily mailings, you allow your contacts to read you wherever they want, at a low cost.

To [activate the module](#), you must proceed in 3 steps:

- Buying a number;
- The configuration and activation of this number;
- The definition of eligible types of communication.

Once these steps are completed, you can start exploring the possibilities offered by your new module:

- See a list of all SMS messages that contact has received/sent;
- Send your SMS automatically;
- Create groups to target contacts who have already received an SMS;
- Display SMS messages in the approval or sending process;
- View the results of your SMS sendings.

And much more!

TechJury

Text messages have a 209% higher response rate than phone, email, or Facebook Messenger.



Créer un message SMS

Creating an SMS message with the platform is very similar to creating an email, except that there are fewer options for SMS. This makes it much less complex. To get there, go through the following steps :

1. Name and prepare the SMS

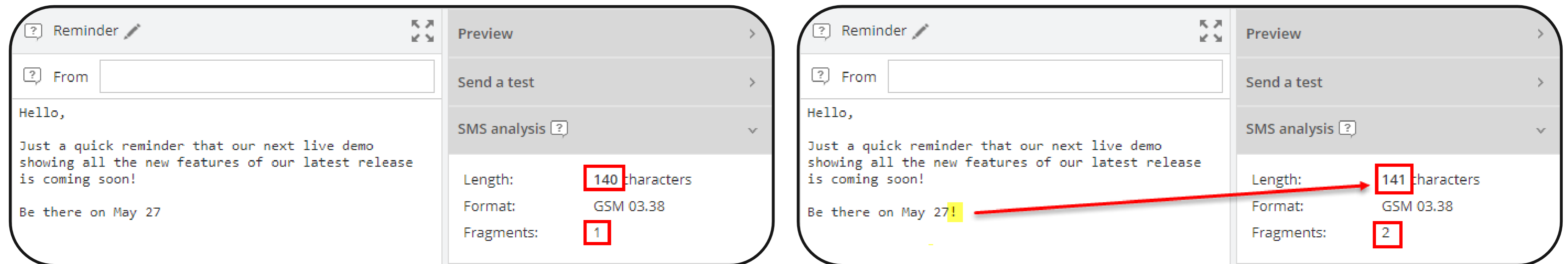
When creating a new SMS message, you must first name it to differentiate it from other messages. To help you, also determine the type of communication you do, for example: administrative, promotional, informative, etc. You can then retrieve all your sent promotional messages (for example) by filtering by message type.

2. Write the message

Theoretically, there is no character limit when sending SMS messages. However, if your message is longer than 140 characters, it will be sent in several message fragments. It is therefore not ideal for understanding it and is more expensive.

Indeed, the cost of sending an SMS is variable and depends on the number of fragments required to transmit the message. The system is designed to send the SMS in the most efficient way, but ideally, an SMS should contain only one fragment. That's why we still advise you to stick to the basics and get to the point.





For the more technical ones, the encoding format in which the SMS is transmitted also influences the number of fragments of your message. The GSM-x format allows more characters per fragment than the UCS-2 format but supports a limited range of characters (may be limited up to 50%). A variable format indicates that the static content of your message supports the GSM format but that adding custom elements could force the use of the UCS-2 format.

Example, if you choose to include special characters (ex: © and other symbols) in your messages (encoded in UCS-2 format), that will force your entire message to be as well, reducing your character limit by half. So 70 characters instead of 140... It's very little! So be careful with special characters. If your message is very short, there is no problem using them. However, if your message is longer, avoid them if you want to send your message in a single fragment.

To write the message, just type your text and if you want to add other elements, everything is under the Library section of the module.



3. Personalize your message

To personalize your message, it is the same technique as in an email. You can include custom elements anywhere in your text. These elements come from **the contact form**, so, whether it is an address, age, phone number... In short, all the information you have about your contacts are elements of personalization. You can even add a note that you have put in the contact form if you want.

