



Say This, Not That

Ace every conversation, whether you text, chat, post, email or call.



 Thryv Small Business Guides



Say This, Not That

How to Talk to Customers on Every Channel



We've all had those moments when we're staring at an empty screen with no idea what to say. When you add all the different channels — email, texting, social messaging — the anxiety only builds. To emoji or not to emoji? All caps or is that considered yelling? Yikes!

To combat all these conversational landmines, we've built this guide to help you navigate customer conversations so you can confidently say the right thing to the right person at the right time.

Table of Contents

1. Texting Tips
2. Chat with Charm
3. Post like a Pro
4. Master Email
5. Call with Confidence



Texting Tips

Texting Tips

Texting Basics:

Text messaging or SMS (short message service) is one of the fastest, most direct and lowest-hassle communications channels out there. It's also one of the hottest marketing tools you can get your hands on — literally. According to EZ Texting, text marketing performs four to five times better than online advertising when creating brand awareness and encouraging purchasing.

Plus, nearly everyone you're trying to reach has a smartphone today, so you have a captive audience right in the palm of your hand (and theirs, too).



**The most valuable text messages received from businesses, according to U.S. consumers:
Reminder of an important appointment.**

— eMarketer

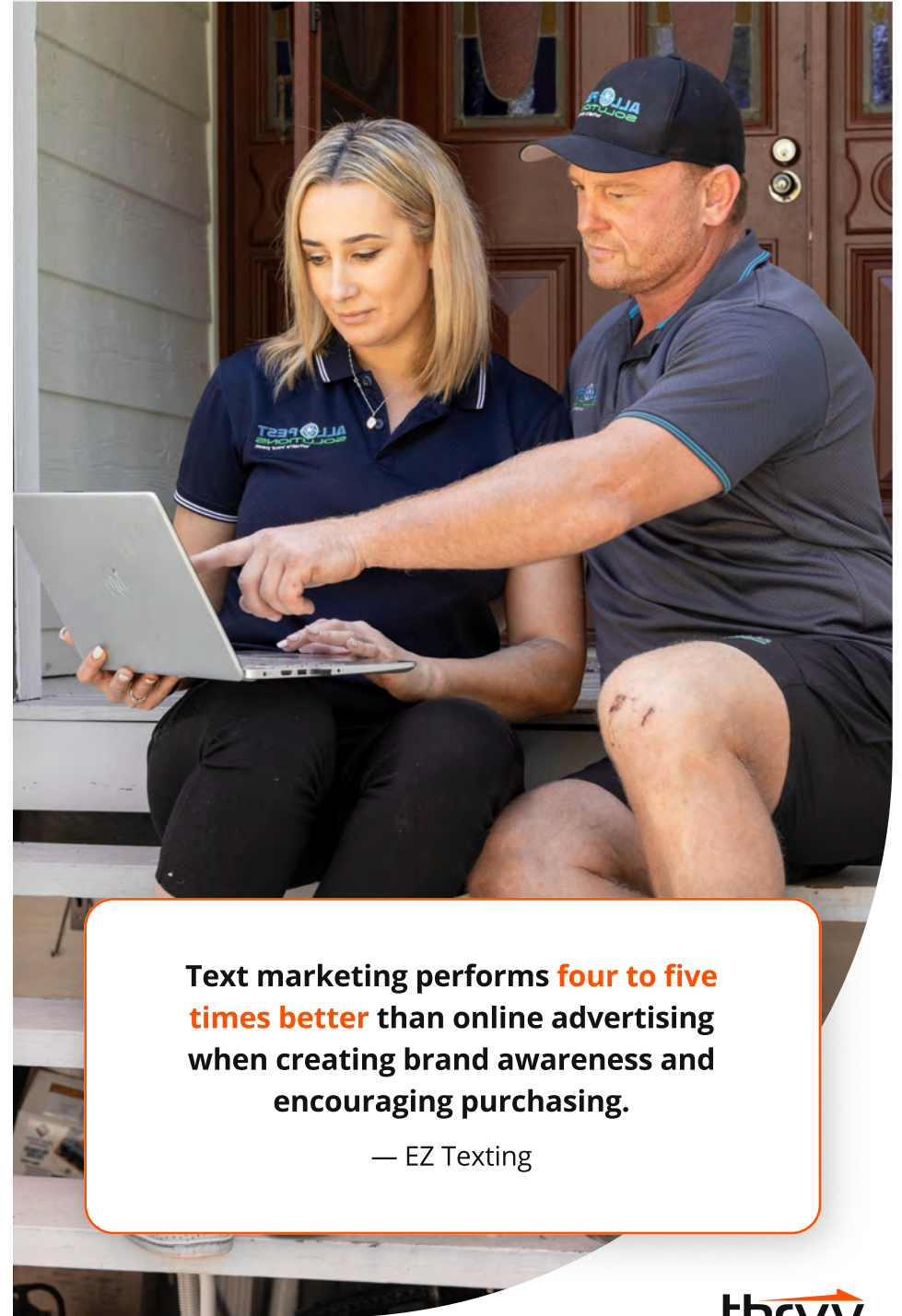
Texting Tips

Do's & Don'ts When Texting:

When communicating via text, it's important to keep your audience top of mind. The savviest small businesses will do their best to keep up with the texting trends. Otherwise, these younger consumers will give you a low-key TTYL, fam. (Translation: They'll say goodbye to your business and find someone a little more relevant. Bummer.)

