SMS Best Practices: Lessons Learned from CDC's Text Messaging Program

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Office of the Associate Director for Communication

Why is Text Messaging Important?

Mobile Usage on Rise

More than 292 million Americans have mobile devices, 93% of U.S. population.[1]

Minorities Lead Mobile Access

- Whites: 80%
- Hispanics: 87%
- African Americans: 87% [2]

1. CTIA Wireless Association. Wireless Quick Facts. *CTIA.* [Online] October 2010. [Cited: January 2011.] http://www.ctia.org/media/industry_info/index.cfm/AID/10323.
2. Pew Internet & American Life Project. *Mobile Access 2010* [Online] July 7, 2010: [Cited: January 2011] http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Mobile-Access-2010/Summary-of-Findings.aspx

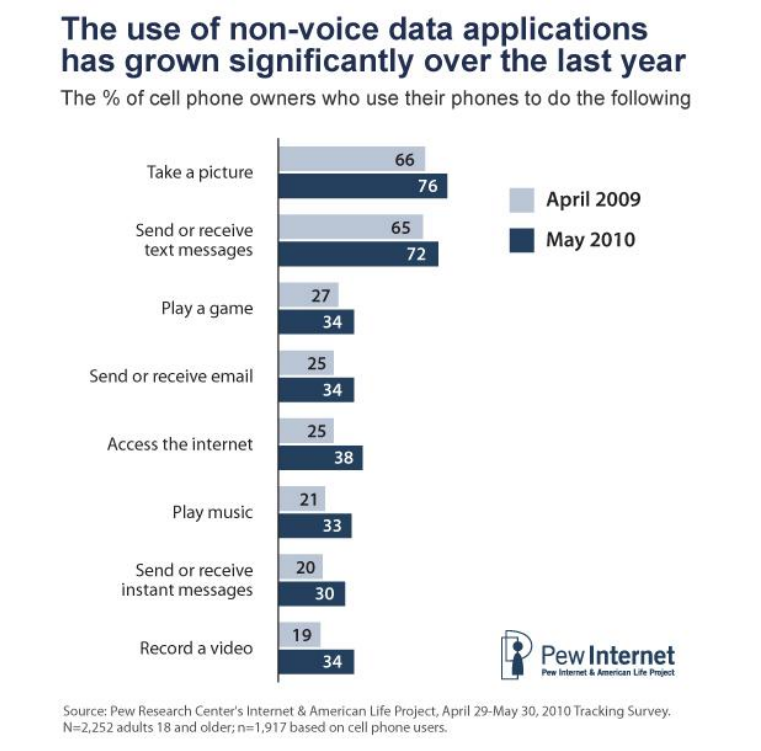
Why is Text Messaging Important?

Widespread Reach

Text messaging is available on 98% of all cell phones.[1]

72% of cell phone owners send/receive text messages.[2]

- 7 Trillion text messages to be sent in 2011 *(estimates)3*



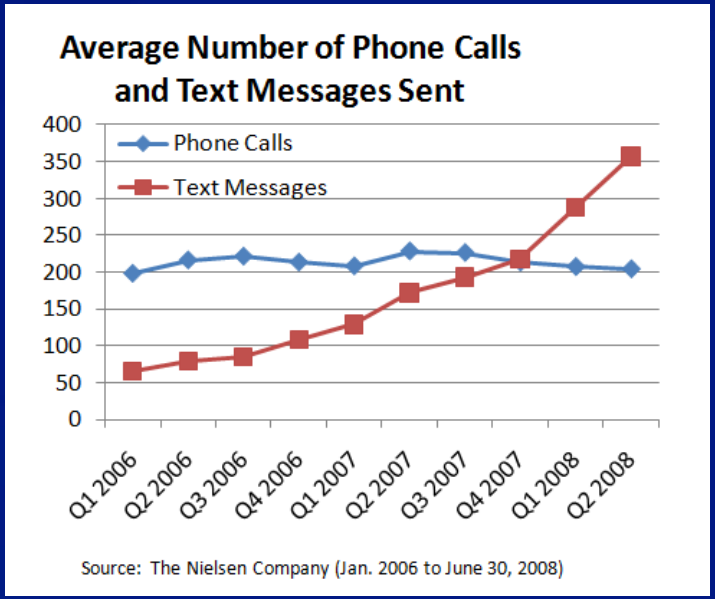
1. CellSigns. Text Messaging Statistics. *Cellsigns.* [Online] November 2008. [Cited: January 23, 2010.] http://www.cellsigns.com/industry.shtml.
2. Pew Internet & American Life Project. *Mobile Access 2010* [Online] July 7, 2010 : [Cited: January 2011] http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Mobile-Access-2010/Summary-of-Findings.aspx
3. Tsirulnik, G. (2010, December 30). *More than 7 trillion SMS messages will be sent in 2011: ABI Research*. Retrieved January 11, 2011, from Mobile Marketer: http://www.mobilemarketer.com/cms/news/research/8631.html?utm_medium=nl&utm_source=internal

Why is Text Messaging Important?

Frequent Usage

Adults send an average of 10 text messages per day.[1]

Number of text messages sent per user increased by nearly 50% in the U.S. last year.[2]



1. Lenhart, A. (2010, September 2). *Cell Phones & American Adults*. Retrieved January 14, 2011, from Pew Internet & American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Cell-Phones-and-American-Adults/Overview.aspx
2. Wortham, J. (2010, May 13). *Cellphones Now Used More for Data Than for Calls*. Retrieved August 12, 2010, from New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/14/technology/personaltech/14talk.html

Why is Text Messaging Important?

Immediate Communication

65% of adults say they have slept with their cell phone next to their bed.[1]

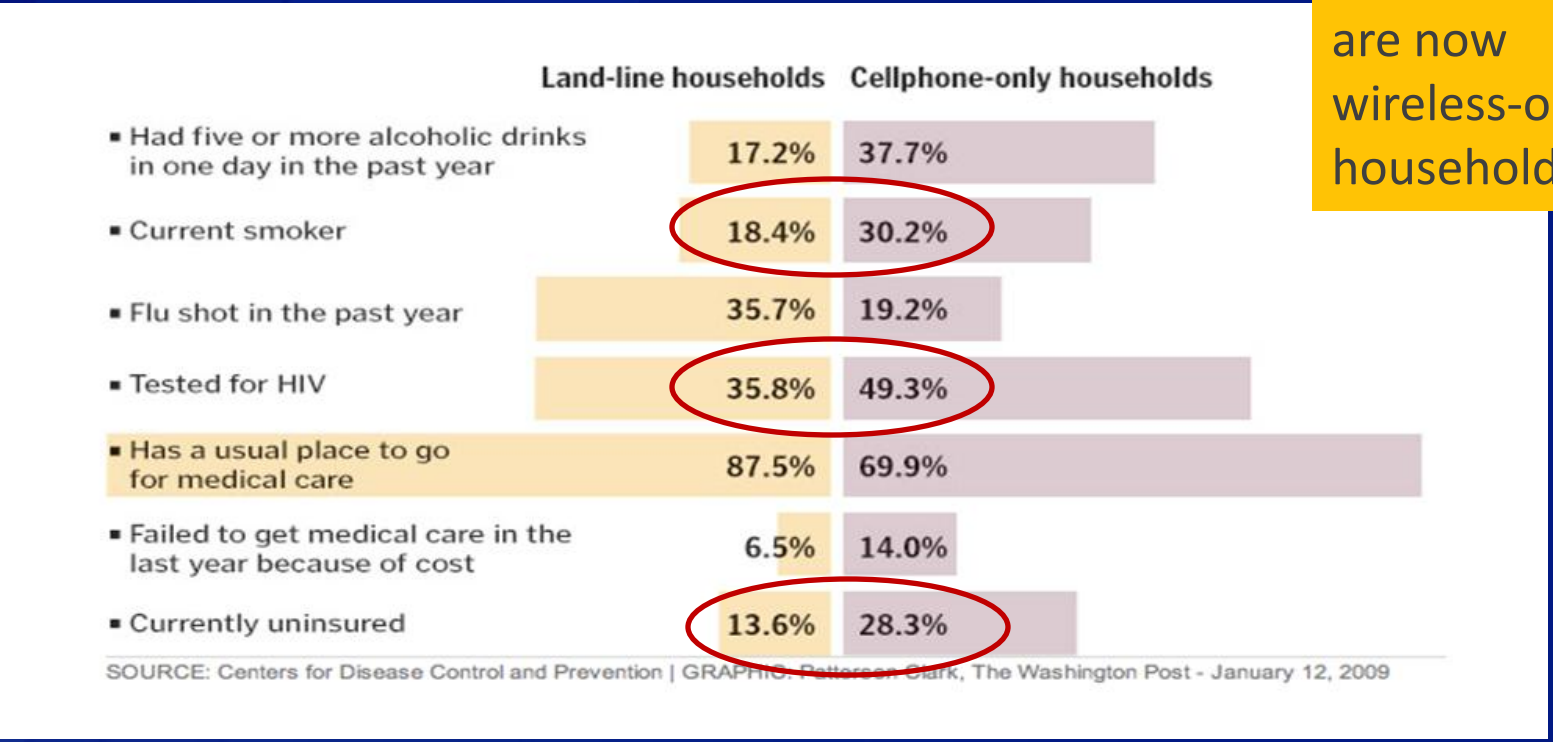
Americans spend an average of 2.7 hours a day on their mobile phone.[2]

