

Google launches free Gmail sms service

Google has launched the Gmail SMS Chat service in South Africa, which allows Gmail users to chat with mobile phone users via SMS - for free.



With Gmail SMS Chat, users can send text messages from their desktop Gmail Chat interface directly to mobile phone numbers via SMS. In return, the mobile phone users can reply by SMS and their responses will appear in the original sender's Gmail Chat interface. Gmail users are not charged for outgoing text messages and the mobile users are charged standard text messaging rates for the replies.

Designed for consumers in Africa

"We are very pleased to be launching Gmail SMS Chat in South Africa," said Luke McKend, country manager for Google South Africa. "The service has been specifically designed with consumers on the African continent in mind and will bring a new level of flexibility and mobility to Gmail Chat." McKend confirmed that the service has been successfully launched in a number of countries in Africa and other emerging markets.

Gmail SMS Chat is easy to use. Start a new chat with a mobile user by typing their phone number into the new SMS box in Gmail, enter your message and send. Phone numbers can be saved to your Gmail Contacts and existing contacts with phone numbers will show a new option to send an SMS.

The service is open to all Gmail users and is initially available to numbers on the MTN and 8.ta mobile networks.