Improve SMS Marketing with Phone Number Carrier Lookup

by Amber Iven - Monday, August 17, 2020

https://www.searchbug.com/info/phone-number-carrier-lookup/

Phone number carrier lookup is the method of finding out which company owns a phone number. Carriers own phone numbers, and customers lease them. Knowing which carriers own which numbers improves the deliverability and security of sending text messages.

But why is this important?

Businesses are taking advantage of bulk text messaging not only for marketing purposes but also for basic communication with customers. There are many ways to send bulk text messages (which we cover below), but all require carrier identification so that the messages can be delivered.

In this article, we cover how to send bulk text messages quickly, cost-effectively, and safely.

How to Send Bulk Text Messages

There are a few ways to send bulk text messages. You need to consider the volume of messages you need to send compared to the cost to do so. **A2P messaging** (application to person texting), or business SMS, is the method of sending messages from a software application to a customer's phone.

However, not all numbers can handle the same volume of mass text message delivery. So here are your options:

Number Types for Sending SMS Messages

- Short code
- Toll-free long code
- Local long code
- 10DLC

Here's how they compare:

Short codes, 5-6 digit numbers, are the best A2P option in terms of effectiveness. With a short code, you can send the most messages the fastest. Short codes are expensive to purchase, though, so you have to make sure your volume is high enough to justify it and your budget is high enough to support it.

There is also an approval process you have to undergo to qualify for a short code. Because of this, short codes are the most trusted by customers which results in higher open rates and engagement.

Local long codes are regular 10-digit phone numbers and are the least optimal for A2P messaging. They were designed for P2P messaging, person to person, and for that reason cannot support high volumes or

speed of message delivery. Furthermore, using local long codes for A2P messaging violates CTIA regulations (more on this later).

10DLC (10-digit long code) was designed specifically for A2P SMS messaging. It costs as much as a local long code, and you even have the option to convert an existing landline to a 10DLC. As far as volume, 10DLC ranks between short code and toll-free long code.

Toll-free long codes are 10-digit phone numbers with distinct three-digit codes such as 800, 866, 888, etc. Toll-free numbers were designed for landlines to call without charge. Mobile carrier and data rates apply for calling a toll-free number from devices without unlimited plans, but toll-free numbers can be text enabled to receive text responses.

A2P messaging is so effective for marketing and communication because 98% of text messages are opened. What you have to be careful of, though, is making sure you have your customers' consent to send them text messages.

Rules and Regulations for Sending Mass SMS Messages

Commercial telephone numbers are regulated by the FCC. One of their initiatives is the fight against robocalls and caller ID spoofing in an effort to protect consumers. When it comes to text message spam and fraud, you really need to be aware of TCPA guidelines.

Since SMS messaging only applies to cell phone numbers, you should operate under TCPA guidelines. They are broader and protect consumer cell phone numbers as well as landlines. If you follow these best practices, you will avoid millions of dollars in fines:

3 Important Rules for SMS Marketing

1. Always get customer consent first
2. Do not text numbers that are listed on the Do Not Call Registry
3. Never text customers who have opted out

Overall, the same rules apply whether you are calling or texting your customers and you can incur TCPA fines *per number* if you fail to comply. Wireless communication specifically is regulated by another organization as well: CTIA.

CTIA Messaging Principles and Best Practices

The **Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association (CTIA)** provides compliance guidelines and best practices for SMS, MMS, and FTEU programs. CTIA works in cooperation with TCPA to protect consumers against unwanted phone calls and text message marketing campaigns.

CTIA Messaging Principles and Best Practices help facilitate P2P and A2P messages while protecting consumers from receiving unsolicited communication. CTIA audits conform with the regulations set forth by the TCPA and CAN-SPAM Act. Failing a CTIA audit could mean TCPA fines and/or deactivation of your text messaging campaign.

When planning an SMS campaign, consider not only the best tools for your needs but also applicable laws and regulations.

Cell Phone Carriers and Text Message Software

Text message software needs to know the phone carrier of the number it's sending a message to. Think of it as a multi-pronged fork in the road: when it comes to delivering that message, the software needs to choose the correct route, ie, which "prong" is the right carrier leading to the recipient.

Knowing that information ahead of time ensures speedy and accurate delivery. You can do a phone number carrier lookup one by one if you have only a few or in bulk for an entire database. You can also check at the point of entry with a [phone number API](#)!

While maybe only 18% of people are [likely to change phone carriers](#) in a given year, it can and does happen. This means that at least occasionally you should run your database through a [bulk verifier](#) to maintain the most valuable data.

Whether you use Searchbug's [phone number lookup](#), [batch verify tool](#) or [API](#), you get more information than just line type or carrier. Depending on your needs and budget, you can get names for phone numbers, zip codes, and DNC list check.

Use customer names to personalize messages and increase open rates and engagement. Knowing the zip codes associated with phone numbers can help improve your SMS campaigns by strategically sending messages at times when your customers are the most active. And avoid hefty fines by knowing immediately whether or not a number should be contacted.

Avoid Spamming Your Customers

Identifying the carrier further proves your legitimacy. If you invest the time, energy, and money to strengthen the quality of your data, your results will improve consequently.

Providing the carrier shows that you are familiar with the recipient and reduces the chance of your message being treated as spam. As we mentioned earlier, messaging from a short code is the ultimate sign that you're invested and legitimate.

But if you don't have the budget or volume to support that kind of investment, at least maintaining a clean, complete database can solidify your credibility. Be aware also of ways to honor your customers' preferences and privacy.

Again, only text customers who have provided their consent to receive messages, avoid texting numbers registered on the DNC list and provide and honor opt-outs.

Identify Carriers to Reduce Fraud

With each new technological development comes ways to breach and compromise it. Cell phone numbers

have traditionally been considered secure methods of personal identification and authentication for security purposes. Now, it's important to monitor cell phone activity to avoid hacks.

Porting allows customers to keep a current phone number when switching carriers. This is quite convenient for many consumers as a change of phone number might deter them from exploring better options. However, this means that phone numbers can become compromised and ported without someone's knowledge.

When this happens, calls and texts can be rerouted and fraudsters can use that phone number to access accounts via two-factor identification. Sending a verification code to a customer's mobile number is considered one of the highest levels of authentication, so if that number becomes compromised, so do any associated accounts.

To help combat this, some carriers offer or require a PIN or password for consumer phone accounts that's necessary for making account changes such as porting. There are also alerts that can be added to help report activity that may or may not be authorized.

Knowing the carriers of the phone numbers in your database also helps protect your customers in the case of a carrier data breach. Customers with numbers owned by or ported to a specific carrier that has experienced a data breach are exposed and vulnerable to account takeover and attacks.

How to Use Phone Number Carrier Lookup

When collecting, storing, and using customer phone numbers, it's important to operate with the highest caution. The best way to protect your customers and yourself is to verify and regularly clean your data.

Use [Searchbug's identify phone number API](#) to find out if a phone number has been ported to a new carrier if it's active or has been disconnected, and if it's on the DNC list. You can use [Searchbug's batch phone number verification tool](#) to regularly clean your database, adjusting data that has changed or become unusable.

Utilizing these resources saves you time and money by preventing costly errors and appending additional useful information to your database. Attach names to numbers, use zip codes to improve the effectiveness of your campaigns, identify carriers to improve deliverability, and determine line type to choose the appropriate campaign channel.

Your campaign is only as good as your data, so invest in it. [Start today](#)!

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