1. Pew Internet & American Life Project. *Mobile Access 2010* [Online] July 7, 2010 : [Cited: January 2011] http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Mobile-Access-2010/Summary-of-Findings.aspx
2. Ruder Finn. MobileIntentIndex. *MobileIntentIndex.* [Online] February 10, 2010. [Cited: May 1, 2010.] http://www.ruderfinn.com/rfrelate/intent/mobile/intent-index.html

Why is Text Messaging Important?

Mobile-Only Households

Nearly **25%** of U.S. households are now wireless-only households.[1]



1. CTIA Wireless Association. Wireless Quick Facts. *CTIA*. [Online] October 2010 [Cited: January 2011] http://www.ctia.org/media/industry_info/index.cfm/AID/10323
2. Brown, D. (2009, January 12). *Cellphones' Growth Does a Number on Health Research*. Retrieved January 12, 2009 , from Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2009/01/11/ST2009011102094.html?sid=ST2009011102094

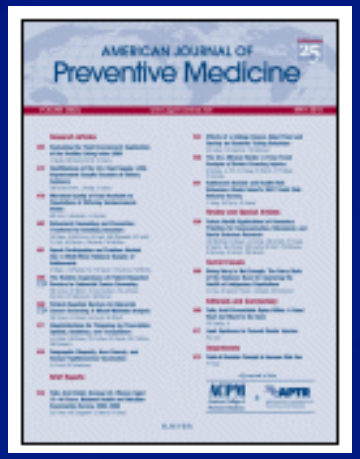
Why is Text Messaging Important?

Health Behavior Change

Positive behavior change outcomes were observed in 13 of the 14 reviewed studies.[1]

Keys to Success:

- Tailoring of SMS content
- Interactivity



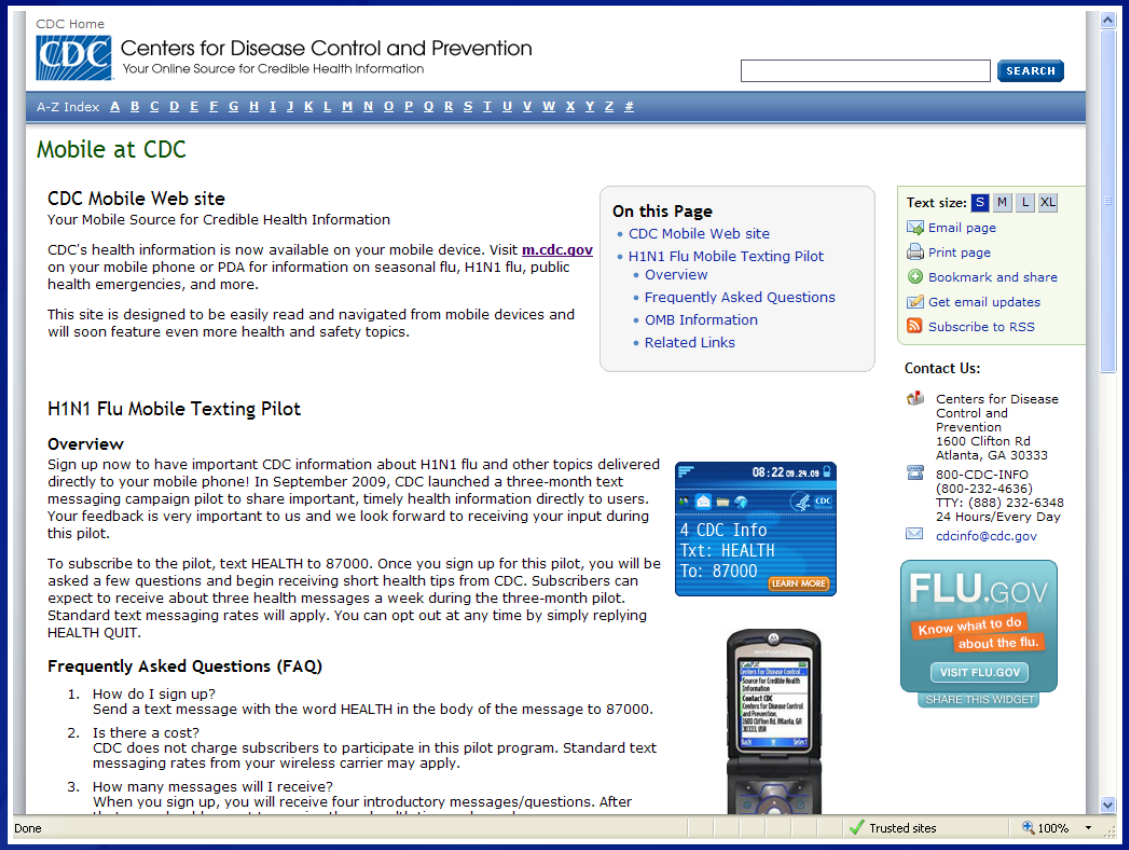
American Journal of Preventive Medicine 2009

Behavior change interventions delivered by mobile telephone short-message service..

1. Fjeldsoe, Brianna, Marshall, Alison and Miller, Yvette: American Journal of Preventative Medicine, 2009, Vol. 36

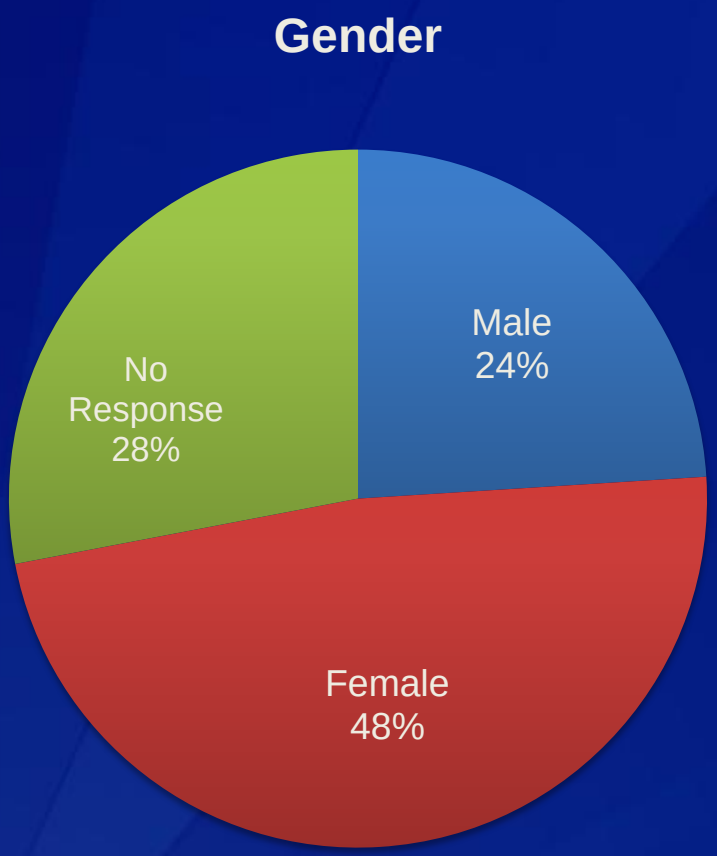
Lessons Learned from CDC's Text Messaging Program