If you want your text marketing messages to stand out, become familiar with emojis and even memes or gifs. However, some folks may be a little less hip with pop culture references and won't appreciate you being so "extra." Find the right balance so you're always keep things professional and connecting with your customers.

Don't take advantage of the power of texting. Just as you wouldn't bombard your close friends with text after text, you don't have to overwhelm customers to get your point across. You probably don't have the time either. (Guess what, neither do your customers.) In fact, sending too many messages could come across as annoying or needy.



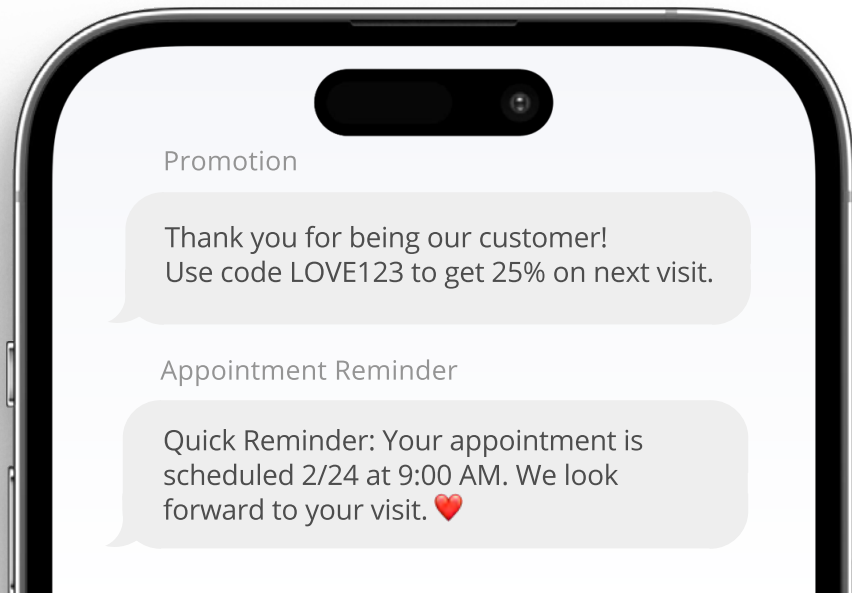
Text marketing performs **four to five times better than online advertising when creating brand awareness and encouraging purchasing.**

— EZ Texting

Texting Tips

When Texting Works Best:

- **Promotions:** Text messages and promotions like flash sales are similar in that they both create a sense of urgency. So, marrying them together could give consumers the urge to spend with you right away. The pros make this work by using language like "Use code: FLASHSALE to redeem," or "Present this text to take advantage of the offer."
- **Appointment reminders:** Consumers say that appointment confirmations and reminders are at the top of their list when it comes to the type of texts they want from businesses. Set these up automatically so the confirmation is sent immediately, and reminders appear a day before and an hour before their appointment. And say goodbye to all those no-shows.



