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Understanding the Common Short Code: Its Use, Administration, and Tactical Elements

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With the proliferation and fragmentation of media touch points, consumers are becoming harder and harder to reach effectively. Marketers, brands, enterprises, ad agencies and content owners have recognized the absolute necessity of cutting through the media cacophony to find ways of engaging their audience in an informative, interactive, and entertaining way (Bauer et al. 2005, Byron 2006). With the universal adoption of mobile devices into the consumers' lifestyle, mobile marketing has become the most obvious solution to this problem. The most common form of mobile marketing is when marketers enhance their traditional media channels with a mobile call-to-action in order to create a personal interaction that consumers value (Becker 2005). Dupree & Bosarge (2006) support this notion, "with the advent of wireless technologies, all bets are off regarding media touch points; the home-based tether has been severed and media consumption locations are virtually anywhere. Handheld and portable devices from smart phones to PDAs redefine the relationship with media, making it an increasingly personal choice." Leading industry brands and marketers are committing anywhere from 5 to 25 percent of their near-term advertising and promotional marketing budgets to interactive digital media—including mobile (Airwide 2006; Pearse 2005). Airwide Solutions also notes, from a recent study they conducted, that by 2008 89% of brands expect to be using text and multimedia messaging to reach their audience (Airwide 2006). A recent study by The Shosteck Group validates this claim, estimating that mobile advertising, which is a subset activity of mobile marketing, will generate in excess of \$10 billion in annual revenues by 2010, up from \$1 billion today (The Shosteck Group 2006). Mobile marketing is here to stay and is increasingly becoming a critical component of any brand or content owner's marketing mix. If 20th century marketing was defined by radio, television, and most recently the Internet, there is a reasonable argument that 21st century marketing will be the "mobile century" and have mobile at its core.

It is important for marketers to understand the key elements that make mobile marketing work. One such element is the multi-carrier Common Short Code, a.k.a. "CSC or short code", which is an abbreviated 5 or 6 digit number used as an "address" for text and multimedia messages. In addition to SMS and Internet Protocol (IP) mobile data network routing, CSCs also have premium billing capabilities. This paper discusses the definition of the common short code, its use in mobile marketing, how it is administered, and the various attributes that should be considered by the marketer to effectively manage it.

Common Short Code Overview & Use

The concept of the Common Short Code is relatively straightforward. The U.S. Common Short Code Administration (CSCA) defines the common short code as:

Origin of the Common Short Code in Mobile Marketing

The origin of the common short code concept is somewhat difficult to pin down. It appears that the first use of an abbreviated access numbering system (a.k.a. the common short code) to address messages across competing mobile operator networks also enabling mobile phone billing for mobile content (ringtones, wallpapers, mobile games) was first conceived in 1997 by Telenor, a Norwegian mobile operator (Alphonse 2004). While the underlying concept of the short code has not changed much, its use and administration has matured greatly.

"Short numeric codes (e.g. 47467, 63459) to which text messages can be sent from a mobile phone. Wireless subscribers send text messages to short codes with relevant keywords to access a wide variety of mobile content. Common Short Codes (CSCs) are compatible across all participating carriers and easy to remember. CSCs are either five-digit or six-digit numbers" (About CSCs 2006).

To understand the concept of the CSC it is a relatively common to use the analogy of a web address or URL (Chesnais 2006). Like a web address, the CSC is a "person-to-service or application" solution used by the consumer to "access" information and services being provided by the marketer. A CSC may also be thought of as an email address, since it is used as a destination designator. The important difference is that unlike email or private person-to-person text messaging (addressed directly to someone's mobile phone number), consumers use the CSC to send a text message to a commercial service or software application. While these analogies are helpful, they fall short of capturing the full capabilities of the CSC. Common Short Codes are much more powerful than a Web URL or email address, in that they are:

