

THE EFFICACY OF TEXT-BASED MARKETING



This tactic achieved excellent results during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

BY ROD SOLAR AND LAURA LIVESEY

While practices were trying to figure out their cash flow during the first COVID-19 shutdowns and the early stages of reopening, many practices relied on short messaging service marketing, or *SMS marketing*, to generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue.

If you've been trying to determine how to keep COVID-19 from forcing you to lay off staff, nip into your retirement savings, or work years longer than you planned, a text-based marketing approach may be a lifeline. Not only does it increase revenue significantly, but SMS marketing takes very little time or effort to execute if you know how to do it properly using the right technology.

HOW IT WORKS

What is SMS marketing? In SMS marketing, you message prospective patients through SMS. As with email marketing, text messages can be automated. By using a software tool known as an *SMS chatbot* or *text bot*, you can program these messages to interact with large groups of consumers by responding to their replies.

Isn't phone- and email-based follow-up enough? Although phone and email follow-up can be effective, text-based campaigns offer several advantages (see *Cases for SMS Marketing*). According to the Content Marketing Institute:¹

- SMS open (97%) and click-through (36%) rates significantly outperform email open (22%) and click-through (6%) rates;
- The majority (85%) of mobile device users prefer to receive a

- text message from a business rather than a phone call or email message; and
- Texting is the most-used mobile device feature. The only thing more personal than the phone itself is the standard messaging app, where users spend more time than anywhere else on their devices.

THE EFFICACY OF SMS MARKETING

This summer, we initiated what we called *The Guaranteed Refractive Revenue Campaign* for our clients. The campaign used SMS marketing to reengage inactive and passive prospective patients who subscribed to receive information about our clients' services. Specifically, the goal was to get prospective patients to open text messages from these practices and thereby reignite patients' desire for the services during the lockdown.

We helped four clients integrate this approach into their marketing efforts. Following are case examples showing the efficacy of SMS marketing campaigns, and the results of each campaign are shown in Figure 1.

► **Case No. 1.** A total of 9,449 text messages were sent to this clinic's list of patients who had inquired about services but hadn't booked appointments. These messages were opened by 1,423 people and led to 548 scheduled phone calls and virtual consultations and 151 booked appointments. The acquisition of these patients equates to more than US\$600,000 in sales. (A second clinic also generated more than US\$600,000 from sending just over 1,000 SMS messages.)

► **Case No. 2.** This client's campaign is ongoing, but these are the results as of this writing in two of their markets.

Market A. Of the 429 text messages sent, 84 were opened, leading to a total of 42 calls and virtual consultations and six bookings, equating to US\$22,788 in revenue so far.

Market B. A total of 703 text messages were sent to this market. Those messages were opened by 145 prospective patients, leading to 62 calls and virtual consultations and 20 bookings, which equate to US\$42,980 in revenue so far.

CASES FOR SMS MARKETING

SMS is an excellent way to communicate with existing patients as well as prospective ones. A few use case examples are to:

- Automate routine inquiries like frequently asked questions and appointment scheduling with intuitive self-service options;
- Streamline operations and improve the patient experience with easy reminders, refill options, and rapid intake; and
- Verify and authorize patient accounts, follow up on appointments, inform patients that a bill is ready, and share helpful links.

