Transcript of:
040 SMS Marketing - should you? how do you?
with Corinne Watson from Postscript

[00:00:01.590] - Intro
You're listening to the Keep Optimising podcast to increase your traffic, improve your conversion rate and grow your profits.

[00:00:10.020] - Chloe Thomas
Hello and welcome. If you're looking to improve the performance and return on investment of your marketing, then you have come to the right place. I'm Chloe Thomas, the host of this marketing-focused podcast, and it's very, very cool to have you tuning in to our fortieth episode. Yes, this is the big 40, this podcast now has as many episodes as I am years old.

[00:00:34.860] - Chloe Thomas
We've hit the milestone together. In today's episode, I'm going to be talking to Corinne about integrating SMS into your communications plan. Because whilst this month we're all about email marketing, it's also important to think about other ways we could communicate with our customers. We thought we'd expand a little bit in this five-week month to talk about SMS as well. We started the month with three episodes about the fundamentals of email. So list growth, welcome campaigns, post-purchase and for the last episode in this, we're kind of expanding it out a bit.

[00:01:06.880] - Chloe Thomas
So last time was ad audiences from your email marketing and this time we are talking SMS, which is less of an expansion of email, but more kind of taking what you've learned from email and applying it to a totally brand new channel that you need to respect and use quite differently rather than steal Corinne's thunder and tell you things. No, I'm going to let you listen to the whole episode to find out exactly what the huge opportunity at the moment of SMS is.

[00:01:34.170] - Chloe Thomas
But before we meet her, please do check out the sponsors.
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Today, I'm chatting with marketing expert Corinne Watson. Corinne is the Senior Content Marketing Manager at Postscript and a deep thinker about all things eCommerce. She gave some amazing advice on eCommerce MasterPlan for our expert show earlier this year. So when I decided we should bring SMS into our Keep Optimising email marketing month, there was only one person to call on.

Hello, Corrine.

Hi, Chloe. Happy to be chatting with you again.

Yeah, it's great to be catching up and tell me we didn't talk about it last time, so let's talk about it now. How did you end up in marketing?

Yeah. So I have a pretty roundabout way that I ended up being a content marketer. I went to school and received a degree in graphic design straight out of college. I did graphic design and copywriting for a small eCommerce brand that sold information technology, geographic information technology and eventually made my way to Austin Texas, and joined the team over at a BigCommerce. So at BigCommerce, I was a writer and researcher and basically dug my heels into anything having to do with eCommerce, learned all that I could, and then eventually ended up in SMS marketing.
[00:03:32.500] - Chloe Thomas
Wow.

[00:03:32.920] - Chloe Thomas
So you kind of you went for the graphics and you've ended up with the words.

[00:03:36.700] - Corinne Watson
Yep. I'm one of the many people who do not use their university degree whatsoever.

[00:04:00.010] - Chloe Thomas
Me too. I'm a historian by education, although in many ways I do still use it. I think, I'd like I like to think maybe some of those critical thinking skills I was given work, who knows? But yes, I know what you mean. It's like those twists and turns that lives takes us on you really couldn't have assumed.

[00:04:00.010] - Chloe Thomas
Well SMS, I feel like a lot of retailers are still scared about sending marketing SMS to their customers. So let's hit that one on the head straight away. Why shouldn't they be scared about it?

[00:04:17.920] - Corinne Watson
I feel like the fear around using SMS marketing is totally valid. I think that brands should absolutely think twice before implementing an SMS marketing program, which is very oxymoronic coming from someone who sells that as part of my job. But the bottom line is SMS is a supersensitive channel.

[00:04:38.680] - Corinne Watson
It's where we're communicating with our family and friends and keeping in touch with people, especially during these days where you can't just catch up with someone in person. So totally valid for brands to be thinking twice before jumping in. But at the same time, we're also in an era where customers are used to being communicated but with from brands at every single step of the buyer's journey and in every single channel that they already frequent. So you know, marketing has been around for a while.