Quick Update: Our tech is on time and will be arriving shortly.

- **Status updates:** If your service tech is on the way or there's a delay, using text to inform customers is the fastest way to get the word out, keep your customer informed and display your team's professionalism in real time.

Say this, not that during tricky customer conversations:



Customer: "I can't get to the bank today. Can I pay you next week?"



Don't Say: "I guess that's OK."



Instead, say: "No need to head to the bank. I can save us both time by texting your invoice, and you can pay from your phone instead."



Why this works: The best way to get paid on time is to make it convenient. By using a payment processor that allows you to send invoices digitally, your clients can pay on the go or even ahead of time.



Chat With Charm

Chat With Charm

Chatting Basics:

When we talk about chatting, we're referring to using a chat tool on your website that pops up to encourage website visitors to ask a question or get connected with your team. Your customers love it because they can get answers fast. You'll love it because you'll free up your team's time when you automate answers to frequently asked questions.



You can also opt for a "live chat" tool with which you have an employee ready to answer questions in real-time. This gives your phone-averse customers a quick and easy way to type and receive answers, and your team can respond to more than one inquiry at a time.

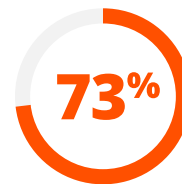
Chat With Charm

Do's & Don'ts When Chatting:

Here's the main take-away on live chat: Do not offer it if you cannot provide an answer right away. The expectation is that if the customer types a question into live chat, they expect a live answer. Sounds basic, right? You'd be surprised at how many small businesses drop the ball here. Be at-the-ready, and you'll stand out amongst your competition.

When chatting, be personable. There's nothing more inauthentic than an upset or jovial customer sending messages that are met with robotic responses. Empower your team to acknowledge frustration with an apology and commitment to solve the problem. Let the walls down with a smiling emoji if the customer makes a joke.

While chatting, understand the limitations of the channel. If the question is complicated or the response requires nuance or lengthy instruction, move the chat to a phone call or email. Because chats fire off quickly, important steps could be missed or misinterpreted.



73% of consumers say live chat is the most convenient way to communicate with a business.

— SaaS-worthy

Chat With Charm

When Chatting Works Best:

- **Frequently asked questions.** You can pre-populate your chat with common questions that will automatically provide answers, such as: What are your hours? Can I schedule an appointment? Where are you located? If you'd like to gather information from the visitor, request a name and email and a friendly invitation to stay connected or subscribe to your newsletter.

Hi, Craig! How can we help?

Find an answers quickly. [Search our help center >](#)

Send us a question. We are here to help.

- **Quick-hit answers.** If you've got an employee ready to answer chats, they'll be most effective when they can provide quick answers beyond the typical FAQs above. Live chat isn't the place for lengthy requests or estimates for complex projects. Again, move those to a phone call or email.

- **Process questions.** If you want a web visitor to sign up for a consultation or follow some other digital process, live chat can be a huge asset to help the visitor through the process. You can also share links to articles that explain longer-form processes through chat, but try to get as much answered as possible in real-time before shooting an article to the visitor as the easy way out. They're making the time to connect on chat, so, attempt to do as much as you can on this channel before pushing them to another.



Say this, not that during tricky customer conversations:



Customer: "That price seems a little high for just walking my dog."



Don't Say: "I can give you a discount, just don't tell my other customers."



Instead, say: "Prices are based on experience and the TLC we give your pet while they're in our care."



Why this works: You put time and energy into perfecting your craft, so charge what you're worth. If you plan to raise your prices as your skillset increases, be sure to alert customers in advance.