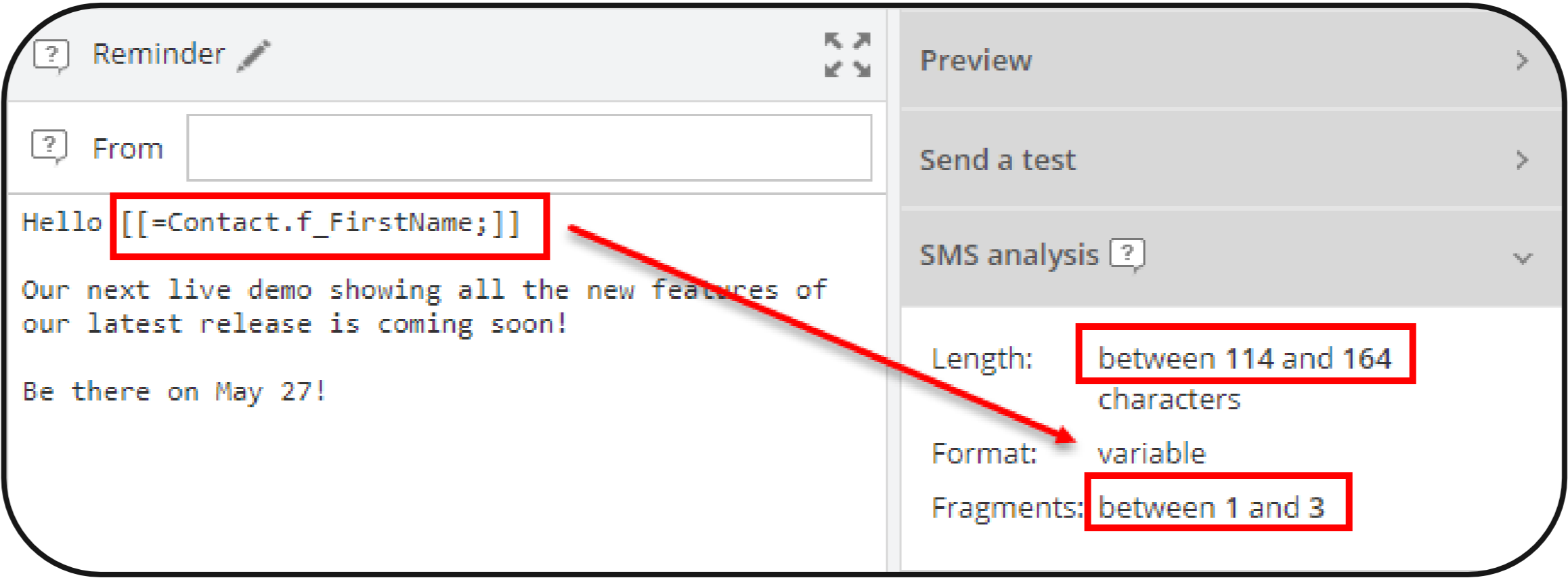
When including a custom field in your message, for example, the name of the recipient, you should consider how many characters this field may contain. In the platform, you will see an approximation of this number by taking into account the minimum/maximum of this field. Thus, the number of fragments of your message will differ from one contact to another and the encoding format will also differ.



3. Personalize your message

Here is an example to illustrate what this means:

If you send an SMS to 100 contacts, some may be encoded in GSM and others in UCS. This depends on whether the value of the customization field contains special characters or not; therefore, not all messages will have the same number of fragments.



4. See an overview of your message and test it



Once your message is finished, you probably want to see a preview of your message! Well, this preview appears immediately when you save your message. You will be able to see the layout on a mobile phone simulation and perform a final quality control before sending.

You can also test your sending and make sure it is sent correctly and that everything is correct before you send your message. To do this, you must enter a [valid cell phone number](#) and send the test. You can then check that the message has been received and whether it meets your expectations.



5. Send your message

To send your message, you can send it to all your contacts as you can make groups to target contacts according to specific criteria. If you send your message to several groups and a contact is in more than one group, only one message will be sent to him.

It is also possible that the same telephone number may be associated with several recipients. You have the option to choose between sending one SMS per recipient or sending one SMS per single phone number.

You can also schedule your shipment for later by specifying the date, time and time zone. If you decide to schedule your mailing, you can ask to update the contact list before sending it to make sure you send your message to all your contacts, including those who have subscribed in the meantime.

6. Analyze the results

After sending an SMS, it is important to check the results to find out what worked and what didn't. All this in order to constantly improve and send more relevant messages over time.

Here is the list of data that is collected on your SMS campaigns, which you can analyze:

Production: Total of SMS messages produced, in production error or still to be produced

Delivery: Total number of SMS messages delivered and SMS messages in error

Confirmation: Total number of SMS messages delivered, either with confirmation from the provider that the SMS is delivered or without this confirmation. But it should be noted that not all suppliers send a confirmation.

Errors: Total number of errors, either in delivery or production.



Conclusion

Email campaigns are effective and simple to set up, however, it is a channel that has become increasingly saturated over the years. That's why turning to a complementary channel to email, such as SMS marketing, is a viable solution for your business.

So, whether you are a small or a large company, whether you are in B2B or B2C, SMS is an opportunity to connect with your contacts in their daily lives and engage them with your brand. It is also a low cost solution considering that the ROI is generally high with this channel.

Thus, if you haven't tried using SMS for your campaigns yet, don't wait any longer! It's easier to write an SMS message than an email, as you've seen in this document, and the results are almost instantaneous.

Don't forget that even though we have explained the different steps of installation beforehand, we can help you set up your SMS with Dialog Insight, don't hesitate to [contact us](#)!

TechJury

SMS messages have a whopping 98% open rate.





About Dialog Insight

One of the most effective ways to achieve your growth is to take control of your customer data to maximize your marketing efforts.

At Dialog Insight, we believe that each of our customer is unique and that their needs are specific. Therefore, we have developed global solutions in personalized marketing to adapt to ever-changing contexts. On the one hand, we provide a platform that centralized customer database, omnichannel campaigns and detailed analysis of your performance. On the other, we offer strategic and operational support services aligned to your needs.

Whether you're looking to increase sales or engage your customers, leverage customer insights you've gathered over time. You will communicate in a more relevant, coherent and personalized way than before. Make every point of contact an opportunity to offer your customers a brand experience beyond their expectations.

With Dialog Insight on your side, you are more than ever the master of your success.



