

# HOW TEXT MESSAGING IMPROVES EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN A COVID-19 WORLD

This eBook outlines eight best practices for using text messaging for employee communication as you work to navigate the "new normal." With the uncertainty caused by the current health crisis, it's critical to use the right channel for your messaging and be a trusted source of timely, accurate information to provide reassurance and reliable guidance.

**Text messaging is not only the preferred method of communication for most of the population, but it is now expected as way of receiving critical, timely updates.**



# IT'S A MOBILE-LED WORLD, AND IT'S NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT TO USE TEXTING IN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

**When it comes to texting in America, there are some eye-opening statistics, including:**

- 90% of text messages are read within three minutes of being sent.
- Responses to texts take an average of just 90 seconds.
- Text messages have an open rate of 97%.
- SMS has 4x the open rate of email communication.

This is a time when the value and effectiveness of text messaging really shines. Throughout the nation, organizations are reopening offices, changing office procedures, updating remote work policies, and needing to share constantly changing information. For those organizations that leverage text messaging, resuming operations will prove more streamlined and successful.

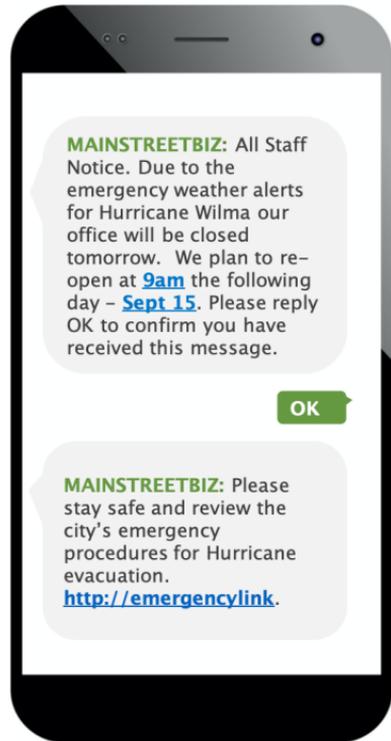
**And in a mobile-led world where employee engagement has become an essential strategy, text messaging is a necessity.**

Not all texting solutions are the same. Employers need solutions to fit their challenges. At minimum, a texting platform should be cloud-based, include two-way texting capabilities and Tier 1 connectivity, and be easy to use and self-service for this new environment of ever-changing, urgent communications.



# 1. EMERGENCY TEXT ALERTS: SUPPORT YOUR BUSINESS RESILIENCY PROGRAM BY ENSURING AN EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

The pandemic reminds us of the importance of business resilience planning and the need for an effective emergency communication channel to support such a program. Text messaging is a fast, effective way of keeping employees current on expectations. It is also valuable in the event that business must quickly inform staff of a significant development, such as a fellow team member testing positive for the novel coronavirus.



As the Department of Homeland Security's Ready website notes, "When an emergency occurs, the need to communicate is immediate. ... An important component of the [emergency] preparedness program is the crisis communications plan. A business must be able to respond promptly, accurately, and confidently during an emergency in the hours and days that follow. Many different audiences must be reached with information specific to their interests and needs."

## Text messages for emergency communications

- Emergency communication
- Unexpected office closure
- Natural disaster communication
- Urgent COVID-19 updates

## 2. MASS / GROUP TEXT ALERTS: PLANS TO RESUME BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND CHANGES TO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A great text communication is that business is gearing up to resume operations and more information will be forthcoming, including how safety will be ensured. This mass text will not only help mentally prepare staff for the time when they will come to the office, but it can also serve as welcomed, positive news of the beginning of the return to some semblance of normalcy.

Businesses should use texting to tell staff about changes to policies and procedures, such as those concerning screening and wearing of protective equipment, such as masks. Another effective use of mass texting capability is to remind staff about the need to avoid coming into work if they are not well. Employers can also use texting to send links to updated policies and procedures, if these documents are accessible online via the company website or employee portal.