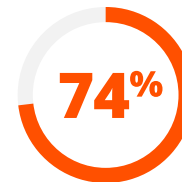
Post Like A Pro

Post Like A Pro

Posting Basics:

If you're reading this, chances are you have social media for your business. Let's face it: You're there. Your competitors are there. Everyone's there. While the social media landscape is ever-changing, one thing remains steady: Your customers expect to see you on social platforms, and they expect you to respond to their comments, questions and direct messages — immediately.

While it's difficult to stay a step ahead of the algorithms, the main focus for small businesses on social media is to interact with your customers. If they're reaching out to you on social media channels, you'd better have the bandwidth to respond. If not, they'll likely move on to a competitor who does.



74% of small businesses use Facebook as their main social media platform for engaging with customers. — Gitnux

Post Like A Pro

Do's & Don'ts When Posting:

Social media presence is one advantage that small businesses have over big brands. While they're limited by strict policies about what they can and can't post and how they phrase certain things, you're not.

Inject your own personal style and way of speaking into your posts as often as possible. If you run a salon, show a little attitude and sass. If you run a business that provides urgent services, like a locksmith or a plumber, write posts about how much locking your keys in your car sucks, or how an overflowing toilet can really ruin your night.

The more interesting and relatable your posts, the better. And what's great about social media is you have countless opportunities to try different things and test your limits. When you find a post that resonates, write similar content with the same personality and style more often.

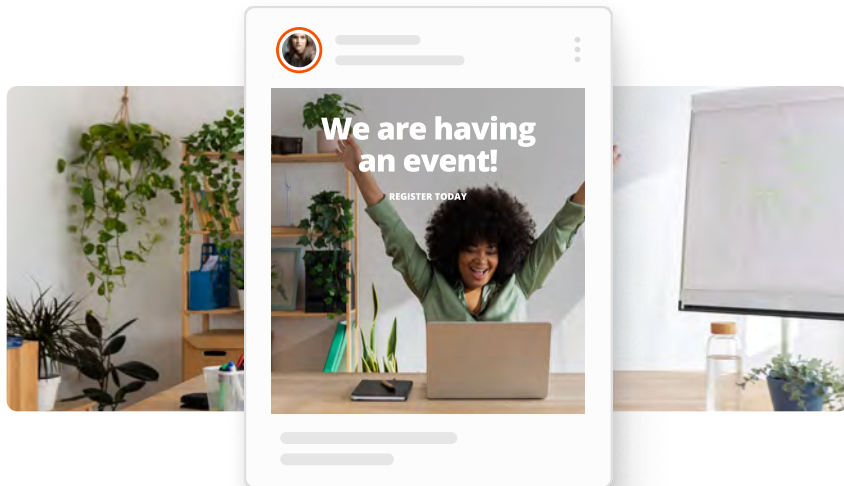
As for engaging with customers and answering questions on social media, do not copy and paste the same answer time and again. Keep the "social" in social media and communicate like the human you are. Use their name when responding to them and provide real-world solutions, not the typical "We're sorry for the inconvenience" cliché.



Post Like A Pro

When Posting Works Best:

- **Answering customer service queries.** If you can be helpful with a quick answer, do so on a public post comment. If a customer is disgruntled, try to move the conversation to direct messages so both you and your customer can be candid without the rest of your followers grabbing the popcorn when things melt down.
- **Promoting events.** Social media is nothing if it's not super timely. This is the perfect landscape to promote upcoming events, whether that's a sale or a workshop or special guest speaker. Utilize Facebook Events to give all the details, and Instagram Stories to post links to registration pages, for example.



- **Showing off.** Take advantage of social media's video and photo posting options and show off your best work. Do a before-and-after video to show how a grimy pool transforms into a sparkling blue oasis. Post photos of happy customers (with permission) and show your staff some love by posting behind-the-scenes activities or shenanigans to add some levity to your posts.



Say this, not that during tricky customer conversations:



Customer: "This company did me wrong!
One star!"



Don't Say: "I think you're exaggerating the experience you had."



Instead, say: "We hate that we missed the mark. Let's connect so we can make things right."



