Choosing an SMS API Provider – Seven Considerations

Taking full advantage of the communication method customers prefer

Texting is the preferred method of communication for the vast majority of consumers. Businesses use text messaging for a myriad of reasons including:

- Conversational texting for sales and support
- Appointment and reservation confirmations and reminders
- Order and delivery status alerts
- Payment reminders, billing alerts and account balances
- Dispatch notifications to mobile workforces
- Two-factor authentication
- Feedback surveys
- Targeted promotions, marketing campaigns and loyalty program updates

With recent COVID-19 measures, text messaging has seen new use cases emerge. These include requiring customers to text when they arrive for an appointment, on-demand delivery services, onboarding new workers, updating customers with new hours of operation or reservation requirements, keeping employees informed about operational changes and sharing news to stay connected during a time of change.

For software developers who are not experienced with telecom protocols, APIs bridge the gap by using familiar web interfaces. They can start sending and receiving SMS and MMS messaging in minutes without worrying about complex standards, formats, niche protocols or service provider interoperability.

To hit the ground running and take full advantage of this popular communication channel, businesses want a secure, high performance and reliable SMS gateway with APIs enabling their business to automate message flows, text-enable numbers and validate customer numbers. Below are some key considerations when choosing an SMS API provider.

Making the Best SMS API Provider Choice – Seven Key Considerations

1 Ease of Use

Find out if the API provider offers the following:

- A well designed API for ease of use - Leveraging REST architecture provides for predictable resource-oriented URLs, accepts form-encoded request bodies, returns JSON or XML-encoded responses and uses standard HTTP response codes, authentication and verbs.

- Ability to test the system quickly— Many providers of SMS APIs offer testing without any coding required. A fully service provider-connected REST API emulator allows interaction by setting parameters and selecting – either JSON or XML response schemas. Businesses can send a live message to a mobile telephone number in 30 seconds in many cases.

- Support for multiple workflows (e.g. message automation, telephone number provisioning and number lookup flows).

- Fast provisioning and activation of telephone numbers.

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2   **Compatibility**

Make sure the API is adaptable to various languages. It should be compatible with all major programming languages. Whether a fan of Java, PHP, CSS or other languages, ensure that the service provider offers code samples to make integration easier.

3   **Deliverability Tracking**

Choose an API that provides robust data on the deliverability of business messages. Ideally, look for the ability to track each message individually with transaction identifiers and API reporting capabilities. Look for mobile service provider delivery reporting sourced directly from the user handset for outbound messages which reports back if the message has been delivered for every message sent.

Make sure you will have access to:
- Acknowledgements and receipts
- Transaction reports
- Real-time insights

4   **Flexibility**

Types of messages: Make sure the API is flexible enough to handle the types of messages that will be sent, e.g. SMS and MMS supported across different number types.

Number agnostic: The API should handle any type of trusted, registered numbers and routes to support multiple enterprise communication use cases. This should include short codes, standard 10-digit telephone numbers, text-enabled toll-free numbers and alphanumeric source addresses for international messaging. It should also include the ability to bring your own landline and toll-free numbers or leased telephone numbers from the API provider if needed.

Phone number look up: Commonly used with SMS to improve delivery results and troubleshoot message delivery, this API resource provides service provider and telephone number information for mobile and landline telephone numbers worldwide. This allows for an easy way to clean distribution lists, validate numbers and reduce delivery costs.

Language support: Deliver the best customer experience with the use of special character sets to support SMS in multiple languages.

Account and message routing configurations: Look for a messaging API that supports segmented traffic and can apply different rules, credentials and webhooks across multiple accounts and connections.

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5 Coverage

Ensure that the messaging provider's APIs can cover all the geographic areas and countries needed to engage with mobile subscribers.

6 Robust SMS Gateway

The gateway is the core engine enabling businesses to send and receive messages through APIs that bridge back-end applications and third-party systems, cloud apps and mobile devices. It sits between the business applications and a service provider's message processing network (SMSC, MMSC) and interfaces with the SMS API.

Look for the following criteria for a strong SMS Gateway:

Reliability: To maintain maximum uptime, it should include 24x7 monitoring with exceptional reliability and redundancy while supporting a distributed system architecture for scalability.

Speed: Look for optimum deliverability with low latency for high speed transaction processing. Make sure the SMS gateway can meet time sensitive messaging needs, sophisticated queueing and sub second processing.

Scalability: To allow for traffic growth, high throughput is a must. Some gateways offer auto-scaling configurations that can spin up more capacity when traffic spikes.

Secure: Secure control of your APIs for credential generation and management with just a few clicks.

Automation: The gateway should allow for instant provisioning of numbers and account connections.

7 Top-of-the Line Support

Look for a provider that offers a full spectrum of support from onboarding to day-to-day technical assistance and an experienced team that provides messaging expertise, guidance, training and support.

One way to test out an SMS provider's capabilities is through a free trial.
Some providers offer the ability to try their SMS API without having to fully deploy.