### Text messages for group communication

- Reopening date and time
- Revised hours of operation
- New staff arrival procedures
- Updated staff schedules
- Vendor visits and protocol
- Urgent positive COVID-19 result

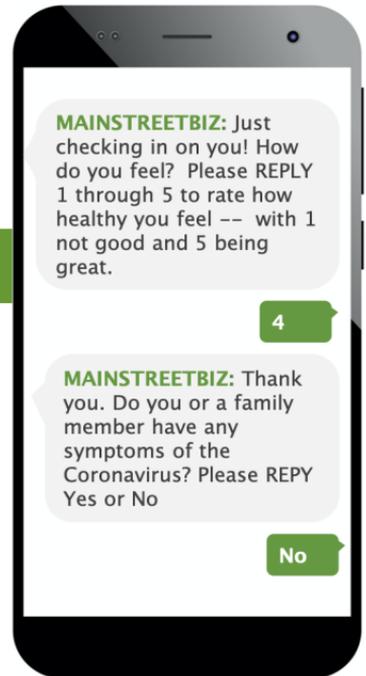
### 3. SURVEY TEXT ALERTS: CHECK-IN WITH YOUR STAFF WITH A QUESTION THAT REQUIRES A RESPONSE

During a crisis, employees are looking for their leadership to convey ongoing compassion and concern for their wellbeing. Employers are looking for staff to quickly provide information and feedback that can help guide timely decisions. Both can be accomplished using surveys conducted via text message.

Whether you are sending a link to a survey or asking for an immediate rating or a vote, texting has proven to have a higher engagement rate than other communication methods. Employers can quickly assess staff comfort with new policies and procedures, determine if staff have the resources needed to perform their jobs safely and effectively, request feedback on new initiatives, and much more. Leveraging targeted pulse surveys will help you evaluate the effectiveness of your business's response to the pandemic.

#### Texting to survey employees

If your employees experience a communication gap, you run the risk that they will come up with their own narrative about internal and external problems and priorities. Now is the time to communicate clearly and frequently about where your organization is going and how you're going to get there.



## 4. TEXT HEALTH PLAN, PROVIDER, AND BENEFITS INFORMATION: HEALTH INSURANCE FAQs AND INCREASE ENGAGEMENT DURING ENROLLMENT

The pandemic has made the general population more acutely aware of their health. It's also shined a spotlight on health coverage. Employers can use text messaging to provide staff with timely information concerning their sponsored health insurance. This can include matters such as where employees can go to receive a covered COVID-19 test, availability of mental health services, and options for telehealth.

Automating a series of texts to go out before open enrollment starts and throughout the enrollment period is a simple and effective way to increase engagement during open enrollment. Many employers also use automated text campaigns to drive engagement with company-sponsored health and wellness initiatives.

### Text messages to inform of benefits

- COVID-19 testing updates
- Link to benefits
- Information on open enrollment
- Link to Employee Assistance Program (EAP)



## 5. TEXT LINKS TO TELEHEALTH PROVIDERS AND INFORMATION: TO PROVIDE SAFE HEALTHCARE FOR EMPLOYEES

According to the Mercer National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans 2019, almost 9 out of 10 large employers offer a telemedicine program to their members. While utilization was growing slowly, COVID-19 has rapidly advanced the model, with some healthcare leaders stating that the telemedicine revolution had been "accelerated by a decade" as a result of the crisis.

Text messaging is the most effective way for employers to communicate with staff about their telehealth options and encourage them to take advantage of these virtual services. There is little to no learning curve to use telehealth as most have used videotelephony programs (e.g., FaceTime, Skype, Facebook Messenger). There is no need for someone to have wi-fi, a computer, speakers, or even be at home to access telehealth services through their mobile phone.



### Texting to utilize telehealth resources

In addition, reminding staff about their telehealth options reinforces your business's investment in virtual care benefits. Even if employees choose not to take advantage of the service, there is comfort knowing that the option is available should they choose to pursue it.