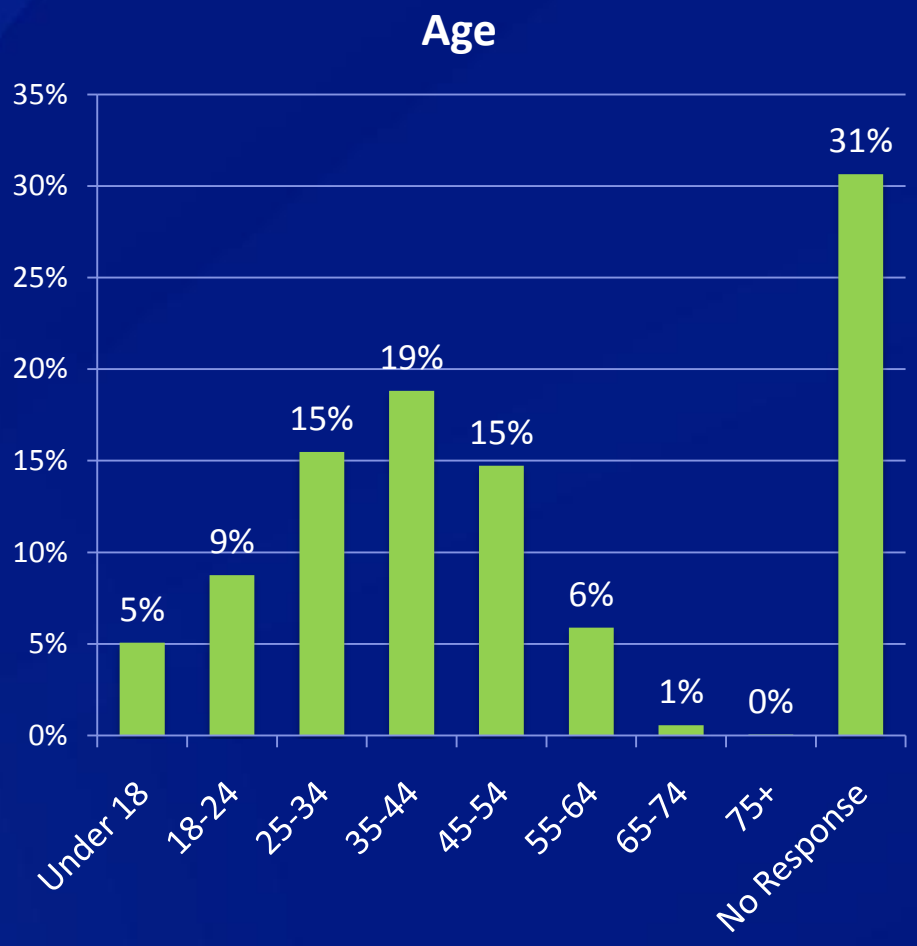
Overview Text Messaging Pilot



- Launched September 2009
- Subscribers receive 2-3 msgs/week
- Everyday health tips
- Health message testing and user evaluation

CDC Mobile Text Messaging Pilot





Mobile Texting Pilot

Overall Satisfaction (N=2,435)

- How would you rate UR overall satisfaction with the text messages: A) Very Satisfied, B) Satisfied, C) Dissatisfied, D) Very Dissatisfied

87% Satisfied

- How can we improve?

Actionable

Relevant

Text Messaging Survey

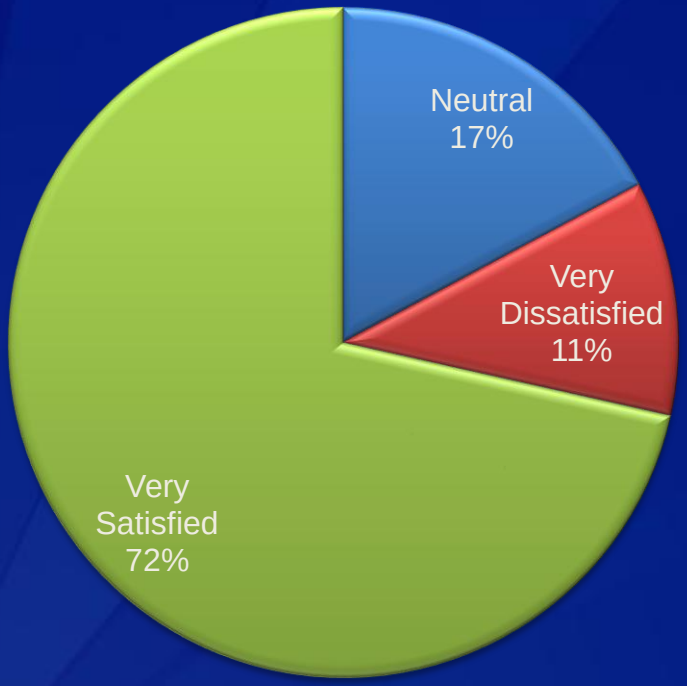
Evaluation Dates:

March 30, 2010 – March 31, 2010

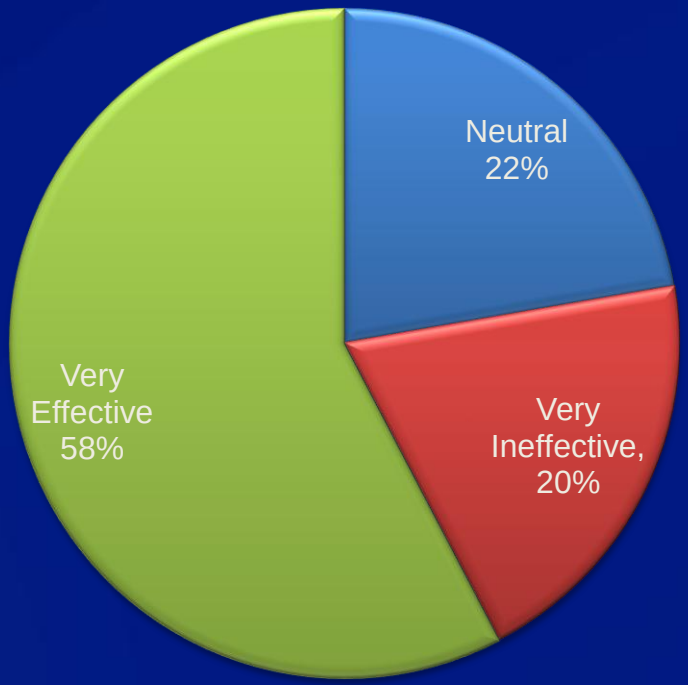
N=237

Overall Satisfaction

How would you rate your overall satisfaction with CDC's text messaging pilot?