- **Bi-directional (2-Way and interactive)**
- **Cross-carrier enabled (interoperable)**
- **Personal (consumer profile, vanity codes)**
- **Billing engines (premium SMS)**
- **Effective mechanism for permissions marketing (opt-in and opt-out)**
- **Useful for a wide range of marketing campaigns and services**

Associated with the short code is a "keyword", also known as a "prefix". The keyword is a short word (recommended minimum is three characters) used to identify a specific mobile campaign or service. For example, in the call-to-action "Text WIN to 47467 to play the BrandX mobile quiz", "WIN" is the keyword, and it identifies to the mobile application and the mobile operators that under the short code 47467, every consumer that texts "WIN" to 47467 wants to play the BrandX quiz, and subsequently all messaging will transpire within the mobile application controlling the BrandX quiz. The keyword also controls correct routing of messaging between the mobile operators, aggregators and mobile applications so messages are not mixed between different campaigns and services. There are also "secondary keywords" (a.k.a. "sub prefixes") that can be used for gathering metrics, repurposing existing keywords, or as a geographic locator. For example, a marketer could use the call-to-action "Text WIN LA to 47467" exclusively in Los Angeles advertising and "Text WIN NY to 47467" exclusively in New York advertising. In this example, "WIN" is the keyword for both campaigns, but each city has a different "secondary keyword" (LA, NY). The marketer can use the sub prefix to calculate how many participants opted in to a program in each city. While some degree of metrics can be derived from mobile phone numbers, this usage of secondary keywords would produce the exact metrics because the participants could only have seen the different ad in the different cities.

Common Short Codes are bi-directional

Short codes enable permission based two-way interactive message traffic between the consumer and the marketer's mobile or mobile enhanced traditional media initiative, including integrated opt-in and opt-out messaging. Spam or any other unsolicited messaging to the consumer is not permitted. This communication is most importantly *time and location independent*—there are virtually no restrictions (other than roaming time zone black-out periods and non-participating operators) as to where or when a marketer can reach a consumer ("push marketing"), or better yet where or when a consumer can reach the marketer ("pull marketing"). Pulling content on-demand is a unique and powerful characteristic of mobile marketing, a characteristic expected to propel a sea change in direct response advertising. A mobile extension can enhance traditional media (TV, radio, print, billboard etc.) so that the consumer can execute or interact with the call-to-action immediately, without constraints of time or location. Typically, a consumer opts-in to a mobile enhanced initiative by responding to a marketer's call-to-action as viewed/heard in traditional media. For example, the call-to-action in a printed flyer may read "Text SJGP to 47467 to get the latest updates on the San Jose Grand Prix on your phone, and to download free Grand Prix mobile phone wallpapers (standard message rates apply)." Another example of enhancing traditional media is found on the popular "Deal or No Deal" TV show. A call-to-action is announced by the show's host and displayed on the TV screen, where viewers are invited to participate by sending a text message (including a number corresponding to one of the numbered "prize briefcases" shown in the program) to a CSC to enter the show's \$10,000 nightly sweepstakes (Yuan 2006). The following illustration details the typical flow between the consumer and the mobile marketing service:

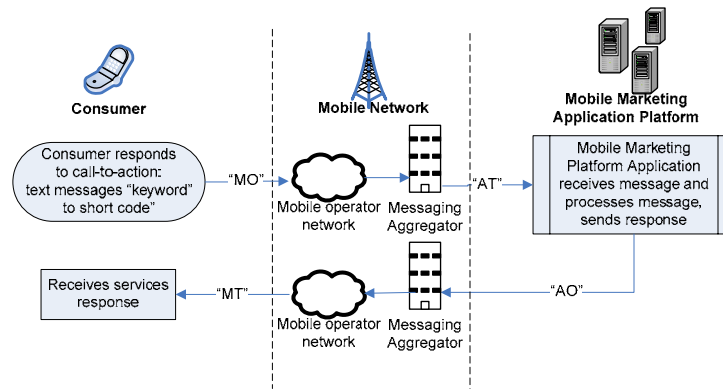


Figure 1: Message flow diagram (no double opt-in)

In mobile terminology, there are four key terms for a message between a consumer and a marketer's mobile marketing application. The consumer's initial opt-in message sent from their handset is a Mobile Originated ("MO") message. Once the MO message is delivered to the application it becomes an Application Terminated ("AT") message. The reply message from the application is the Application Originated ("AO") message. When the AO message reaches the consumer's mobile network and/or handset it becomes a Mobile Terminated ("MT") message.