[00:05:09.580] - Corinne Watson
Customers are used to receiving emails. The next step for brands really is text message marketing when we're looking at how to connect with customers next. And it's also something that surprisingly has been around for a few years. I think that for a while SMS marketing was just used as a promotion channel. But over the past, I'd say 18 months, we've seen more and more brands use it in ways that are outside of just sending promotion codes to their customers and subscribers.
Keep Optimising Podcast: https://keepoptimising.com

[00:05:36.130] - Corinne Watson
It's becoming a lot more of an effective way for brands to communicate with customers through conversations and check-ins and more empathetic means of communicating.

[00:05:46.090] - Chloe Thomas
I find it quite an interesting channel because it's almost like, I mean I love the fact you said, yes, we should be scared of it. We need to treat it with respect, like we would any marketing channel.

[00:05:54.760] - Chloe Thomas
But I like the fact that it feels like because we're starting to, as consumers receive a lot of delivery notifications, last section of the buyer journey, we're getting a lot of those via SMS and we're appreciating the fact we're getting them via SMS and they're really useful. It's like that's, that's kind of wedged open the door a bit. And if we as retailers can send really useful, helpful SMS messages, then we can build on that and make the customer more comfortable feeling, you know, kind of coming, hearing from us.

[00:06:30.610] - Chloe Thomas
But if we suddenly just blast them endlessly, as we many do with email then, then we run the risk of having that door kind of slammed shut in our face. It's kind of like our opportunity to win or lose.

[00:06:43.930] - Corinne Watson
Yeah, absolutely.

[00:06:44.950] - Corinne Watson
And I think one of the biggest mistakes that we see brands using when they start text message marketing is treating it the same way as email. And I know that this is email marketing month for the Keep Optimising podcast. So I think one of the biggest questions that brands have is how do I keep the channels differently? And there are a lot of different strategies and tried and true ways that we've kind of seen brands differentiate the two and see a lot of success.

[00:07:09.130] - Chloe Thomas
Excellent! That's one of the reasons I wanted to talk about it, is because. It's kind of it can be seen as just like, well, we got our email working, let's go on SMS. You know, we've got a 6 email welcome campaign. Let's chuck in SMS message in there. Clearly, that's not what we should be doing. And don't worry, guys, we're going to get on to what you should be doing in a minute or two, but because it's that one on one customer communication channel.
[00:07:30.650] - Chloe Thomas
So we, we kind of tie it into email. But yeah, I think it's definitely not just a straightforward button. OK, so we should be scared, but we've got opportunities if we're using it in the right way.

[00:07:41.210] - Chloe Thomas
I guess before we get on to how we, what sort of messages to send and how we send them, how do we actually build a list? Because presumably we can't just go and mine our existing customer database from mobile phone numbers and start spamming them.

[00:07:55.640] - Corinne Watson
Absolutely! The number one tip that we give brands at Postscript.io when they're starting with SMS marketing is to work on list growth because again, you can't just convert email subscribers into SMS subscribers. They need to opt-in on their own. Otherwise, you can get faced with huge amounts of fines. So there are a lot of ways to build your list. But even before that, now that now that we're talking, I think it's important for us to mention that before you even dive into SMS as a channel, you should ask your customer if it's something that they would be interested in receiving? I, I would recommend to any eCommerce brand.

[00:08:29.810] - Corinne Watson
You probably are already doing some kind of customer survey to figure out what kind of product adaptations you should make, marketing, stuff like that. But consider next time you're sitting down with customers, asking them the best way that they like to communicate with you and bring up SMS and say, hey, would you mind if you received a text a week from us, a text a month or something like that? So that's before list growth and then. Yes, list growth.

[00:08:55.250] - Corinne Watson
There are a lot of different ways to get SMS subscribers. One of the most effective ones that we have at Postscript.io is just a pop-up that occurs on mobile or desktop. When people are visiting and browsing your eCommerce website. Most of the time we see brands incentivizing people to fill out that form with a discount or a gift card or getting added into their VIP list. So we see a lot of that. And then for these more DTC and native brands that are 'really gung ho' about social media, we see a lot of brands advertising their shortcode on Instagram swipe ups or within images on Instagram.

[00:09:36.290] - Corinne Watson
That's another fun way to build your list as well. And there are also keywords that you can use in advertising, in print media, in add ons that you include within your fulfillment. Lots of ways you kind of get people to subscribe. I think part of it is just making sure that your shortcode is as many places as possible, but then also making sure that you're being really intelligent about how you incentivize people to opt into your list. Just saying that you want to send them text messages won't get them to add their number.
It'll need to be like a discount or 15 percent off or like a ten-dollar gift card or just something to make them give you their information.