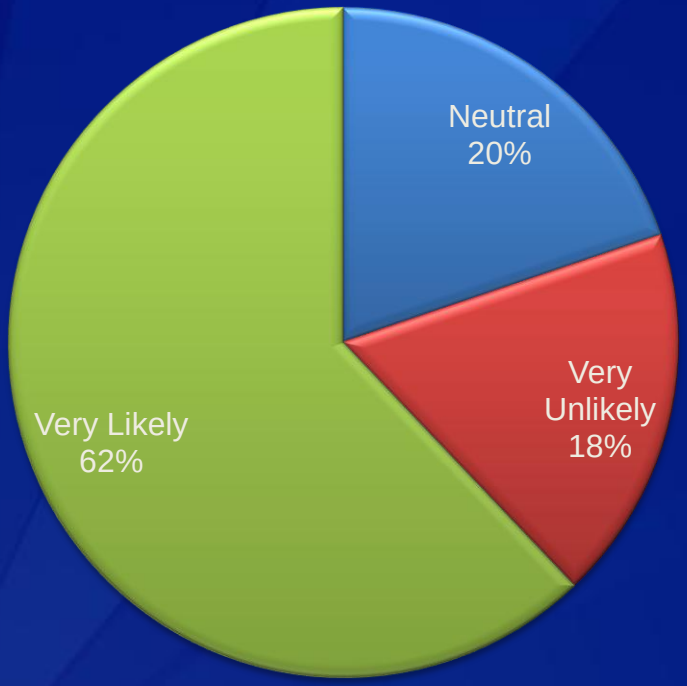
In your opinion, how effective are CDC's text messages in meeting your needs?



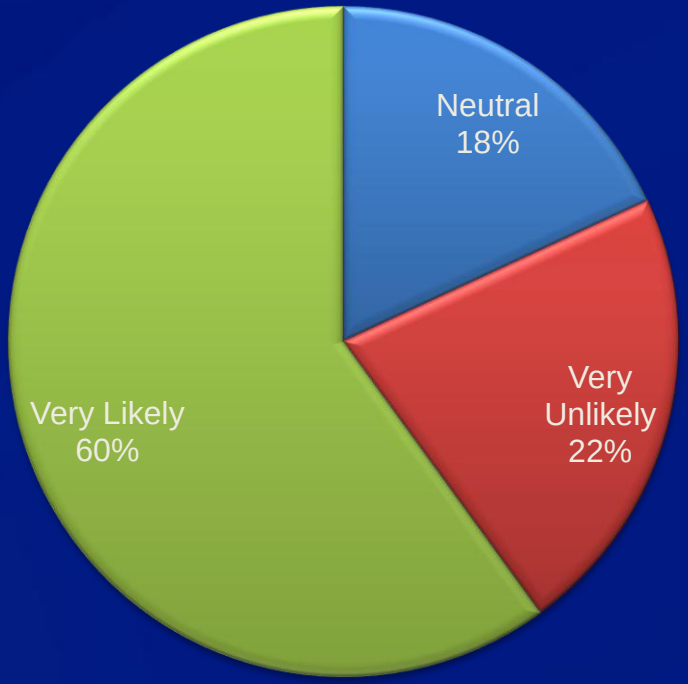
There was a statistically significant difference in satisfaction by role.

Health Behavior Change

How likely are you to use any of the information in the text messages to improve your health?

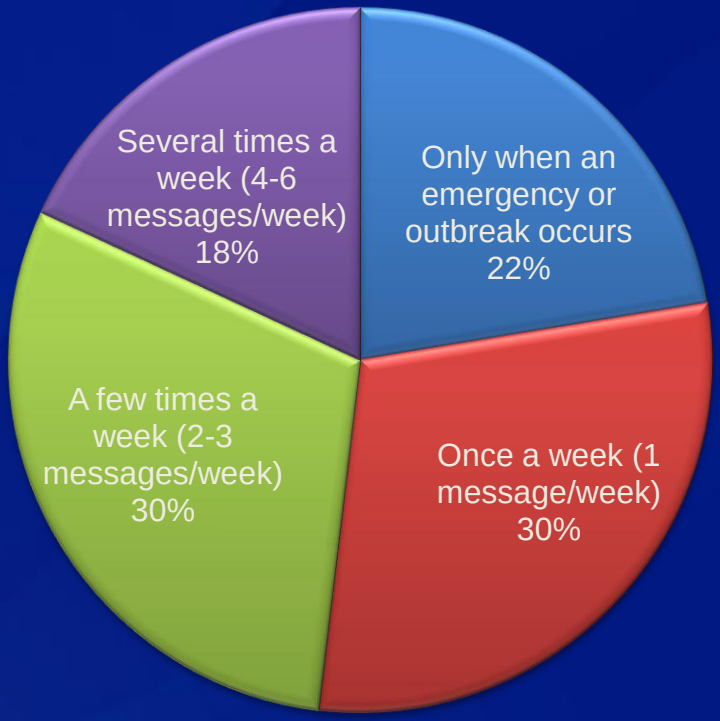


How likely are you to recommend CDC's text messaging pilot to a friend?



Frequency of Messages

How often would you like to receive messages?



67% have no preference for when the messages arrive.

91%

said the messages were easy to understand

91%

said the messages were easy to understand

90%

said the messages were credible

91%

said the messages were easy to understand

90%

said the messages were credible

89%

said the messages were friendly

91%

said the messages were easy to understand

90%

said the messages were credible

89%

said the messages were friendly

70%

said the messages provided helpful information to improve my health

Lessons Learned

- **Identify the name of the program:** Begin each message with the name of the program.

BEFORE

- Be active! Get 2.5 hrs of moderate activity each week: walk fast, ride a bike, dance, play tennis. Break a sweat! CDC 800-232-4636. Reply HEALTH QUIT to end.

AFTER

- CDC: Get your kids moving this summer! Try swimming, hiking, baseball, soccer, walking, running, etc. Find fun ways to be active 60 min a day. 800-232-4636

Lessons Learned

- **Avoid abbreviations:** Users expected messages from the CDC to be professional and not use abbreviations.

"I know that it is 'text speak' to abbreviate messages like your to UR, but since I am older than some texters (27) - text abbreviated words look ridiculous and teenager-like to me which makes me less inclined to pay attention."

"I hate the usage of texting shortcuts like "UR" for your, etc. I know UR trying to appeal to a young, hip audience, but to me it's a real turnoff."

"I was put off by the fact that the messages were written in txt: "We need UR help! Pls take 5 mins to tell us what U think of our txt msgs & how 2 improve." I get that you're speaking to a specific audience, but coming across like a 14-year-old does a lot to undermine your authority."

Lessons Learned

- **Avoid abbreviations:** Users expected messages from the CDC to be professional and not use abbreviations.

BEFORE

- Love is in the air. Show UR partner U care! Get tested 4 STDs. Take UR partner 2. Txt UR zip to 49809 for a location near U! CDC 800-232-4636

AFTER

- CDC: Achy joints? Arthritis affects 1 in 5 adults. Decrease pain by staying active, 30 min-5 days/wk. See your doctor if you have symptoms. CDC 800-232-4636

Lessons Learned

- **Provide a way to get more info:** SMS messages are short, so always provide a way to get more specific info.

BEFORE

- Cover your coughs & sneezes-protect health. Call CDC 800-232-4636 or http://m.cdc.gov for more info. Reply HEALTH QUIT to end.

AFTER

- CDC: Do you smoke? Smoking causes about 1 out of every 5 deaths each year in the U.S. That's about 443,000 people. For help, call 800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)

Lessons Learned

- **Only use links when specific:** Users do not click on generic links to a mobile website. Include http:// to ensure all mobile phones include a clickable link.

BEFORE

- Test your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detector when u turn your clocks back on Nov 1; replace batteries if needed. Call CDC 800-232-4636 or http://m.cdc.gov.

- Heart disease is leading cause of death in the U.S. Support heart disease awareness & wear red 2morrow. Rply SIGNS to lrn heart attack symptoms. m.cdc.gov/heart

Lessons Learned

- **Only use links when specific:** Users do not click on generic links to a mobile website. Include http:// to ensure all mobile phones include a clickable link.

AFTER

- CDC: About 1 in 110 kids have an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Monitor your child's development & act early if there is a delay. More: http://m.cdc.gov/milestones

- CDC: Stop the spread of germs: Cover your mouth & nose with a tissue if you cough or sneeze. Wash hands with soap & water. Learn more: http://m.cdc.gov/flufacts

Lessons Learned

- **Allow users to respond to get more information:** Provide ways for subscribers to get more info via SMS.

