

Are you making the most of mobile

How can third party logistics providers use existing technology to better engage with their customers and optimise the user experience? As a group of third party logistics providers discussed, the answer could be in the palm of your hand.

In association with



Third party providers are used to being the behind-the-scenes operators whose reward for a job well done is often to go unnoticed, but in this new age of increased service levels, with an ever increasing pace of change, how can 3PLs be sure of offering the best value added services? And how can they best communicate that value to their customers?

There are 83.1 million mobile phone subscriptions in the UK. 93 per cent of UK adults own a mobile phone and 63 per cent have a smartphone, according to recent figures published by Ofcom. Not only that, 16 per cent of adults live in a mobile only home. It was against this background that a group of senior executives from the 3PL world gathered to discuss the role of mobiles and SMS in a roundtable hosted by OpenMarket.

"The mobile phone is becoming the place of choice for interactivity," explained Adrian Sarosi, director of sales and marketing. "If you are trying to communicate with 220 million people, or your 80,000 staff – half of which have not been given an email terminal – what is the easiest way to get to them? It will be by SMS."

Russell Bell, head of operations and service delivery at Cinram Logistics, talked about the potential of SMS to engage directly with customers and to collect customer data through marketing and surveys. "As a 3PL, I can see the obvious application of delivery notifications, but as a consumer I have never had a survey via SMS, but I hear there are some very good response rates."

Sarosi felt that SMS had much greater potential to reach consumers at the right time than other mediums. "The great thing about the text message survey is that it is immediate. If you get a call three days later you have forgotten about it already and moved on. Whereas you can send a quick text message with the simple question, 'Give us a score, 1 to 10'."

"One of the problems that I have is gauging people's opinions on the service they get from our IT," said Owen Devine of Norbert Dentressangle. Because we have offshored our IT service desk and some functions it is very important for us to know how they are doing. At the

moment, when we close a call an automated email is sent asking people how the service was. The idea of SMS for this kind of thing is very appealing, but my concern is how you get the detail."

Dawn Redman, head of customer service at Hermes, felt that the value of SMS surveys depended on the desired outcome. "It is whether or not you want the details of the service and you want to cut in to each particular aspect, or you want the emotion of the journey. We are trying to capture both."

"I want to know about the experience talking to our customer service desk. How quickly did we answer the phone? Did they resolve your issue? Is there anything else that we could do? I want to get that richness of depth of how we are performing," said Devine.

Determining the exact purpose of customer surveys and recognising the characteristics of SMS became a key talking point around the table. "With mobile, our suggestion is only ever do a maximum of three closed questions and then leave one open at the end if you want to," said Sarosi.

Graham Cooper, head of business systems at Norbert Dentressangle outlined the challenges of conducting large scale customer surveys. "I can see the value in identifying an issue through SMS and following up on it as opposed to a general survey... Identifying an issue and following up on it can add real value."

Bell noted that individuals were more responsive to SMS and email communication than ever before. "People are less sociable than they used to be and would rather have a text or an email than a phone call or a face to face."

Siamac Rezaiezhadeh of OpenMarket noted the juxtaposition of many consumers' approach to feedback: "People are less sociable, but happier to share."

Devine argued that the choice of medium had an impact on the customer response: "If you are communicating this way you give the power to the individual. If you ring someone while they're having their tea it can be intrusive."

Broad customer surveys tended to highlight extremes

Meet the panelists



Owen Devine,
Head of Service Delivery,
Norbert Dentressangle.



Adrian Sarosi,
Director of Sales &
Marketing, OpenMarket.



Graham Cooper,
Head of Business
Systems, Norbert
Dentressangle.



Dawn Redman,
Head of Customer
Service, Hermes



Alistair Wolf,
Head of Support, UTL.



at both ends of the spectrum, says Redman. “We sent 23 million notifications to our customers last year to tell them where their parcel was going to be. The measure of that was how many enquiries I got on those parcels. People use information to get the answers they want. From a survey point of view we need to know whether or not we are doing the right thing.”

Whether by mobile SMS or any other medium, making that initial contact with the customer and collecting the data is only one part of the story. Retaining a dissatisfied customer and ensuring consistent quality requires a crafted response. “If you feel like you’ve been fobbed off with a standard response, it is often worse than not replying at all,” said Devine.