Why this works: A bad review can ruin your day, but you don't need to let it ruin your online reputation. By handling those less-than-flattering reviews in a calm and professional manner, you're showing potential customers that you care enough to make it right.



Master Email

Master Email

Emailing Basics:

At its core, email marketing is the practice of sending emails to contacts who have expressed interest in hearing from your business. Email marketing can be useful in informing customers of new products, promotions and services. They also help you drive sales and foster a community.

When it comes to email marketing, we've learned the "spray-and-pray" approach of hitting as many people as possible is far from a safe plan. Taking the time to create segmented lists proved to be more effective.

Why is segmentation so helpful? In a nutshell, it helps marketers deliver more relevant emails to their subscribers based on geographic location, interests, purchase history and much more.



80% of Americans check their email at least once a day.

— Digital Marketing Community

Master Email

Do's & Don'ts When Emailing:

In an era of email overload, it's difficult to breakthrough those crowded inboxes. We've learned that personalization is key. Use email software that allows you to add the client's first name in the subject line or within the content. Also, your email's "from" line can be a person's name, not simply your business name. For instance, Mike from Milwaukee Plumbing feels more authentic.

While you're at it, it's important to come across as professional in your emails. But you can do this without being stilted and dull. Be personable and try to strike a friendly tone. Concentrate less on selling. Instead, try to address customer needs and acknowledge their pain points.

For email to do its job, you'll need a thoughtful call to action (CTA) to get the reader over to your website or signing up for an event. The key here is: One CTA per email. Keep it short, positive and colorful. Avoid being pushy. CTAs that are outlandish, assumptive or even downright rude can be a huge turnoff to your audience. While negative phrasing can be effective, use it with great caution.



Master Email

When Email Works Best:

- **Staying in touch.** Keep your business top-of-mind with customers and prospects by sharing news about your business. Is your business reaching new highs or being featured in a publication? This is the place to share. Make sure that no matter when you send them — weekly, bi-weekly or monthly — they're consistent. That way your customers know to look out for them.
- **Promotions, announcements and sales.** With a strong subject line that shouts the news: On sale this week! New service now available!, etc., you'll grab your customer's attention and create a sense of urgency for them to open the email to find out what's up. For upcoming promotions or sales, be sure to send teaser emails in advance and "ending soon" to get those last-minute shoppers.
- **Upselling.** Use your customer relationship management tool (CRM) to keep track of which services your clients have used. This is an easy way to personalize emails by getting them to try something new.

Do they get regular lawn service? Try sending an email about stump removal. Have a regular haircut client? Send a promotional email for color or special occasion blow outs.



Say this, not that during tricky customer conversations:



Customer: "Oops, I didn't realize my appointment was today."



Don't Say: "Sorry, we forgot to call you."



Instead, say: "Let's update your email address in our system so you can receive appointment reminders by email."



Why this works: You shouldn't have to spend hours calling to confirm appointments. Set up automatic, time-based reminders for customers via email. This way, the customer doesn't miss their slot and your staff isn't wasting their time.
Bonus: This tactic also works great for text message reminders, as well.



Call With Confidence

Call With Confidence

Calling Basics:

Despite those rumors you may have heard, using your phone to make calls is actually still a thing. So much day-to-day business is still handled over the phone, and using good old-fashioned etiquette could set you apart from your competition.

When jumping on a call, be prepared to go over the details you need to cover, go somewhere quiet without background noise, be professional and remember your manners — no interrupting allowed.

Also, take advantage of technology that allows you to manage calls over social media, from your desktop or on video, and utilize voicemail transcriptions when you're too busy to pick up.