BEFORE

- Play like an Olympian! Wear protective gear, helmet, wrist guards, knee/elbow pads when playing sports--4 signs of concussion reply HEAD. http://m.cdc.gov/gear

- CDC: When was UR last pap test? Most cervical cancer can be prevented w/ regular pap tests & follow-up. Need free/low-cost tests? Reply PAP

Lessons Learned

- **Allow users to respond get more information:** Provide ways for subscribers to get more info via SMS.

AFTER

- CDC: Be prepared on & off the ice/slopes. Wear a helmet & protective gear. Think you have a concussion? Don’t hide it, report it. For concussion signs reply HEAD.

- Sign of concussions: headache, nausea/vomiting, dizziness, blurred vision, confusion, etc. If you have any of these, you should see a doctor. 800-232-4636

Lessons Learned

- **Use interactivity:** Use quizzes to deliver information in a fun, interesting way – edutainment.

Quiz Invitation

- CDC: Having turkey this Thanksgiving? Test your turkey knowledge with a turkey quick quiz. Reply TURKEY to start.

Quiz Question

- What is the minimum internal temperature needed when cooking a turkey? A. 145F B. 160F C. 165F D. 175F

Example Text Quiz/Messages

Correct Answer

- That's right! All poultry, incl. turkey, should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165F. From all of us at CDC, have a happy & healthy Thanksgiving.

Incorrect Answer

- Sorry! All poultry, incl. turkey, should be cooked to an internal temp. of 165F to prevent illness. From all of us at CDC, have a happy & healthy Thanksgiving.

Response Rate
25.6%

Votes
A: 6%
B. 24%
C. 48%
D. 22%

Lessons Learned

- **Begin each message with an interesting lead-in:** To entice users to open the message, make the first 20-30 characters interesting.

BEFORE

- Children younger than 10 years should receive two doses of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. Call CDC 800-232-4636 or http://m.cdc.gov. Reply HEALTH QUIT to end.

AFTER

- CDC: Ready for the big game but not the weight gain? Control portions when eating in front of TV. Put snacks in small bowl & resist eating from bag. 800-232-4636

Lessons Learned

- **Begin each message with an interesting lead-in:** Provide ways for subscribers to get more info.

AFTER

- CDC: Are you sick with the flu? Rest, drink plenty of fluids, avoid contact with others & stay home for at least 24 hrs after your fever is gone. 800-232-4636

- CDC: What's scarier than ghosts & goblins this Halloween? A mouth full of cavities! Brush with fluoride toothpaste, floss daily & drink tap water with fluoride. 800-232-4636

Lessons Learned

- **Tailor messages:** Create sub-groups of users with similar interests.

BEFORE

- Resolve to be healthy in 2010! Reply NEWYEAR to get weekly tips on weight loss, fitness & nutrition. CDC 800-232-4636. Reply HEALTH QUIT to end

- Thx 4 resolving to be healthy in 2010! You'll getwkly txt tips on weight loss, fitness & nutrition. To opt out rply NEWYEAR QUIT. Msg&DataRates may apply.

Lessons Learned

- **Tailor messages:** Create sub-groups of users with similar interests.

AFTER

- CDC: Are you pregnant? Have a new baby? Reply PREGNANT for tips on staying healthy while pregnant. Reply BABY for tips on keeping your baby safe. CDC 800-232-4636

- PREGNANT: Thank you for signing up for tips about staying healthy during your pregnancy.

Lessons Learned

- **Make it interesting:** Consider using text messages for contests and challenges.

Sign Up: Tobacco Regulations Mobile Texting Pilot Program

FDA's Center for Tobacco Products, has launched a six month text messaging program in its ongoing efforts to educate our stakeholders about federal regulations to protect kids from tobacco.

To sign up, text **BreakChain** to **87000** from your mobile phone.

Messages will include information on

- FDA rules that limit the sale, distribution, and marketing of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco
- Provisions that prohibit the advertising or labeling of tobacco products with the descriptors "light," "mild," or "low" or similar descriptors without an FDA order
- Requirements that new, larger health warning labels for smokeless tobacco products

Get the Button!

Contest winners have been selected!

Subscribers had the opportunity to take quizzes for a chance to be recognized on FDA.gov. One winner was selected each week from September 20 - October 14. Winners will be featured on www.fda.gov/tobacco via FDA/CDC's bi-weekly podcast series: Tobacco Control Act: What Retailers Need to Know. Four winners have been selected and will soon be announced.

Thanks for your participation! We will continue to send you weekly text messages on the latest in tobacco news, issues, and regulations.

http://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/ResourcesforYou/BreakTheChain/ucm219686.htm

Lessons Learned

- **Make it interesting:** Consider using text messages for contests and challenges.

This video features Mobile Contest Winner Samantha from North Carolina, one of the winners in FDA's Tobacco Regulations Mobile Texting Program. Here, she shares insights on her experience with the mobile messaging program and the new tobacco product regulations.

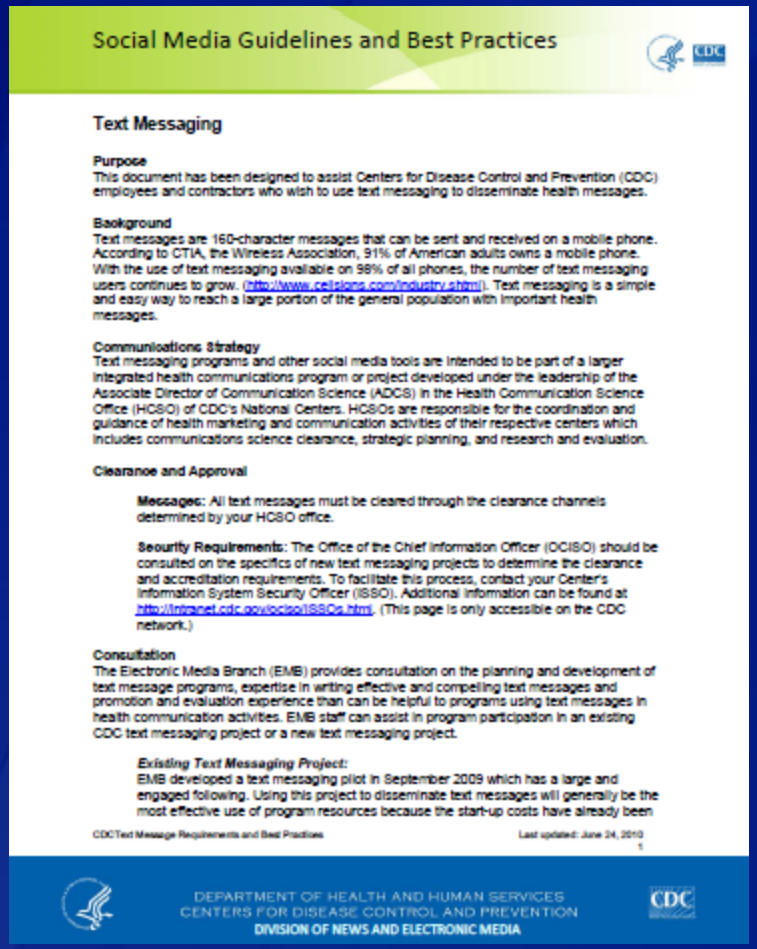
Listen to the podcast: Mobile Contest Winner Samantha on FDA Tobacco Regulations

http://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/ResourcesforYou/BreakTheChain/ucm219686.htm

Writing Effective Text Messages

1. Ensure messages are relevant.
2. Create actionable messages.
3. Identify the name of the program.
4. Avoid abbreviations.
5. Provide a way to get more info.
6. Only use links when specific.
7. Allow users to respond to get more info.
8. Use interactivity.
9. Begin each message with an interesting lead-in.
10. Tailor messages.
11. Make it interesting.
12. Evaluate & refine!