Common Short Codes support cross-carrier messaging traffic, a.k.a. inter-operable messaging

A very valuable aspect of the CSC is that it is a standardized addressing format for all participating mobile operators. When provisioned or activated properly on participating mobile operator networks in a select region, each CSC's individual message routing identity (e.g. 47467) will be recognized across multiple operator networks. In the U.S. all Tier-1 mobile operators offer nationwide reception to their subscribers. Behind the scenes, and transparent to the mobile subscriber, the mobile messaging network and handset deliver mutual "acknowledgement" that a message has been received (network acknowledgement settings vary per operator). A marketer can promote an initiative using a single CSC and the subscribers on different participating mobile operator networks can all participate in the marketer's program. This interoperability avoids an inefficient and unwieldy system of having to use separate CSCs for different wireless operator networks by offering a single common addressing scheme for content providers that can reach all consumers (mobile subscribers). There can be exceptions however; 4-digit codes, like those used by Cingular Wireless, can only be used by Cingular subscribers. This "exclusive short code" is used on initiatives exclusive to Cingular, such as text voting for the TV show *American Idol* where mobile subscribers on wireless networks other than Cingular are excluded from participating.

Today, the concept of CSC interoperability is limited to country regions and the mobile operators within the country who choose to participate in the local common short code program. At present there is no intra-continental short code support, and the only countries with CSC Administration registries are the U.S., U.K. Canada, France and PR China.

Common Short Codes are personal

Short code messaging is also very personal, meaning marketers can track who is participating in their programs. When consumers opt-in to a campaign, marketers are able to capture basic information about the subscriber based on their 10-digit mobile phone number and corresponding mobile operator. This information is captured when consumers send messages from their mobile handset or when they complete and post a form on mobile Internet (WAP) sites. If a WAP Push message is sent to the handset, the handset reply can also capture the consumer's mobile handset manufacturer and model number. With this information marketers can interact with the consumer on an individual basis, monitor a consumer's participation over multiple programs, and tailor integration with individual consumers over time, especially when the mobile marketing platform is integrated with a customer relationship management solution. In some European countries marketers can even look up a consumer's name and home address in national registries created for this very purpose, allowing marketers to easily mail product samples and purchases to the consumer that have been ordered from their mobile phone. CSCs may also be used to personalize a brand. Content Providers can lease CSCs that spell their name (ie: FORBES = 367237 or HAWKS = 42957); these types of CSCs are known as "vanity short codes". There is much more to discuss

regarding the personal nature of mobile interaction, including permissions based marketing and privacy related issues. These topics are best suited for future papers. For additional details on permissions based mobile marketing and privacy issues see the Mobile Marketing Associations' code of conduct guidelines (<http://www.mmaglobal.com/modules/content/index.php?id=5>).