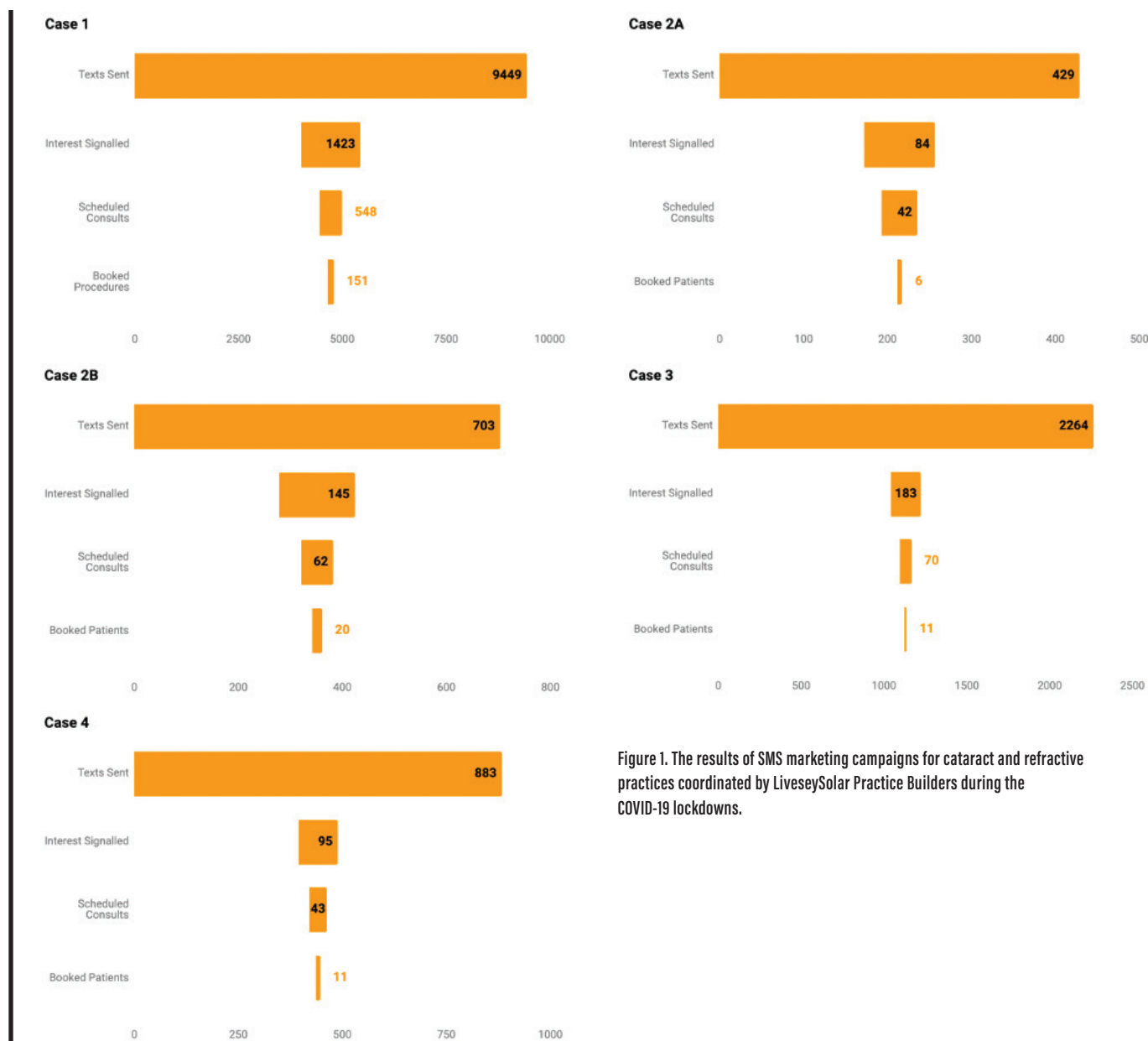


Figure 1. The results of SMS marketing campaigns for cataract and refractive practices coordinated by LiveseySolar Practice Builders during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

► **Case No. 3.** For this clinic, 2,264 text messages were sent, of which 183 were opened, leading to a total of 70 calls and virtual appointments and 11 bookings, for a total revenue of US\$44,000.

► **Case No. 4.** For this client, 883 text messages were sent that captured the interest of 95 prospective patients and led to a total of 43 calls and virtual appointments and

11 bookings, again for a total revenue of US\$44,000.

HOW DID THEY DO IT?

To achieve these results, the aforementioned clinics provided us with their target list(s), which were then segmented and shared in a safe, private, and protected manner. They also licensed our text bot technology to run a SMS marketing campaign for a period of 30 days and used our direct-response copywriting specialist,

who crafted a message that included a compelling call to action.

The campaign was tested to ensure its efficacy and to determine the optimal day and time to send the message. We helped clients identify what they wanted (eg, full payment, deposit on surgery) and what incentive they'd offer in return (eg, added value, a spot in the queue). Additionally, we provided our clients with all necessary training and advice to become confident and

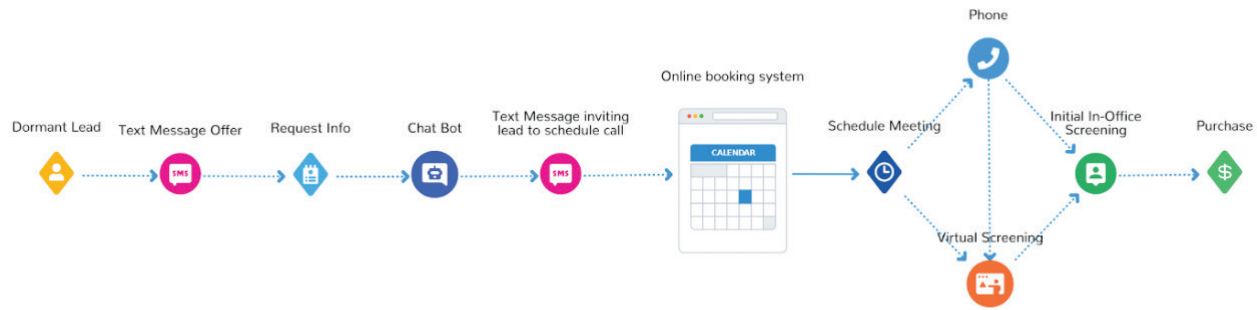


Figure 2. The SMS messaging marketing funnel.

skilled in handling the responses from the SMS campaign so that they could increase their chances of converting interested responses into sales (Figure 2).

NEXT STEPS

We are currently evaluating if regularly reactivating text bot campaigns wins back leads that don't

meet our ideal 7-day conversion window. If your practice doesn't already collect text-enabled mobile numbers from leads, we recommend that you start. Doing so will allow your practice to initiate similar campaigns, perhaps during a future shutdown. ■

1. Johnson B. Text-based marketing: 13 reasons to use it. Content Marketing Institute. September 27, 2018. Accessed October 5, 2020. <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2018/09/text-based-marketing/>

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