So on our website, we treat it very much like we would an email sign-up. With an incentive, with a pop-up and do all the testing we'd normally do to see where we get the best results and what offers work and all that kind of stuff.

And then you mentioned the shortcode, What's a shortcode?

So shortcode is a five or six digit number that all of your SMS advertising gets sent from. So if you’re browsing on your phone and your text message inbox, most of the numbers that you’re communicating with friends and family on are ten-digit long codes. So they're ten digits long, whereas any kind of automation or fulfillment or messages that you're getting from brands come from a shortcode. And this is something that has kind of the whole SMS world buzzing because some brands still use long codes I'm getting very technical, but some brands do still use long codes to communicate with customers.

This depends a lot on where you’re located in the world as well as the types of communications that you’re sending. So there are some pitfalls to long codes and then some benefits to shortcodes. But most of the time, SMS advertising is coming from, or SMS marketing is coming from shortcodes.

And am I right in saying you may be sharing a shortcode with other brands depending on your platform?

For now, Yes. It's very interesting that we're having this conversation now because at least in the US, a lot of mobile carriers are limiting the amount of shared shortcodes that can occur. So we on the Postscript end are having as many people as possible get signed up on their own unique shortcode in order to avoid that sharing shortcode and then communicating with customers that also might be receiving messages from other brands on that shortcode as well. If that makes sense.
That makes enough sense. But I think let's stop digging into shortcodes. And then you mentioned about on offline, we might say a word or something, so I'm guessing if parcel, we might put a leaflet that says text shoe to 8888 or something, and that would be a way of getting someone to opt-in and sign up. Is that what you meant by that?

Yeah, definitely. And there's I'll have to send you this example after we're done recording. But we've seen a lot of brands are using marketplaces for fullfilment, include a leaflet in those packages that includes their shortcode, which is awesome, because not only are you regaining ownership of that customer from the marketplace, but you're also making the, you're also engaging with them in a new channel and encouraging repurchase so.

And it's an awful lot easier to send a text message with one word to something and to sign up than it is to go to a URL and to your email address. So I imagine that the pick up from that is a lot better with those marketplaces.

And you can get really fun with keywords, too. We've seen brands. Have you send in a certain keyword depending on what products you're interested in. So, for example, if you're selling candles and one of them is lavender scented and then one of them is peppermint scented, you can kind of segment people based off of the scent that you think they'd be interested in and then further down the line, maybe re advertise the other scent or something like that. It's like segmentation for email.

Nice, there's some clever things we can do even in the sign-up stage, which I, I like anything clever in marketing. OK, so building a list is something we need. We obviously need to focus on and presumably, we need to do that in line with whatever the current legal ethical requirements are for personal data capture in any whatever area we're marketing in.

OK, we've covered that, Corinne's nodding at me so we're not going to get into the legal stuff guys, be glad. But do make sure you're doing ethically and legally wherever it is you're capturing this data.

OK, so we've got some people on our list. You mentioned earlier we might want to do more kind of conversational content rather than kind of blast marketing. So what's a nice, comfortable, powerful
but safe marketing campaign for us to start off with, with all these lovely phone numbers we've gathered?

[00:14:25.560] - Corinne Watson
So the recommended automation's that we have people set up when they first start with SMS marketing is definitely a go-cart abandonment. So if someone looks at an item and doesn't purchase it, selling them additional promo code to purchase it and then a welcome series. So once someone becomes an SMS subscriber, sending them, again, a special offer and showing your brand. This is a good opportunity to kind of show your brand voice and show empathy there. And outside of those two automation's, I also see a lot of brands becoming more conversational with customers.

[00:15:00.330] - Corinne Watson
So sending in a check in saying, hey, how are you doing? Especially during covid times, it's fun to receive something a little bit more human from a brand. And one of the benefits of the Postscript platform is that if people do text back to the brand, you can have a conversation with them right through the number. And that turns into great opportunities to build user-generated content or just get to know your customers. We have some good integrations with support platforms as well, just in case anyone just responds and says, hey, I want to know where my order is.

