GTC

Achieving the Right Balance

The Complete Guide to Select an SMS Platform for your Business

Whether launching SMS services for the first time or considering replacing an old software system, this comprehensive guide will help you choose the right platform vendor and avoid the pitfalls of selecting an ill-suited software platform

Making the commitment to change
often the toughest part

Your company plans to launch SMS services or is about to consider replacement of an old software providing the business intelligence for your complete business process.
You're not wrong in feeling the weight of this responsibility; it's not easy to evaluate and short-list the platform players to recommend which vendor will best deliver on your individual needs as an Operator, Carrier or OTT Provider.

Apart from direct costs, it's inherent that organizations have concerns about running into adapting processes, migrating connections and data, dealing with system customizations, debugging scripts plus providing training to employees who already went through a painful learning process with the existing software.

Even the strongest and well-informed buyer might say, "What is there to fear? Customer is king and certainly I'll be able to decide based on vendors I've met at industry events or have known for ages?" it can be a case of being distracted by the strongest marketing campaign or brand name longevity.

Which platform providers to trust?

A start might begin with exhaustive market research to understand who the most relevant providers to support your business are.
Let's meet a few of the contenders claiming to be the pinnacle of platform know-how and vying for your platform consideration:

- Contender 1: a segment of established platform providers who remain standing as monoliths from the golden era of telco.
- Contender 2: attractive low-cost platforms mushrooming in countries typical for low labour costs.
- Contender 3: SMS Aggregators who originally developed in-house solution have now discovered the opportunity to commercialize it to secure future margins.

Due to a heterogeneous market where comparable solutions are intrinsically difficult, the results are akin to seeing many trees but never finding the correspondent forest on the map—basically little to no help in providing a solid basis for decision making.

Here's what you came to read.
A decision maker's rough guideline
for platform change

Confronted with the high responsibility of choosing a platform provider and making a decision of with long term impact on the success of your business, what is the right way to begin?

GUIDELINE 1 DEFINE YOUR KEY SELECTION CRITERIA.

Sound too obvious? 50% of carriers choosing an SMS software platform do not predefine their criteria in detail. Rather choosing to follow the crowd – whichever crowd is visible to them!

GTC suggests using a mix of quantitative and qualitative proof-points to minimize your risk and increase the success of your future business. Key selection criteria may include:

Pricing and price model	Versatility of platform	Level of intuitiveness using software
In-house vs. hosted solution	Supported features and protocols	Business neutrality of provider
Licensing vs. renting model	Required business process components	Integration of testing or MNP solutions
Home country and culture of provider	Openness of system	Additional VAS offered by provider
Geographical server location	Overall compatibility	Trust and experience with provider
General market reputation	Quality of post-sales support	Customer references

GUIDELINE 2 CHECK, ANALYSE AND DISCUSS YOUR MULTIDIMENSIONAL DECISION CRITERIA CAREFULLY WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS.

Assign differing weights to the decision criteria - without making it a purely mathematical decision.
Consider all dimensions when it comes to evaluating and preparing detailed comparisons. One-dimensional decisions (e.g. based purely on price or local language support) might confront you with other business-critical limitations in the near future, if not right from the start. Consider which required technology providers to run your overall SMS business such as MNP and testing solution providers in your analysis and budget.

GUIDELINE 3 TAKE YOUR TIME FOR DECISION MAKING AND CONTRACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS.

At GTC, we've experienced both large and small players replacing their platforms 3 times within 5 years! Don't rush just for the objective to claim having an SMS platform. Selecting the provider isn't an ordinary box on the project list to tick off, it will be THE most important decision, very likely determining the success probability of your project. The provider you choose will become a long-time partner in both good times and bad.
Are there forces driving you to go for the cheapest option possible? Judge carefully if it is the right time to launch SMS hubbing services. This is a highly competitive and mature market where obtaining returns without investment is largely based on fiction. That said, you might not want to lose more time since margins/unit are shrinking, but still ponder carefully taking into account that launching a completely new service will present opportunity costs resulting from significant distraction from your core business.

GUIDELINE 4 INVOLVE RELEVANT DEPARTMENTS IN DECISION CRITERIA.

Resistance to change is natural and nowhere more prevalent than in companies. Make allies of your Sales, Technical, Finance, Marketing or Routing Department by bringing them into the project early on. Think strategic and long term - especially in choosing internal co-decision makers.

GUIDELINE 5 GET TO KNOW YOUR PLATFORM PROVIDER IN GREAT DETAIL.

To choose your platform provider is to strategically choose a core business partner. To that extent, do you share a culture with the platform provider? Are they a financially, well-staffed stable company? Who is/are the owner/-s? What is their long term strategy? To what extent

is your platform provider neutral when it comes to SMS trading? Will the platform provider be your competitor when you launch SMS hubbing services?

Make sure the company promises stability and values the partnership aspect of supporting your business operations long-term. For this purpose don't hesitate to interview other market players to find out exactly what downsides they've experienced during launch and expansion phases, including the skill and responsiveness of their suppliers' customer support. Through a thorough process, you'll achieve a strategic long-term alliance based on a win-win agreement for both sides.

GUIDELINE 6   SEEK IMPARTIAL ADVICE.

It is in the very nature of a project of this magnitude to feel uncertain during the RFP and platform selection process. Don't hesitate to look for advice. Talk at length with trusted contacts and impartial professionals about their experience with different existing solutions. Prepare your RFP by comparing multidimensional criteria and selecting the most relevant features of nearly endless feature sets.

Achieving a successful result

Knowing that you won't take the project on without doing your due diligence, you should be encouraged to take your time to scrutinize and inspect each part of the selection process. Doing so will ensure that you are getting the closest fit suiting the demands of your business.

This will be a consuming process, consider if a private one-day workshop can help get these details sorted. Pre-planning like this can go a long way in saving the investment of your time and avoiding mistakes.

GTC makes it possible for Operators, Carriers and OTT's to optimize existing or select and integrate new SMS Platform services. Using experience and an unbiased approach, the telco consultation firm headed up by José García, enables companies to access the growth and revenue-generating potential of A2P messaging. With individual assessment, GTC brings end-to-end custom-tailored solutions to maximize SMS Services and secure the revenue and margin uplift your company is ultimately looking for.

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