## 6. LANGUAGE PREFERENCE TEXT: FOR TEXTING IN PREFERRED LANGUAGE

Communicating in the preferred language of employees, whether communicating to them or receiving communication from them, eliminates language barriers. Employers should seek out a text messaging platform that supports multiple language options.

Sending text messages using employee's preferred language will drastically enhance communication and achieve higher engagement.



**Text messages in preferred language  
for increased engagement**

## 7. TEXT COVID-19 UPDATES AND RESOURCES:

### KEEPING STAFF ABREAST OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

Staying current with the latest national and local developments concerning COVID-19 is difficult, but it is essential that employees understand the guidelines they are expected to follow when traveling to and from work as well as outside of work to reduce safety risks. To make this easier, employers can use text messaging to provide staff with COVID-19 updates.

Employers can choose to make reviewing these materials mandatory and require staff to attest via text message replies that they have received and reviewed the information.

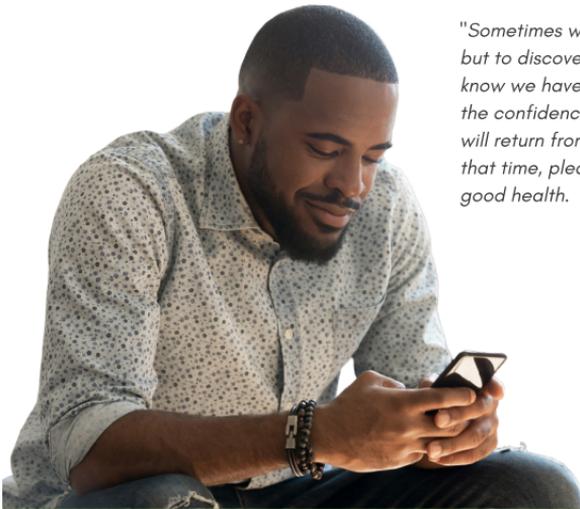
**Text messages a trusted source of COVID-19 updates**



## 8. EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TEXTS: STAFF MORALE

While most text messages sent by employers will concern business and safety matters, there is another beneficial way to use the technology: providing emotional and inspirational support to staff during this unprecedented and uncertain time. Sending an uplifting text message can have a positive impact on mental health.

We believe the value of supportive text messages can be underestimated, but that is changing as mental health is increasingly strained because of the health crisis. Below are a few examples of texts employers are sending to help lift the spirits of their team members.



*"Sometimes we are tested not to show our weaknesses but to discover our strengths" – John F. Kennedy. As you know we have been tested these past few weeks, but it's the confidence we have in our team that assures us we will return from this stronger and better than before. Until that time, please know we are wishing you and yours good health.*

*During this challenging time, we want you to know that we appreciate everything you do and the sacrifices that have been made. Your selflessness represents the best of our organization. We look forward to coming back together as soon as possible, but in the meantime, we wish you good health.*

**Emotional support for your staff.**

# CONCLUSION

Text messaging is a proven method for communication and improving staff engagement, among other benefits. As text messaging has become the preferred communication method for a growing number of Americans, organizations should evaluate how they can incorporate two-way text messaging as a communication platform or further expand its existing use during this transitional period.

We are here to help. Organizations interested in adding or expanding text messaging should visit the Dialog Health website at [dialoghealth.com](http://dialoghealth.com), text or call (877) 666-1132, or email [info@dialoghealth.com](mailto:info@dialoghealth.com).

**During COVID-19, we have fast-tracked mass text alert setup and streamlined database uploading.**

## 4 EASY STEPS TO SET-UP MASS TEXT ALERTS



### STEP 1: SIGN-UP

Set up is fast. Since the platform is cloud-based, there's no software to install.

### STEP 2: LOAD CSV FILE

Load your CSV file into the provided template and complete a short training.



### STEP 3: WRITE YOUR TEXT MESSAGE

Write your custom message or use one of our best practice texts. Need help? Call on our support team.

### STEP 4: SEND TEXT ALERTS

**GO LIVE!**  
Start sending text messages to your selected groups.





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