Writing Effective Text Messages



Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices

Text Messaging

Purpose
This document has been designed to assist Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) employees and contractors who wish to use text messaging to disseminate health messages.

Background
Text messages are 160-character messages that can be sent and received on a mobile phone. According to CTIA, the Wireless Association, 91% of American adults owns a mobile phone. With the use of text messaging available on 98% of all phones, the number of text messaging users continues to grow. (http://www.cellsigns.com/industry.shtml). Text messaging is a simple and easy way to reach a large portion of the general population with important health messages.

Communications Strategy
Text messaging programs and other social media tools are intended to be part of a larger integrated health communications program or project developed under the leadership of the Associate Director of Communication Science (ADCS) in the Health Communication Science Office (HCSO) of CDC's National Centers. HCSOs are responsible for the coordination and guidance of health marketing and communication activities of their respective centers which includes communications science clearance, strategic planning, and research and evaluation.

Clearance and Approval

Messages: All text messages must be cleared through the clearance channels determined by your HCSO office.

Security Requirements: The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) should be consulted on the specifics of new text messaging projects to determine the clearance and accreditation requirements. To facilitate this process, contact your Center's Information System Security Officer (ISSO). Additional information can be found at http://intranet.cdc.gov/ocio/ISSOs.html. (This page is only accessible on the CDC network.)

Consultation
The Electronic Media Branch (EMB) provides consultation on the planning and development of text message programs, expertise in writing effective and compelling text messages and promotion and evaluation experience than can be helpful to programs using text messages in health communication activities. EMB staff can assist in program participation in an existing CDC text messaging project or a new text messaging project.

Existing Text Messaging Project:
EMB developed a text messaging pilot in September 2009 which has a large and engaged following. Using this project to disseminate text messages will generally be the most effective use of program resources because the start-up costs have already been

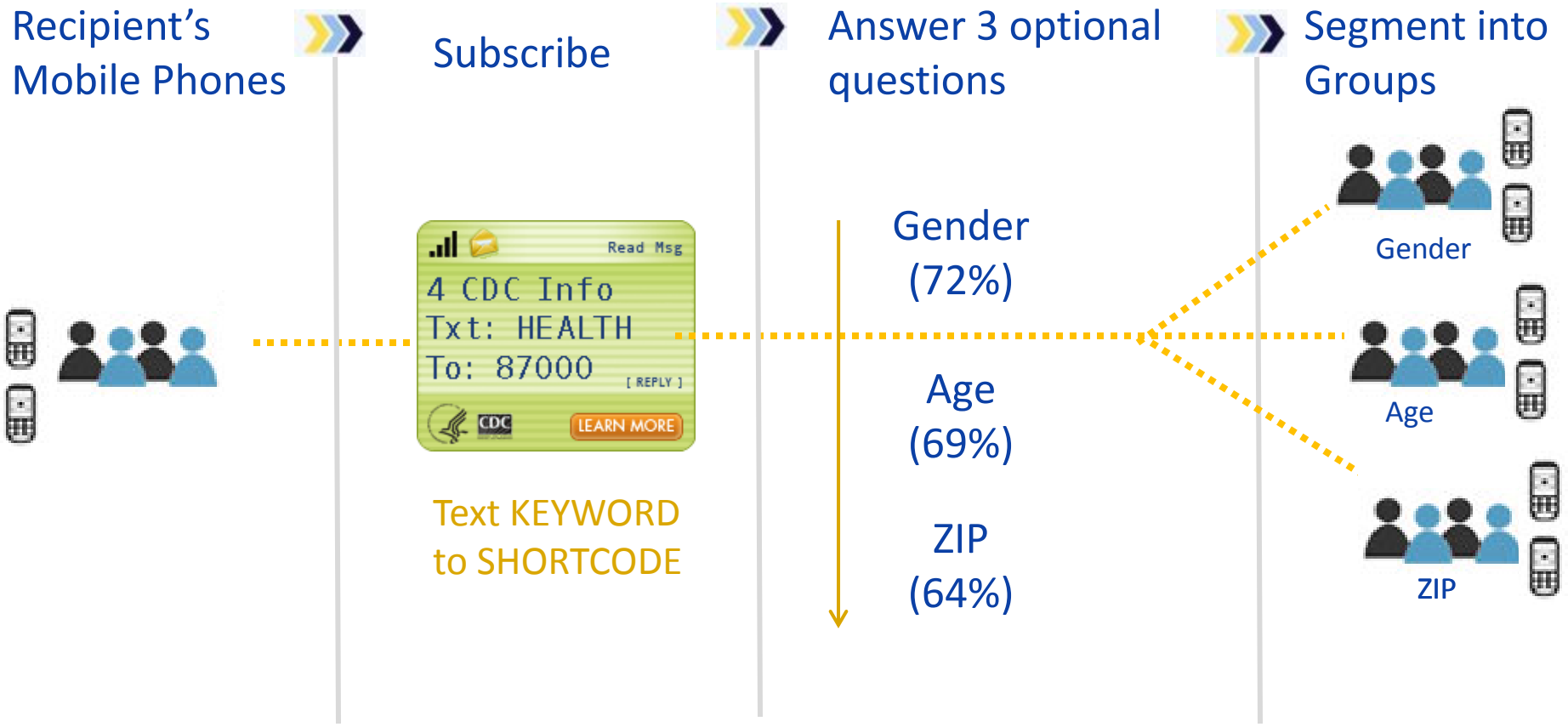
CDC Text Message Requirements and Best Practices — Last updated: June 24, 2010
1

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION
DIVISION OF NEWS AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

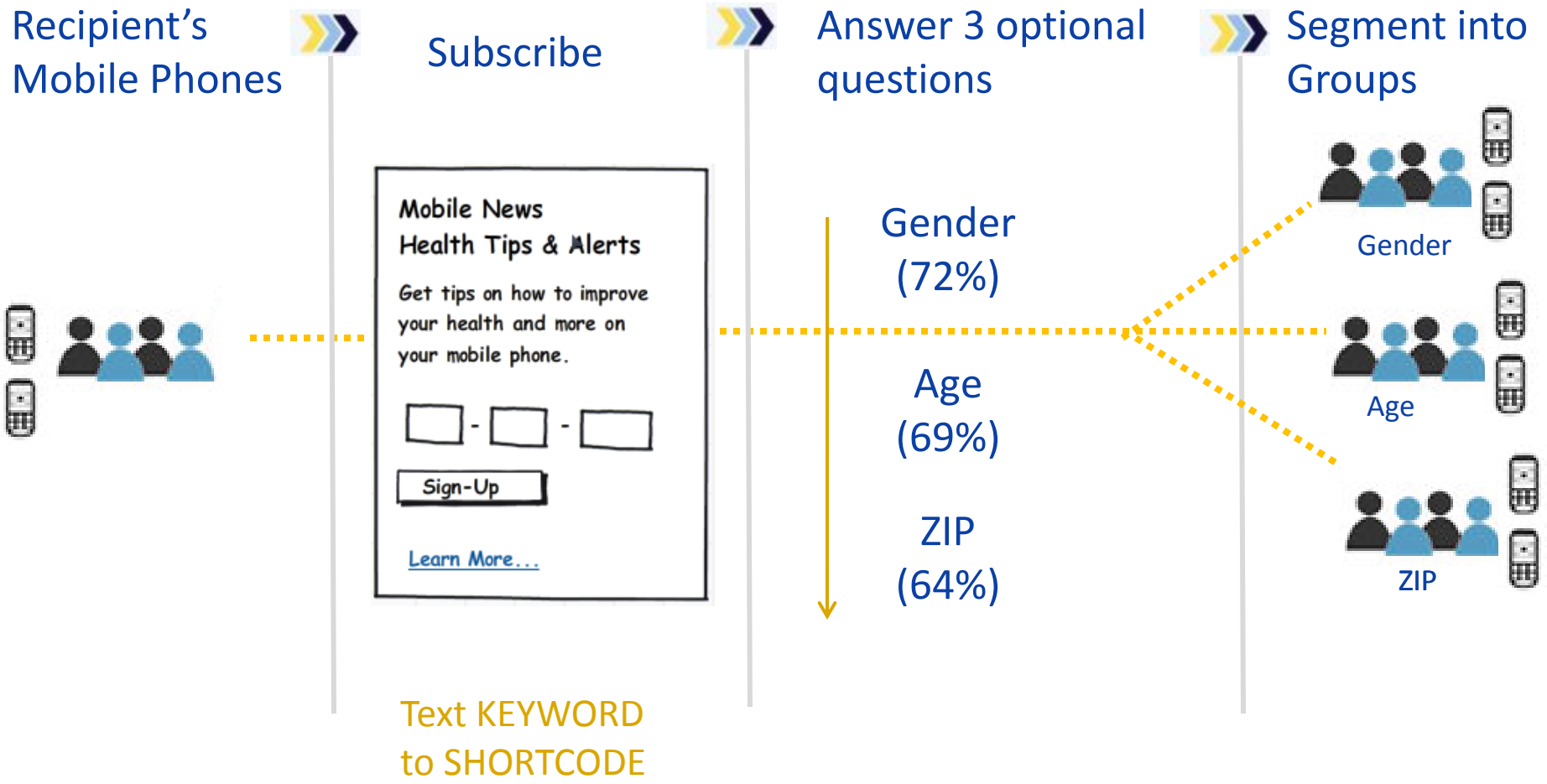
http://www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/Tools/guidelines/pdf/textmessages.pdf