[00:15:31.650] - Corinne Watson
You make sure that you're servicing them as well.

[00:15:34.080] - Chloe Thomas
Nice. And I'm going to ask Corinne a really simple question here. When we're sending these text messages, are we literally limited to a certain number of characters? Is this literally a text message we're sending people?

[00:15:47.340] - Corinne Watson
Yeah, there's a, there's two different types of messages that you can send to customers or a subscriber. One of them is an SMS and one of them is an MMS. The biggest differentiator between the two is that MMS contains images. So if you want to put a gif in or your logo or something like that, it's an MMS. MMS can be, I think, up to a thousand characters. I'll have to get back to you on that.

[00:16:08.700] - Corinne Watson
But then SMS you're limited to, I think, one hundred and sixty characters. Again, don't quote me on that. I'm not a 100 percent sure, but SMS you have fewer characters to work with than MMS.
[00:16:18.660] - Chloe Thomas
I realized the other day on the numbers front that I'd sent one of my team the task of writing tweets to promote something, and I give them completely the wrong character count and I gave them like one hundred and forty, which is totally like from five years ago.

[00:16:31.590] - Chloe Thomas
So because we get so used to the machine telling us what the numbers are like the character's counts were missing. Well then guys, we will add the exact ones in the show notes so you can go and double-check the details in there.

[00:16:42.300] - Corinne Watson
Chloe let me look it up.

[00:16:44.160] - Chloe Thomas
We're going to get you the answer right here and now. But what's quite, quite cool about that, what I quite like about the simpler, not simpler, but more restrictive marketing channels like Persch, like SMS, is that you, when you can't, you know, faff around with fonts and colours and layouts and all the rest of it, it really does make you drill down on the actual point of what you're doing. Why are we sending this, how should we structure it, who are we sending it to?

[00:17:14.060] - Chloe Thomas
It kind of forces us to do the stuff that really makes the difference rather than get distracted by all the stuff we could do.

[00:17:21.200] - Corinne Watson
Yeah it's, you have so much left. It's kind of looking at an email subject line. There is so much that you have to do with is such an impression that you can make in such a short amount of time. I'm actually in the middle of working on some really fun research around emojis and how they affect the performance of text messages, which is a lot of fun and there's a lot of creative ways to use emojis and images and stuff like that in SMS.

[00:17:43.490] - Chloe Thomas
Nice I like that, we will have to, you have to send us details of that once you've done it. And we'll make sure everyone finds out how that research is going? Emojis!!! I like putting emojis on things, but I'm always slightly scared I'll accidentally put an emoji that has a meaning which I'm not aware of in something.
It's so funny that you bring that up because one of the sections is around the age or the implied age of a subscriber and the emoji that they use most often because you're totally right, especially with Gen Z, they have all these emojis that have like random meanings that they use. It's super interesting stuff.

Yeah, I'm glad to say I'm pretty confident never going to use an aubergine in a message because that's pretty much the only one I know the wrong meaning for. Anyone who doesn't know what that one is about? Google it, we're not getting into it on this. But yeah, it's kind of like that I can't see myself accidentally using that. But the mind does start boggling about what else you might accidentally use. But I'm taking us completely off topic.

So with our SMS, it's not about integrating into our email marketing.

It's more about using the skills we learned from our email marketing to make our SMS work for us and I guess making sure they're not conflicting with each other. You're probably not going to send your email on the same day you send your SMS out, I would guess.

Yeah, I one of the biggest recommendations that I have for brands that use sms marketing is to start testing different aspects of it, much like you would test email. So testing what time of the day to send text messages out, how frequently to send text messages out, the type of offers that you want to put inside of text messages. Doing all those tests is super important. And then when you're looking at it alongside email, just writing it all out and seeing what that cadence looks like across both of those channels, it's going to be really important.

I know you mentioned at the very beginning of the call, but just copy and pasting your email strategy into your SMS marketing isn't going to work. You might work as like in the interim, but it's something that you probably will need to iterate on quickly in order to see more success. I also would be remiss if I didn't mention that just because a subscriber has subscribed to you on email, doesn't mean that they can't turn into an SMS subscriber.