Common Short Codes are effective for billing

In addition to being bi-directional and personal, the CSC is a very effective mechanism for billing consumers for participation in mobile initiatives or for mobile content. When used for billing, an activity often referred to as Premium SMS ("PSMS"), the marketer is able to bill the consumer for participating in the mobile initiative directly to their cell phone service bill. Billing events can occur with mobile originated and mobile terminated messages; however, MT billing is preferred because the network receives a message delivery acknowledgement when a MT message is received by a handset. For instance, in the case of "Deal or No Deal", consumers are charged \$0.99 for each entry into the show's weekly sweepstakes. Price points for mobile billing can vary from free to upwards of \$19.99. It is important to note that "free" is not totally free to the consumer in that the standard rate for them to receive or send a message still applies. What the consumer receives from the marketer may be free, but they still have to pay for normal text or mobile data transmission as specified in their mobile service contract. Mobile initiatives are required to state this in their legal disclaimer, often worded as "standard message rates apply". Premium billing historically has been handled under a revenue share model between the marketer's aggregator and the mobile operator. Mobile operators have many requirements that must be met by the marketer before they'll provision a CSC for mobile premium billing. There are requirements around the types of services that can be deployed or grouped on a single short code, how pricing is applied to a program, how "Opt-in", "Opt-out", "Help" and customer service functions are deployed, and the type of content that is allowed (e.g. over/under 18 general audiences only), to name just a few. To learn more about mobile billing, contact the Mobile Marketing Association, a mobile application provider, a mobile aggregator, or refer to the Academic Review article on the MMA web site "Developing an Understanding of Mobile Commerce: A Review Billed to Phone Payment Methods" <http://mmaglobal.com/modules/wfsection/article.php?articleid=359/>.

Common Short Codes are useful for a wide range of services

CSCs can be used to power a variety of applications used to create "pure mobile" or traditional marketing programs that are "mobile enhanced". Examples of some mobile programs include mobile content sales, interactive TV, text subscription and chat services, mobile CRM, enterprise/employee programs, and virtually any other program that can be imagined by the marketer. While there are no global directory listings for mobile initiative programs with their associated short code and program owner (like there are for web URLs), there are a few private web sites that have collected information on a number of programs and short codes such as the US Short Code Who Is Directory (<http://www.usshortcodeswhois.com/>) and Short Code Info (<http://www.shortcode.info/>).

Marketers should be aware that there are regulations concerning how many and what kinds of services can be run on a single short code. Every country has different specifications on how and what kinds of services can be run on a specific short code. In the United States the mobile operators have specified that a company cannot run multiple subscription services or chat services on the same short code. In the U.K., short codes have been organized into numbering ranges allocated for specific types of services.

Getting started—leasing a Common Short Code

In order to get started and run mobile initiatives, marketers must first lease and/or gain access to a short code. In the early days of mobile marketing, marketers interested in running CSC based mobile initiatives were required to go to each individual mobile operator that supported Common Short Codes, and make individual requests that a short code be provisioned on their networks—a long and laborious process. In the last three years, however, this process has been dramatically streamlined. Today, CSCs can be leased directly from a local administrative body (in some countries), mobile application providers, or messaging aggregators.

Most countries do not have a centralized short code administration body, however, a few do exist like Short-Code.com in the United Kingdom (www.short-codes.com, formed in June 2003 and administered by the U.K. operators), the Common Short Code Administration (CSCA) in the United

States (www.usshortcodes.com, formed in October 2003¹), the Common Codes Administration in Canada (<http://www.txt.ca/common.htm>, formed in July 2003), France's CSC program (<http://www.smsplus.org/index.php>, formed in 2005), and the Ministry of Information Industry Short Code Administration Group in China (formed in 2006). The regional mobile operators, governments, and industry associations in each country came together to make it significantly easier for companies to lease CSCs from a single administrator for each country. This process has completely streamlined the CSC acquisition process for launching mobile initiatives. In the U.S., from the launch of short codes in October 2003 until August 2006 short codes leases increased 6X, and since August 2006 short codes usage continues to escalate (CSCA 2005). Simmons (2005) noted in October 2005 how "every 6 months since the launch of the CSCA, SMS traffic volumes have increased at least 37% in the US." Clearly, administration bodies like the CSCA have a very positive effect on the growth of the mobile channel.

