

# Making the move to mobile

By [Stefano Sessa](#)

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With mobile penetration in South Africa already well over 100%, an increasing number of enterprises are turning to this medium as a means of communicating with their customer bases. Mobile communications tools like SMS represent an immediate, personal and cost-effective mechanism through which to reach customers, allowing large organisations to send anything from account updates to discount vouchers at the click of a button.

According to Windsor Holden, research director of Juniper Research, mobile increasingly represents an imperative element of a company's business strategy, particularly in the case of retailers looking to build customer relationships and drive sales.

"We certainly expect the retail industry to focus on the development of in-store mobile strategies over the coming months," explained Holden. "Increasingly, retailers are perceiving the mobile not merely as a means of driving footfall to their physical outlets, but as a mechanism with which to marry - and maximise sales through - their digital and physical assets."

Yet whilst this might seem like a simple solution for enterprises, large-scale mobile messaging campaigns can prove incredibly complex, and can, in fact, end up hindering a company's communication efforts if not managed correctly. Customers are becoming increasingly savvy and more sceptical when it comes to mobile communications and, as such, companies looking to launch mobile campaigns in 2013 need to be mindful of a number of elements, such as security and capacity management.

## Security is of paramount importance

For large institutions, particularly those dealing with sensitive financial information, security is of paramount importance. With mobile campaigns often spanning a number of departments, from finance to the call centre, stringent user controls need to be implemented so as to protect customer information.

What we've seen, particularly with larger corporations, is that they have a number of different departments, all of whom have their own set of business objectives, and are trying to utilise mobile solutions to achieve them. With a multitude of users accessing a single system, there is a risk of abuse and appropriate measures need to be put in place to ensure that various parties are only authorised to access information that falls directly under their departmental jurisdiction.

## Appropriate fail over systems

With mobile messaging systems servicing a number of departments and business systems, organisations can no longer afford the potential fall-out of a systems failure. Any amount of systems downtime can adversely affect time-critical customer communications and even the frequently touted 99% uptime rate, which deceptively allows for approximately 88 hours of unscheduled downtime per year, is no longer acceptable for companies running around-the-clock campaigns.

In order to achieve loftier uptime targets, companies need to have appropriate fail over systems in place, which must be tested regularly so as to ensure their readiness. Monitoring tools, which keep abreast of critical system services and are able to initiate a failover to a secondary system when necessary, are also critical when looking to ensure that mobile communication tools are constantly available to customers and internal departments.

## Time can be of the essence

When delivering mobile communications to customers, time can be of the essence. Finite message throughput capacity at

a network level means that message loads need to be handled intelligently, with priority allocated to SMS' of a more time-sensitive nature.

Effective load-balancing infrastructure can allow traffic to be evenly spread, which comes in handy particularly during peak messaging periods, which usually occur around month end. Systems such as this not only make it easier to manage current messaging volumes, but message prioritisation tools also allow them to easily accommodate future business growth.

## **Reporting capability**

One of the elements often overlooked when implementing mobile messaging systems is reporting capability. Configurable reporting tools can help businesses to establish a holistic overview of their entire mobile messaging operation, perform investigations with granular detail and allocate messaging costs back to appropriate company cost centres.

Message archiving is also an imperative element to consider and forms a critical element of a company's customer service offering. Archiving allows organisations to keep track of both outgoing and incoming communications as they grow over the years, and to follow up effectively on past customer queries and complaints.

## **Seek out expert outsourced solutions**

Ultimately, a company's ability to execute a successful messaging campaign hinges on the flexibility of mobile services available from its chosen messaging system. Large corporations often make use of mobile communications so as to deliver customer account statements, service updates and promotions, and a system's ability to accommodate these requirements can mean the difference between success and failure.

Given the complexities involved in managing mobile campaigns, I believe that corporates would be best advised to seek out expert outsourced solutions, rather than attempting to manage their affairs in-house.

Specialist SMS providers are better placed to deliver high-impact mobile communication services, with existing systems able to take into consideration a number of key elements essential to their success. Enterprises looking to develop effective communications campaigns, whilst at the same time bolstering their bottom line, can most effectively do so by taking advantage of these systems, which can communicate with core business applications and greatly reduce their total cost-per-message.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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