“You can lose everything with a generic response,” added Alistair Wolf, head of support at UTL. “The solution to this problem may be a unified response mechanism, which involves other areas of the customer service team.”

“We use an online rating company,” explained Catherine Lindsay of Hermes. “We gather responses, look at the low responses and personally reply. If anything scores a one or a two out of five, my team have a look at it and work out what the next best thing to do with it is.”

Redman added: “We form positive and negative word clouds that you can apply to silos within the journey. Because you are trying to get some distinct data, sometimes you have to pick a particular area. The free form text however, is very important.”

Filtering free form responses from closed questions was highlighted as an absolute must by several members of the group. Devine argued that a customer could score five out of five in certain closed questions, but this could disguise an unhappy overall experience. “As a company gathering information, you would want to pick up the fact that you have scored five on things like check-in, but you need the killer question.”

Sarosi noted the importance of communicating with customers at the right time with the right information. “Just because you have sent out a message saying, ‘Your package is coming’, this does not identify who

you are and where you’re coming from. The end user does not know that there is a 3PL doing the delivery. They think they have bought it from a retailer, so personalising that message is important. You need to make it relevant and customise it to that individual, or you are doing yourself a disservice.”

Regardless of their position in the supply chain, knowing the end consumer is vital for any third party. “We commission independent research on the end consumer because we are the 3PL who is delivering on behalf of clients. It’s in our interest that we work with them to make sure they understand what their end consumers want. You are buying from a retailer, but it’s around what you expect from the whole journey,” advised Redman.

Reputation

“It’s as much their reputation as yours, and we all know how difficult it is to build a good reputation and how easy it is to lose it,” added Devine.

Sarosi questioned the flow of information between client and carrier, suggesting: “There is an irony that the service provider is trying to show the brand how to do a better job with their customer.”

However, Wolf maintained that there was a partnership between client and service provider.

“We’re not a retailer,” said Redman. “We would not be foolish enough to try and tell any of our retailers how to run their business. What we are is a logistics expert and we understand the customer and the customer experience. We’re the custodian of the customer, whoever that customer is for whichever client.”

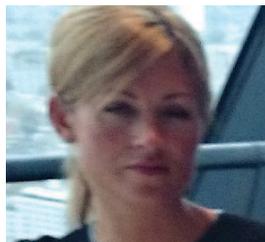
As a supply chain solutions provider, collaboration and partnerships – a joined up supply chain – are of the utmost importance for Cinram.

“We are looking after our content owners product, warehousing and distribution and we sub-contact out our transport. We are looking after the content owner’s reputation along with the transport provider that we have selected,” said Bell.

The great thing about the text message survey is that it is immediate.



Martin Shields,
Head of IT Support
Services, Yusen Logistics.



Catherine Lindsay,
Customer Service
Manager, Hermes



Russell Bell,
Head of Operations and
Service Delivery,
Cinram Logistics.



Siamac Rezaiezhadeh,
Strategic Account
Executive, OpenMarket.

"The battleground in today's world is the consumer, with the device that they have chosen to engage with that brand. The consumer doesn't care who's in the chain and whether it was in-house or outsourced. The battleground is there and the ultimate owner of the customer has to win the battle there. If you don't win it there, you've lost the consumer," said Sarosi.

"Customers have chosen to shop with a particular brand and don't care if there's a third party company in-between," added Bell.

Redman argued that knowing the end customer was crucial for all parties in the supply chain. "The only way you can develop the products you need within your business is by understanding what the end customer wants. We work collaboratively with our clients and we work with independent research companies that give us the information that we need."

Know your customer

The customer is not always an individual and this can have an impact on the business proposition, as Devine explained: "Our customers are not individuals, they're organisations. One of the problems we have with communication is that not everybody within that organisation has a mobile phone. It can be very difficult to target who needs that message."

Martin Shields, head of IT support services at Yusen Logistics, outlined a similar problem: "I don't know who the end customer is. Whichever company we are delivering to, I don't know who is on the gate taking our lorry in, so I can't target a message to them. We have other methods of communication, but that's to the department manager. Not to the person who is experiencing that service."

Finding a single way to communicate with customers can be challenging, especially when customers include retail clients and end-consumers, as Wolf described. "We manage distribution to stores direct, but also to consumers direct. So we have this mix that we're dealing with stores, but also the store's customers themselves. It's quite a mixed bag."