When leasing a CSC, it is important to note that there are two types: random and vanity short codes. A short code is considered random when the administration body assigns a random number sequence to the company leasing the short code. It is considered to be a vanity code when the company leasing the short code is allowed to pick the numbers. An example of a vanity short code would be 46445 purchased specifically to spell out GOOGL. A company may choose to lease a vanity code in order to facilitate easy re-call (e.g. 77777) or for brand building (57238=KRAFT). In the United States five (5) digit codes can be leased as random or vanity, however, six (6) digit codes can only be leased as vanity codes (CSCA 2006)². Short codes are leased on a quarterly, semi-annual or annual basis, and must be renewed quarterly/semi-annually/annually. If a short code is not renewed, it becomes available again to be re-assigned to another company after a 90-day "aging" period. A random short code in the United States costs \$1500 per quarter; vanity codes cost \$3000 per quarter.

Companies can also temporarily gain access to a common short code by renting it from an application provider or messaging aggregator. Application providers provide the software, hardware and databases required to create and control mobile initiatives, while a messaging aggregator like mBlox, Simplewire/Qpass/Amdocs, SinglePoint/Telenor/Wireless Services Corp., Netsize, m-Qube/Verisign, Mobile 365/Sybase, Clickatell etc., provide the connection to mobile operator networks and premium billing IT billing systems. The primary advantages of leasing a short code directly from the administrative body are that the marketer "owns" the short code and can manage the billing, online administration, and account management of their short codes in-house. The marketer can also choose to change a short code's connection between different mobile applications and messaging aggregation partners with minimal effort. On the other hand, short codes leased through an application provider or aggregator may not be leased under the marketer's company name, and thus the company may not have ownership, i.e. control, of the short code. In such cases, the company will rely and trust the application provider/aggregator to renew the short code on time, handle billing correctly, and completely manage mobile campaigns. If the short code is not properly managed, as noted, the marketer faces losing it and having it recycled. Losing a short code could have detrimental consequences and potentially cripple a marketer's program and the brand recognition it has with the code. Lost or inactive short codes already integrated into expensive traditional advertising or media buys would become a marketing nightmare and would incur heavy financial cost. In addition, the marketer would have to lease, register, provision and activate a new code—a process that takes many weeks. These are risks that many marketers cannot afford to take, and underlines the significant advantages of leasing CSCs directly with short code administrative bodies. That being said, however, there is a time and place to "rent" a CSC from an application provider or messaging aggregator. For instance, the marketer may be doing a one-off program, have time pressures to get a campaign up quickly, need a price point that is not provisioned on their CSC, or access a CSC that has already been activated on a specific mobile operator network. Marketers should also note that depending on the media channels used to promote the marketer's program it is relatively easy to start a mobile initiative on a rented CSC and switch the initiative

¹ The U.S. Common Short Code Administration (CSCA) program was developed between Feb-Oct 2003, and launched on Oct 28, 2003 with 5-digit codes. On May 31, 2006 CSC 6-digit codes were launched.

² Why five or six digits? The Mobile Data Association notes, "codes of 5 digits have been preferred so as to balance their supply and customer memory recall—shorter codes of 3 or 4 digit numbers were felt to be too limited in availability to encourage widespread partnering" (MDA Announces 2003). As of May 2006 six digit short codes became available in the United States; the availability of 6 digit short codes has increased the availability of common short codes by 10 fold (Rush 2006). Four digit common short codes also exist; however, they are usually reserved by the mobile operators for initiatives run over their own network, rather than being interoperable across multiple mobile operator networks.

over to the marketer's leased CSC once it has been approved by the mobile operators. Marketers need to balance these pros and cons when deciding to lease or rent a CSC.

Activating the short code and gaining approval to run services on it

Leasing the short code is just the first step. Once a company has leased a short code it must have the code activated on participating mobile operator networks and then gain approval to use it for the specific mobile initiative(s).