So I've seen some brands do what I like to call cross-pollination, where they're advertising their SMS marketing via email to get people to subscribe to both channels. And that's really clever, that's really
creative. I feel like the more touchpoints that you have with a customer, especially in today's increasingly competitive digital environment, the better.

[00:20:24.140] - Chloe Thomas
Yeah, and there's plenty of stats out there, the more channels you communicate on, the more money you'll earn. So, yeah, it's never, you should never think of someone as an email-only customer or an SMS-only customer, because like you said, there's plenty of scope with that cross pollination. OK Corinne, we are going to pause for a remind of our sponsors now and then we're going to talk about the wider world of email and SMS marketing.

[00:20:49.090] - Chloe Thomas
Success in 2021 means building stronger relationships with your customers last year, so a lot of consumers switching to buy online, leading to surges in new customer acquisition. So how are you planning on turning your new first time buyers into profitable repeat customers? Well, that's what Klaviyo is for. Klaviyo helps businesses create memorable marketing moments through email, SMS and personalized website experiences, and that is what creates repeat purchases. That's why Klaviyo, the ultimate eCommerce marketing platform, is used by over 50000 eCommerce brands around the world.

[00:21:24.040] - Chloe Thomas
Get started with your free account today. Visit Klaviyo.com/masterplan. That's KLAVIYO.com/masterplan.

[00:21:34.930] - Chloe Thomas
OK, room during the outbreak, we have checked the numbers of characters for you to make sure 100 percent we're giving you the right information. So for those of you who were going, when are you going to tell us the numbers? Corinne do you want to just quickly let them know and then we will go into the insider tips.

[00:21:49.570] - Corinne Watson
So the maximum characters allowed in SMS is 160 and then the maximum characters allowed in MMS is 1600.

[00:21:58.960] - Chloe Thomas
Excellent. So there you go, guys, one-sixty for your SMS, one, six, zero, zero for your MMS, right.
[00:22:07.000] - Chloe Thomas
Corinne, we have so far gone deep into SMS and given a really good guide on how to get going with the SMS comms plan.

[00:22:16.450] - Chloe Thomas
Now you get to wow us with your insight and knowledge about the whole world of email and SMS marketing. So for the following questions, your answer can be anything to do with email or SMS, which of course does include starting off integrating your SMS into your comms plan. So Corinne are you ready?

[00:22:34.540] - Corinne Watson
Yes, let's do it.

[00:22:35.890] - Chloe Thomas
OK, let's start with marketing newbie advice. If we've inspired someone to take that first step, what do they need to know to give themselves the best chance of success?

[00:22:45.880] - Corinne Watson
Number one, survey your customers, make sure that SMS is something that they would be interested in. Number two, start growing your SMS list, whether that's through pop ups, keywords, social media, wherever your customers live. Make sure that there is a way for them to sign up to your SMS messaging through that nice, simple, straightforward and very easy to do, OK?

[00:23:12.100] - Chloe Thomas
Once you've started, of course, you've got to Keep Optimising. So what's your favorite way to improve SMS marketing performance? I feel like once brands have outlined all of their SMS strategy and put all their automations into place, start segmenting your list much like email. You don't want to be sending the same message to the whole your whole base of subscribers every single week. There are definitely times where a mass text to your subscribers makes sense, but for the most part, you want to treat it a little bit more differently and create campaigns based-off of subscriber data like location, website activity, purchase behavior, whether or not they browsed and abandoned, etc.

[00:23:57.340] - Chloe Thomas
Nice, I like it.
Okay, if someone listening wants to learn more about SMS marketing, is there one cheap or free resource that you would recommend?

I would certainly recommend that they get SMS certified through the Postscript.io platform, we have a free video educational series for anyone who wants to learn about SMS. It's not just about the Postscript platform, it's about all SMS in general. So it's definitely good a beginner's tool. I would also recommend that they check out our learning center on the Postscript.io website. We have benchmark reports to weigh your metrics against industry standards. We had some great resources around Black Friday, Cyber Monday last year.

We have some fun new reports coming out over the next few quarters around emojis and stuff like that. So really great resources there as well. All free, you don't need to put your information to receive it. We're all about educating the broader marketing community about SMS because it's still relatively new.

And if we just head to the website, we'll find all that?