The potential of SMS messaging extends beyond the consumer and could also be used as an in-house communication tool. "We talk to lots of companies who are using messaging to inform staff about critical events that are going on. Ordinarily they would send an email to the whole organisation. There could be 80,000 people and they are not all looking at their computers at the same time," said Sarosi. Redman agreed, noting that employees were also a vital source of information for any company: "Employees are in your business and deal with every element of your business every day. They have a relevant, in-time focus on what is happening. They're



The battleground in today's world is the consumer, with the device that they have chosen to engage with that brand.

taking the call or delivering the parcel or moving the parcel through the depot. Anything that you can do to get that information back from your employees is key."

Devine also saw the potential of SMS as an employee feedback channel. "I don't believe there is a mechanism for our drivers to report back in, except for phoning the traffic office. If there is a massive tail back on a road, the traffic office could then say, 'We've got five trucks on that road and need to look at that', so I can see the benefits."

SMS or email?

According to research, the average text message is read within five seconds and 98 per cent of text messages are read, compared to only 22 per cent of emails. Recognising the shortfalls of email communication, the group was interested in exploring the value of SMS in the workplace. "There are a lot of people out there who don't have email – drivers and warehouse colleagues. So SMS is an easy and readily available mechanism," said Cooper.

Adapting the language of the communication to suit the recipient is also an important consideration, especially in the diverse world of logistics. "In the world of distribution there is a huge variety of languages. English is generally not the first spoken language. To have [the message] in Polish or Czech, or whatever you need to, that would drive engagement in its own right. That could be a phenomenal asset," added Wolf.

Time is an important consideration when communicating with staff, as Cooper outlined: "I think it is about the timeframe in which you are looking for feedback. If you want to get 20 questions back today, than maybe SMS isn't the right way. But if you want to get 12 questions back over a year, you can send an SMS every month and you will get that question answered that month. If you want 50 questions answered it would be the same once a week. So we shouldn't look at text messaging as I need your response now to all of these multiple questions."

"If you are going to do it by mobile, do it in a way that makes sense. You've always got to get that timing right and it may well be that I'm just going to send you a quick temperature check depending on my business," advised Sarosi.

Devine pointed out that cost was still an important consideration for most firms. As with all expenditure, a healthy return on investment is crucial.

Redman said that Hermes had been able to extract information from clients about the return on investment from their point of view.

"The less contact we get from people asking where their parcel is the better. That has to be the way forward. As a consumer, from the point of purchase, all the way through to getting the dress, it has to feel that the trust you have put in that retailer and their delivery experience is going to be met and exceeded. So for us, it's key that we use as much mobile technology as we can."

OpenMarket

At OpenMarket, we are 100 per cent focused on providing a comprehensive set of mobile solutions to allow our customers to engage and transact with consumers via their wireless devices. As a market leader, our mission is to remove the complexity and fragmentation of the mobile ecosystem, enabling enterprises in any industry to drive relevant consumer engagement via the mobile channel.

Whether the goal is the creation of a new distribution channel for your goods and services, driving brand awareness and consumer loyalty, increasing profitability or generating revenue, mobile presents an exciting new way to engage consumers. By using a multi-channel mobile messaging approach,

you can engage consumers with smarter communication through technology that is more intuitive, personal and relevant. Our superior domain expertise, global scale, demonstrated performance, and industry leading reliability will allow you to focus on your core business while we take care of the rest.

With OpenMarket, you get a stable and reliable platform with a service commitment to back it up. Our market expertise and trusted relationships with mobile operators enable faster time-to-market and on-going delivery and support for your mobile initiatives. As a trusted partner, we help keep you connected to those who mean the most to your business.

"SMS is the most frequently used aspect of the mobile phone, beating voice, email & mobile apps"

(Yankee Group, 2013)

Mobile Engagement Platform supply chain customers enjoy targeted, real-time:

- Inventory status and parcel delivery management
- Route and facility planning
- Vehicle location tracking



Choose a reliable, global partner to help deliver excellent service using timely messages to engage customers and employees alike.

Contact us: T: 0845 6667778
E: sales-uk@openmarket.com

Text SALES to 88600
openmarket.com