Activating a Common Short Code

To have a CSC activated the company must complete a commercial services application and explain to the mobile operators how the company intends to use the short code (see "approval process" below). Once the application has been approved the short code is "bound" or "direct connected" to both the marketer's mobile application solution (which is either an in-house hosted solution or one provided by a mobile application service provider) and a messaging aggregator. The binding of the mobile application and the messaging aggregator partner is an important decision as each application solution/provider and aggregator has different value propositions that must be thoroughly evaluated for management and strategic compatibility with the marketer's business. Application providers and aggregators offer different cost structures, network capacity, premium billing capability, value added service, reliability, flexibility, territories covered and many other factors. In addition, different mobile operators can have slightly different rules and regulations outside the baseline normal requirements specified by the code of best practices as published by the Mobile Marketing Association and other best practices bodies. For example, certain U.S. mobile operators only allow one text subscription service or keyword per short code. This restriction applies to only certain operators; others may allow multiple subscription services on a single short code. Again, marketers must seriously consider who their application and aggregation partners are going to be before moving forward with the leasing of their own short code(s).

As for scheduling a new mobile initiative in the United States, a company can expect the approval/certification and provisioning process for a new mobile initiative on a new short code (with a minimum of four Tier-1 mobile operators) to take between 4 to 16 weeks from CSC application to the launch of the live commercial service. The launch times of subsequent initiatives on that short code can often be significantly shorter, but will still require a new approval and certification of the initiative.

The Approval Process

Once the short code is activated the company can begin to run message traffic using the short code, however, different approval requirements must be met in various markets before commercial traffic is allowed. In the United States, the mobile operators require that companies apply for and receive pre-approval for all commercial initiatives to be run on the short code, regardless of the expected traffic volumes. Whether it is the first service to be run on the short code or one of many, marketers have to go through the commercial services application process for each initiative with each mobile operator. They are required to specify and explain to the mobile operators the following (and often more):

- How they intend to use the code
- What the subscriber experience/message flow will be
- What the content of the messaging will be
- What the call-to-action and associated keywords are
- How the opt-in, opt-out, and Help messages are implemented
- The marketing plan including associated collateral, websites and advertising
- Peak traffic projections
- Which price points should be allocated on the code (e.g. \$0.00, \$0.50, \$0.99, \$1.99, \$4.99 and up to the present limit of \$9.99)

Once the application is filled out the marketer must submit it to the mobile operators through the designated application or messaging aggregation partner. Note, the price points requested may factor into whether a service is approved by the carriers or not. Mobile operators will only approve price points that make sense for the application under review, which is subjectively determined by the operators. Once approved companies are not supposed to change the user experience, help messages, or general flow and specifications of the campaign without first amending their application with the operators and resubmitting it for approval.

In the U.K., on the other hand, the process is simpler than the United States for standard rate text campaigns. For example, companies apply and receive short codes without the requirement of prior approval of the initiative from the mobile operators. The Tier-1 U.K. mobile operators have pre-reserved contiguous Universal Short Code (USC) number ranges per operator, with specific code ranges associated with different types of mobile services and campaigns. While operating the administrative program themselves, they operators can perform their own inter-carrier campaigns, however, it is the opinion of some observers that the lack of operator review of 3rd-party applications has led to consumer backlash due to “noncompliant” mobile campaigns and services slipping through unmonitored. Also, the ability to re-sell USCs and keywords has resulted in operator inability to trouble-shoot applications. On the other hand, companies in the U.K. are expected to follow the industry’s best practice guidelines, and run the risk of incurring significant fines from ICSTIS (<http://www.icstis.org.uk/>), the premium services oversight body in the United Kingdom, if best practices are transgressed.

After the short code is activated, the marketer may use the short code and keywords for additional concurrent or simultaneous services, however, in some countries additional approvals are required and/or amendments must be filed.

Running services on a short code

When marketers lease a short code they may choose to run multiple mobile initiatives on a single short code simultaneously, or they may choose to only run one at any given time (depending on what they are approved to offer). When multiple services are running on a single short code the short code is referred to as a “shared short code” and when only one service is running on the code at any given time the code is referred to as a “dedicated short code”. Running shared short codes has pros (multiple initiatives can be run under one short code, lower cost per initiative) and cons (keywords may need to be included in SMS messages from users to identify the initiative³, more complicated user flow and instruction set for initiatives, and the risk of one “outlaw” initiative shutting down all other initiatives on a shared short code⁴). Alternately, marketers may prefer to run their campaign on a dedicated short code model, where only one mobile initiative and one marketer is running on the short code at any given time. Running a dedicated short code has pros (ease of end user task flow, end users can text without necessity of keywords being included to identify the initiative, more flexibility in initiative tactics, easier reporting—all metric data can only belong to the initiative on the dedicated short code) and cons (more expensive—the company is not amortizing short code cost over multiple initiatives).

