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## Texting for profit

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Texting is no longer just for teenage conversations or for making meeting arrangements. It is a viable marketing strategy that has swiftly become a realtor's best friend. The Center for REALTOR Technology's 2010 Smartphone Survey Report found that use of the texting and SMS (short message service) feature accounted for nearly 74% of time spent on realtor smartphones.

In addition to being one of the most budget-friendly marketing strategies, text message (or SMS) marketing is highly effective. Coupled with the fact that 95% of text messages are opened and read, SMS users opt-in to receive texts. This creates a win-win situation wherein the prospective customer feels they are receiving a service, not an advertisement - while the realtor captures their contact information for follow-up calls and texts.

SMS services like House4Cell and RI Tracker provide realtors with a five or six digit short code. Each property listing is then assigned its own keyword, and interested prospects can text these to the realtor's short code for property details, price, and realtor contact information. The SMS service then secures prospect phone numbers and preferences data to build and maintain customer databases.

To fully integrate SMS marketing into an existing marketing plan, short codes and keywords should be promoted across all marketing strategies - from web sites, social media accounts, and signage, to marketing collaterals, direct mailers, and print, radio, and television ads. For leads generated by other strategies, inquire whether they would be willing to communicate via text message. This will increase efficiencies while also demonstrating your commitment to customer service.

When replying to listing inquiry texts, send photos and videos of the property. This delivers additional information while saving in-person property viewing time on a possibly uninterested customer. Also, remember to be succinct - texts are limited to 160 characters - and always lead with customer-focused data.

Texting has created a unique platform for personal interaction with prospects and customers. When integrated into an overall marketing campaign, texting is a smart solution for increasing leads and revenue. If you would like additional ideas on how to leverage text message marketing for your real estate business, or if you require assistance with selecting a SMS service provider, contact an integrated marketing firm.

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