Starting Your Own Text Messaging Program

How does text messaging work?



How does text messaging work?



How does text messaging work?

CDC Content → SMS Application → SMS Gateway → Mobile Carriers → Recipient's Mobile Phones

160 Characters

Mobile Service Provider

Aggregator

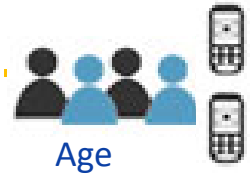
verizon wireless

at&t

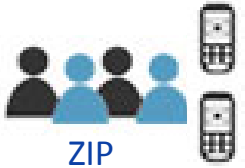
Sprint

T-Mobile

Gender



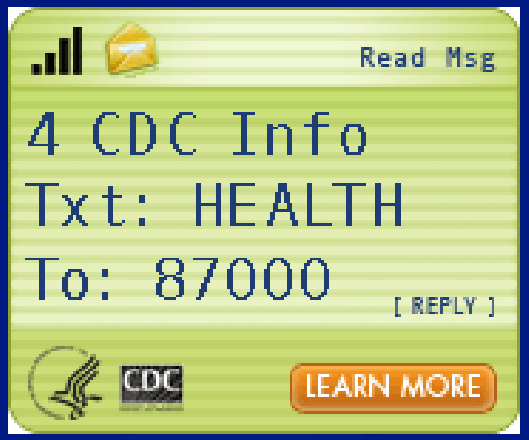
Age



ZIP

Common Short Codes

- Text KEYWORD to SHORTCODE
  - Text HEALTH to 87000
- Short codes in U.S. are 5-6 Digits
  - Only 88,000 possible combinations
- Leased, not owned
  - Neustar (www.usshortcodes.com)



Common Short Codes

- Selecting a short code:
  - Random ($500/mo)
  - Vanity ($1,000/mo)
    - CDC: 87000
    - COKE: 2653
    - ABCTV: 22288
    - JPMorgan Chase: 24273
    - Obama: 62262
    - Yahoo: 92466

Common Short Codes

- Which will you remember?
  - 33257
  - 87000

Source: http://www.scribd.com/doc/21614906/The-Ultimate-Guide-to-Short-Codes

Common Short Codes

- Selecting a short code:
  - Shared (multiple companies)
  - Dedicated (one company)

Shared Short Codes

- Pros
  - Time-to-market is fast (days, not weeks)
  - Fewer costs
- Cons
  - No control over who you share with
  - No control over the messages they send
  - Sharing keywords
  - Brand confusion
    - Don’t necessarily know who the message is from, i.e. 54276
    - CDC QUIT, FDA QUIT, or just QUIT

Dedicated Short Codes

- Pros
  - Complete control over messages
  - All keywords are available
  - Portable (can take it with you if switching aggregator or mobile service provider)
- Cons
  - Costly
  - Timely to set up (8-12 weeks to provision a short code)

Selecting a Mobile Service Provider

- Features to consider

#	Feature
1.	Ability to schedule messages in advance
2.	Ability to use a dashboard to create text messaging campaigns (would like to have ability to have users have different levels of access)
3.	Ability to create multiple login sub-user accounts (if we want to allow the program to send messages)
4.	Ability to send messages on the fly/Ability to send out ourselves (emergency situations)
5.	Ability to segment messages by demographic information (i.e. age, gender, role, topic, etc.) in order to segment/tailor messages to users in the appropriate audiences
6.	Ability to run reports on demand (must include ability to segment by demographic questions and other information gathered from users, i.e. answers to quiz questions)
7.	Ability to use a dashboard to create text messaging campaigns (would like to have ability to have users have different levels of access)
8.	Ability to send messages in Spanish, with the special characters
9.	Ability to send interactive quiz messages (without sending a message to ask users to opt-in to the quiz)
10.	Ability to send timed messages (messages timed to an event, quit date, pregnancy due date, etc.)
11.	Ability to allow users to send in keywords to get "on-demand" messages (i.e. text help, crave, slip, etc.)
12.	Ability to gather open-ended comments (i.e. questions that ask users to tell us how we can improve)
13.	Ability to send messages to users in other countries (which countries does each vendor support?)
14.	Ability to use multiple keywords in order to track sign-up / marketing efforts.
15.	Ability to use an ad network (does each vendor have its own ad network)
16.	Ability to send messages from an RSS feed
17.	Ability to format messages on multiple lines (i.e. poems, quiz questions, etc.)
18.	Ability to send MMS messages
19.	Ability to send an email message to have it translated into a text message
20.	Ability to personalize messages with name, or other information (i.e. quit date)

Features to Consider

- Ability to schedule messages in advance
- Ability to use a dashboard to create text messaging campaigns and to create different levels of access
- Ability to create multiple login sub-user accounts
- Ability to send messages on the fly, by ourselves (emergency situations)
- Ability to segment messages by demographic information (i.e. age, gender, role, topic, etc.) in order to segment/tailor messages to users in the appropriate audiences
- Ability to run reports on demand (must include ability to segment by demographic questions and other information gathered from users, i.e. answers to quiz questions)

Features to Consider

- Ability to send messages in Spanish, with the special characters
- Ability to send interactive quiz messages (without sending a message to ask users to opt-in to the quiz)
- Ability to send timed messages (messages timed to an event, quit date, pregnancy due date, etc.)
- Ability to allow users to send in keywords to get “on-demand” messages (i.e. text help, crave, slip, etc.)
- Ability to gather open-ended comments (i.e. questions that ask users to tell us how we can improve)
- Ability to send messages to users in other countries (which countries does each vendor support?)
- Ability to use multiple keywords in order to track sign-up / marketing efforts.

Features to Consider

- Ability to use an ad network
- Ability to personalize messages with name, or other information (i.e. quit date)
- Ability to format messages on multiple lines (i.e. quiz questions, etc.)
- Ability to send MMS messages
- Ability to send messages from an RSS feed
- Ability to send an email message to have it translated into a text message

Logout Help

SWITCHBLADE™ MOBILE CAMPAIGN PLATFORM

Home | Campaigns | Consumers | Messages | Reports

Browse Campaigns | New Campaign | Keyword List

Tuesday, January 25, 2011 2:35pm

Outbound Broadcast

Outbound Broadcast

Name (eg. Trivia Winner Alert)

Associate with the following Clients

CDC- Main

Send this message to

- (•) One Consumer Group
- ( ) Multiple Consumer Groups

Selected Group

(select one)

Schedule this message

- (•) Immediately
- ( ) Later

Message Text

Character Count (max.160) 000/160

Short Code (select one)

Consumers

This message will be sent to 0 consumers.