Marketers should realize that the shared or dedicated models are not cast in stone. A short code can be used as a dedicated short code for a certain period of time and then be used as a shared short code with multiple initiatives running on it at another time—this is a component of a company’s short code use strategy.

A Call to Academics—understanding the acceptance and adoption of CSCs

While it is clear that CSC use is on the rise and more and more consumers are adopting it as an opt-in method, it is clear that significant research remains to be done to fully grasp the nature of the CSC and the elements that drive its effective use, including factors such as ease of use which helps increase consumer response to mobile enhanced marketing initiatives. Notwithstanding specific case studies, there are no academic studies that compare the use of the CSC as an opt-in method or mobile marketing initiative enabler with other emerging opt-in methods. It would be of interest to compare the short code with other mobile enabling technologies such as Bluetooth alerts, Zoove’s “***” (referred to as “star star”) method, SingleTouch’s #123 direct dial call method, or image recognition methods from MoBot, Nevenvision/Google, or Denso-Wave’s QR Code, to name just a few. Zoove, Inc. recently published results comparing its ** method to that of the short code and found that consumers, especially those in older demographics, found the ** method to be easier to use than short codes (MRI 2006). While the findings of this study are quite interesting, significantly more work in this field is needed to truly understand the elements that foster CSC use as well as the carrier and regulatory approval implications of these alternative opt-in methods listed above.

³ For example, a mobile quiz on a shared short code (“Text WIN to 12345 to play”) may require the end user to include the keyword (WIN) in their answers to a multiple-choice question (A, B or C). The user would need to text “WIN A” rather than simply “A”. The answer must also have a space between WIN and A, otherwise the system may not recognize the answer as a valid response. Finally, this “keyword, space, answer” format must be explained to the consumer when they play the game either in the media promotion or as part of the text flow they receive when playing.

⁴ If an initiative on a shared short code transgresses operator regulations, the operator may shut the short code down, and subsequently all the initiatives on that shared short code will cease to function.

Conclusion

While the concept of the CSC is fairly straight forward, there are a number of elements that marketers must consider and plan for. The CSC can serve as a useful functional asset with importance as an extended medium for both internal and external communication. The short code can also be an important corporate brand asset and should be managed accordingly. Vanity short codes in the future in all probability will become as valuable as a brand relevant URL, and a mobile generated consumer opt-in database or a mobile CRM tool will become prize assets for many sales and marketing professionals. Companies need to decide if they are going to lease their CSC directly from the administrative body or access a pre-activated shared short code from an application provider or messaging aggregator. They must also become intimately involved with mobile regulations. Whenever a CSC is used for a mobile initiative, the mobile operators first require that they approve the entire initiative and all its elements. If a company chooses to lease a CSC directly from an administrative body, they need to decide if they're going to buy a random or vanity code, and how they'll activate it. The company will also have to choose whether they are going to develop and or purchase their own mobile marketing platform and have the short code bound to it, or partner with a mobile marketing application service provider and have it bound to them. Further, companies need to decide which messaging aggregator(s) they are going to work with, or if they are going to try to connect directly with a carriers' mobile data network and IT billing systems. Finally, the marketer needs to become proficient in the art of the application approval process, especially in the United States, so that they can get their commercial campaigns up and running as quickly as needed.

To learn more about CSC, how to lease them, the activation process, and how to manage them see the recently published CSC primer by the Mobile Marketing Association (<http://mmaglobal.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=68>) and the UK Code of Practice for Common Short Codes (<http://www.short-codes.com/pages/documents.php>).

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