Yup! In the header, there's a section called Learning Center, and then there's a section called SMS certification as well,

Excellent! And the URL for the website?

Postscript.io.

Cool. I knew if I tried to do it, I get the dot something wrong, so I have to make you do that one.
OK, finally, it's crystal ball time. What's coming up in the next 6 to 12 months that we should be getting ready for in email marketing?

Oh, man. I feel like this year has just any kind of predictions that I made last year. It probably looked so silly this year. And I hope that this year is a little bit more predictable, although here in Texas we've already seen it. That's not the case. But what's coming up in the next 6 to 12 months that we should be getting ready for? I would say more and more people using SMS. And with that, the channel might get a little bit crowded.

So it's time to get creative. It's time for brands to use SMS as more than just a promotion's channel to become more conversational with their subscribers to make their marketing campaigns stand out from what will certainly become a little bit more crowded in the months and years to come. We mentioned the changes around short and long codes. So that's something that we'll probably also switch things around. So depending on where people are or what kind of products they're selling or just whether or not they're starting out with SMS or want to do it more, they'll be sending from a shortcode versus a longcode.

And then I also will say that I think that we're going to see more and more brands use SMS as a way to not only communicate with customers at the top of the marketing funnel, but through to purchase. So whether that's sending order updates once an order has been completed or

Asking customers what they want to see next from product feedback perspective, not just, I know I've said this so many times, but not just using SMS to bring in purchases instead to use it throughout all the way to purchase.

Nice. I like it. So there's lots, lots of potential coming out.

So probably now is the time to start getting involved, everyone. So Corinne, we are very nearly at the end of the show. So could you please let the listeners know where they can find you and your business on the web and social media please?
[00:27:23.300] - Corinne Watson
Yeah, absolutely. I'm on Twitter primarily. My username is Corinne Juliett, CORINNE and JULIETT and then LinkedIn as Corinne Watson. We do have a newsletter on the Postscript.io website where I am publishing all of our original research and guides and stuff like that. So I would definitely encourage folks to subscribe to that. If you have room in your inbox for another email newsletter, I'll highly encourage it. Yeah, that's pretty much how to get in touch with me.

[00:27:54.050] - Chloe Thomas
Corinne, thank you so much for being on the Keep Optimising podcast today, for being so generous, sharing so much about how we can get all SMS off the ground and do it right first time.

[00:28:04.880] - Corinne Watson
Thanks Chloe, it's always a pleasure. Thanks for having me.

[00:28:09.640] - Chloe Thomas
So there you have everybody, what you could be doing with SMS? First things do be scared of it, treat it with respect. It is a very personal channel, but one which a lot can be achieved by. Think about how you are going to go by getting those phone numbers so you can send the SMS and then Corinne gave us so many cool ideas of how we might want to use it.

[00:28:31.150] - Chloe Thomas
And conversationally, that's got me thinking too. You can get a links to everything we discussed, the full transcript of the episode, important notes and more at Keepoptimising.com.

[00:28:40.960] - Chloe Thomas
And as part of my mission to help you improve your marketing, I've invited all of our email marketing specialists to join us for a Q&A webinar at the end of the month. That's going to be your chance to get your questions answered. Whether it's about how to get the fundamentals set up, what tech to use, how to expand beyond email and integrate with SMS or your ad platforms, me and the experts will be ready to answer everything you throw at us.

[00:29:05.230] - Chloe Thomas
So get yourself registered at Keepoptimising.com. And as it's towards the end of the month, if you're listening after the webinar happened, don't worry, you can still catch the replay. Just head over to Keepoptimising.com.
[00:29:19.120] - Chloe Thomas
Well, thank you for tuning into this episode.

[00:29:21.250] - Chloe Thomas
Our whole set of five episodes about email marketing and related subjects is now live. So please do listen to them all and make sure you tune in next Wednesday when we'll be starting our series of four shows about Affiliate Marketing.

[00:29:36.790] - Chloe Thomas
If you know someone who's particularly interested in affiliate marketing at the moment, then please do let them know we're covering it as this show exists to help you and them improve their marketing. Have a great week and make sure you listen to the next episode so I can help you to Keep Optimising your marketing.

[00:29:55.520] - Intro
Access everything Keep Optimising at keepoptimising.com that's with an S not a Z.