Submit

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Marketing

- Promotion is KEY!
  - Use different keywords to track promotions
- Promotion channels
  - Buttons / badges on website
  - Facebook / Twitter
  - GovD email alerts
  - Call Center (CDC-INFO)
  - Mobile sign-up (NEW)
  - Widgets (NEW)
  - Contests / challenges (NEW)
- Advertising
  - SMS Ad Networks
  - Mobile search results (NEW)
  - Ads on mobile websites / apps (NEW)

CDC Timeline

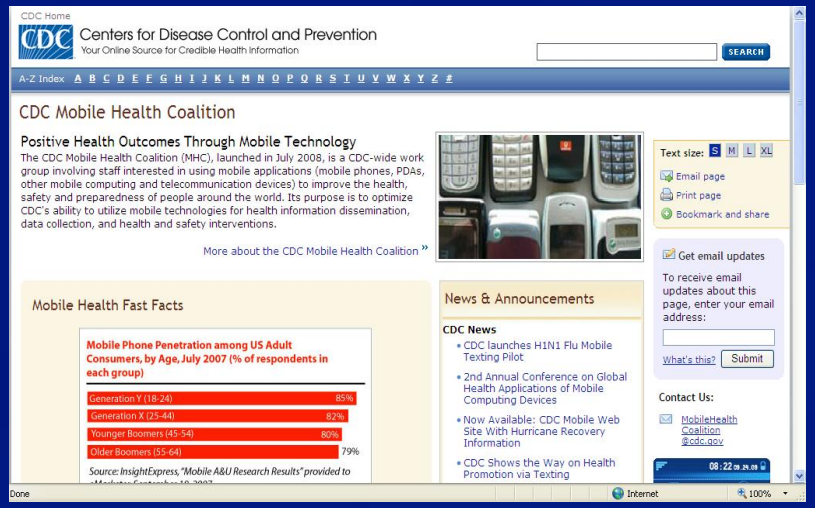
- Preparing documents for C&A: 1 Month
- C&A Review & Approval: 1 ½ Months
- Provisioning on major carriers: 2-3 Months
  - Service requests (SRs) must be sent to all carriers and individualized for each carrier
- Will be transitioned to new vendor March – April
- Marketing campaign & mobile sign-up to begin in March

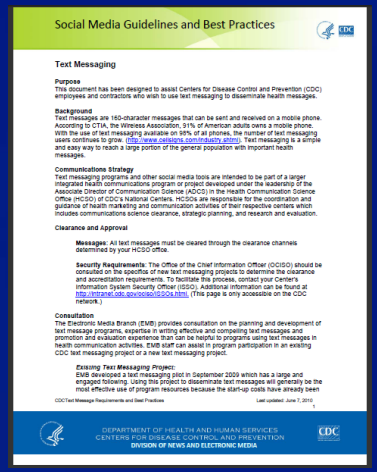
CDC Mobile Resources

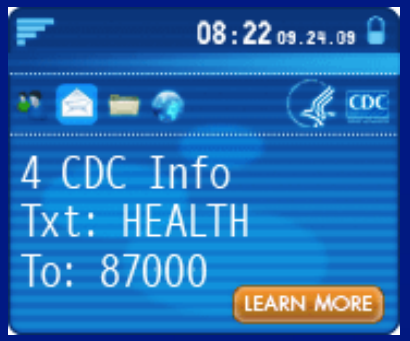
Mobile Activities at CDC
http://www.cdc.gov/mobile/

eHealth Data Briefs
http://www.cdc.gov/HealthMarketing/ehm/databriefs/

Mobile Metrics
http://www.cdc.gov/metrics/socialmedia/mobile.html

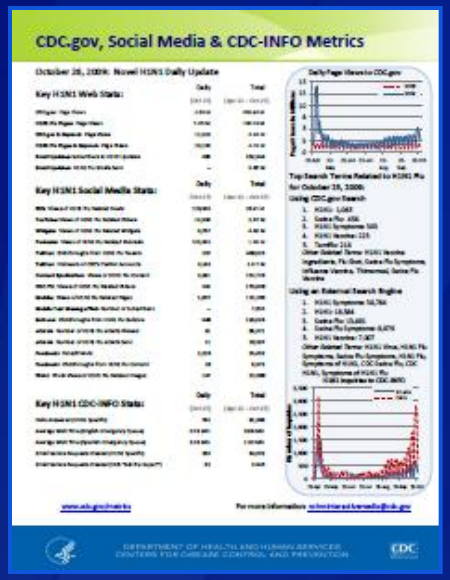


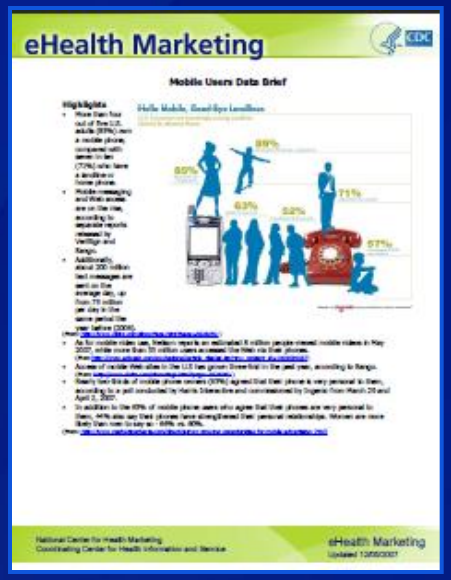


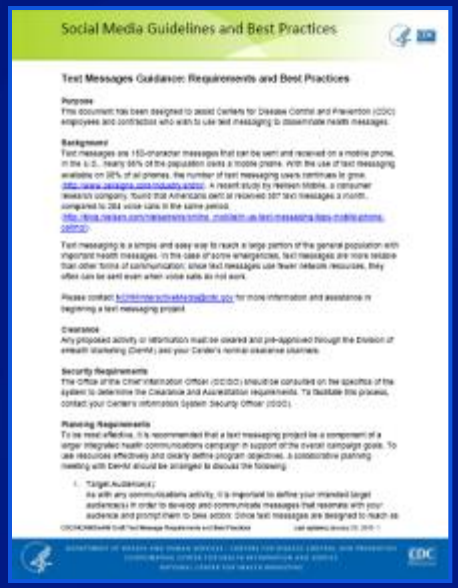


Social Media Resources

- Social Media at CDC: http://www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/







Now Available! Social Media Toolkit and The Health Communication and Social Marketing Gateway

http://www.cdc.gov/HealthCommunication/

Thank You!

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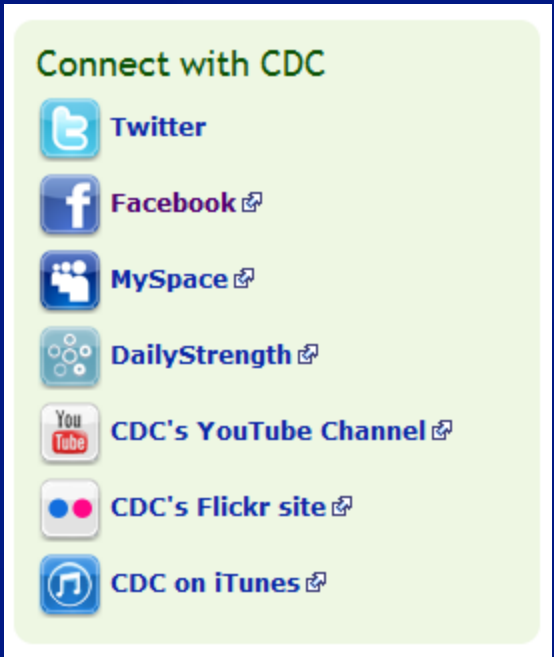
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