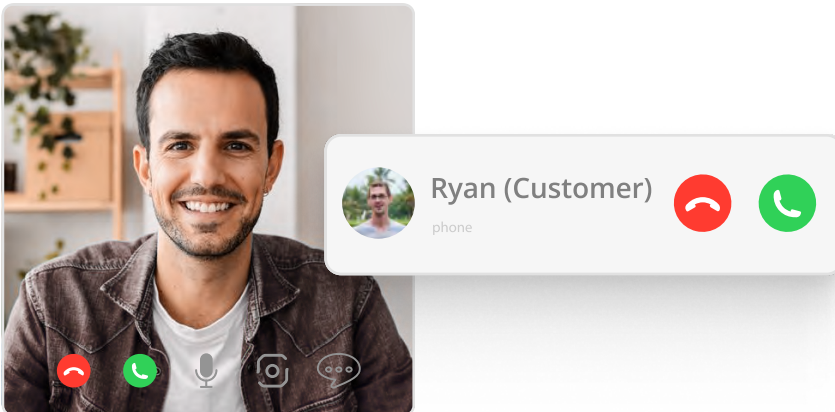
69% of customers say they won't do business with a company that has poor phone skills. — Easybee

Call With Confidence

Do's & Don'ts When Calling:

You know those people who posts memes on social media that say: This call could have been a text? Yeah, don't be the subject of those jokes. It's a fine line when making phone calls today, especially with digitally native customers who simply will not pick up the phone when you call.

If you often think: They never answer the phone! It could be because you're calling too much or you ramble on and on once you've got them on the line. Your customers are more likely to answer your call when they realize you're calling because it's urgent or you need to relay important details. Use phone calls sparingly, and they'll respond to the novelty of a voice call because they recognize that you respect their time.



Call With Confidence

When Calling Works Best:

- **Deeper discussions.** Despite how digitally savvy your customers may be, sometimes you just need to add that human element. If you need to explain something complex, make time for the phone call so you can lay out all the details to your customers, and they can ask questions in real-time. If the recipient of the call isn't available, use a voice message to relay the ins and outs of your side of the conversation.
- **When it's urgent.** There's nothing worse than having an emergency and watching those three little text bubbles appear and disappear — am I right? If you're running late or there's a change happening in the moment, pick up the phone and call. You'll save everyone a lot of frustration.
- **Clearing up misunderstandings.** Messages can easily get lost in translation over text, whether that's an explanation or an emotion. Break down the technological walls and use your voice — literally — to clear the air, whether that's with a client, partner or an employee.



Say this, not that during tricky customer conversations:



Customer: "Why is it so hard to reach someone from your company?"



Don't Say: "Sorry, we're only available from 9-5."



Instead, say: "We're sorry. Did you know you can book an appointment on our website whenever it's convenient for you? Even if it's after hours."



Why this works: Unless you're running a call center, it's unlikely that you have someone ready to answer the phones 24/7. But customers still want to book appointments or set up services outside of the typical 9 to 5. Allowing customers to book online gives them the freedom they want, and gives you the time off you desperately need.

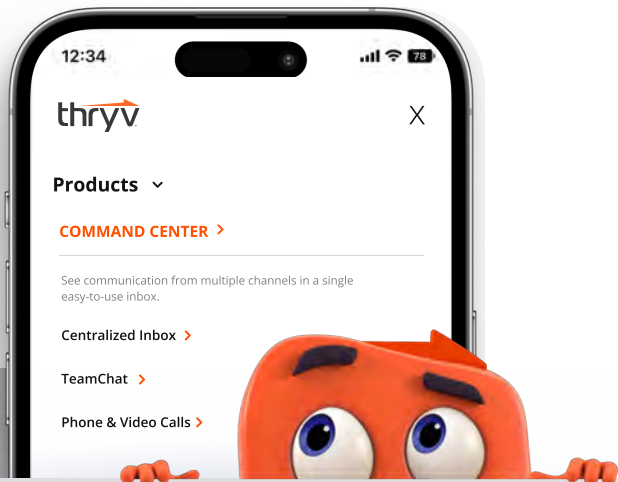


The cure-all for communication struggles.

Centralize all communications with Thryv Command Center and effortlessly communicate with customers and team members- **all in one place.**

[USE FOR FREE](#)

No credit card needed. Unlimited time on Free plan.



All-in-one small business software.
thryv.com