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SMS API Applications

The use of an SMS API spans industries and uses. Below are some examples of business text messaging in action:

Travel and dining applications

Travel organizations including hotels, airlines, attractions, car rental companies and online tourism companies can create new and improved guest experiences thanks to:

- Event-triggered reservation confirmations for booking modifications, cancellations, special promotions, loyalty-relevant redemptions, point updates and upgrade options.
- Use of text keywords that automatically route their inquiry to specific departments to validate requests
- for special amenities or accommodations at check-in or requests such as airport shuttle/car pickup and drop off services.

Restaurants can improve patron experience by sending order confirmations, delivery alerts, table ready alerts, special menu item announcements and limited time discount offers.

Education applications

Deliver priority alerts and other valuable messages to students, faculty and staff so they can stay up-to-date with campus events that require their attention, as well as critical administrative alerts related to student success.

Offer personalized reminders for students, faculty and staff including texts regarding essential deadlines and facility closures.

Send alerts for when grades are posted or courses are changed.

Send reminders for newly accepted students about deposits, move in information and course selections.

Insurance applications

Easily launch promotional campaigns to existing car insurance clients upselling additional services.

Get important feedback, such as surgery follow up for patient outcomes during pre- and post-op assessments. For example, text outreach can be used to collect patient-reported outcomes following surgery at set intervals.

Shorten the claims processing cycle, such as filing an insurance claim for a car or a house warranty policy by sending a picture of the damages to the insurance agent to start the claims process; scheduling the repair and an appointment with a claims adjuster; receiving text updates on the claim status; and receiving the claim check online.

The sky is the limit in how to connect existing applications to an SMS API to best serve customers.
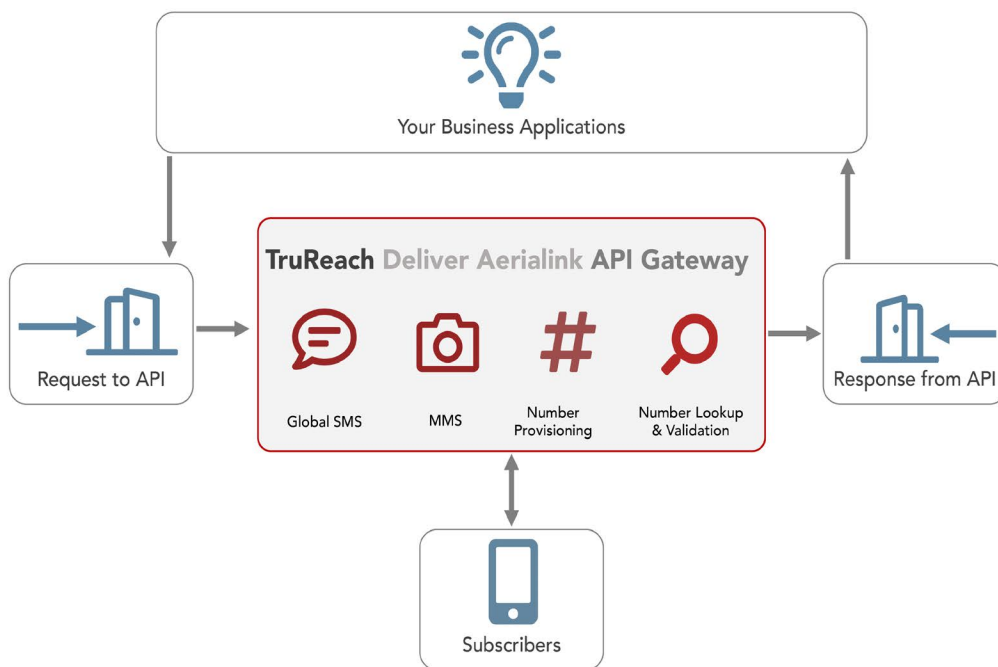
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Robust texting APIs let you connect your way

It's all about flexibility. iconectiv TruReach Deliver Aerialink offers a robust range of API protocols that enable developers to choose how to integrate messaging into their applications. We support HTTP REST-based API connectivity, the SMS-based SMPP (Short Message Peer-to-Peer) protocol as well as MM4 and MM7 interfaces for multimedia.

iconectiv TruReach Deliver Aerialink offers reliability and scalability in a high-performance messaging solution backed by a team of experts committed to building trusted, long-term customer partnerships while simplifying the complexities inherent in business messaging.

We maintain resources, services and tools to help address these challenges. We are also active participants in the messaging ecosystem and work closely with service providers, industry associations, authoritative registries and regulators. Ultimately, we are the experienced partner to help navigate ever-changing requirements, understand the available options and simplify the integration processes so businesses can hit the ground running with their messaging applications.

How an Application Connects to the API and Ultimately Subscribers

Your Business Applications

Request to API

TruReach Deliver Aerialink **API Gateway**

Global SMS   MMS   Number Provisioning   Number Lookup & Validation

Response from API

Subscribers

Try out our SMS API without having to deploy

Use our API console to see JSON or XML formatted responses in real time with live message delivery to your handset.

about iconectiv

Your business and your customers need to access and exchange information simply, seamlessly and securely. iconectiv's extensive experience in information services and its unmatched numbering intelligence helps you do just that. In fact, more than 2B people count on our platforms each day to keep their networks, devices and applications connected. Our cloud-based Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions span network and operations management, numbering, trusted communications and fraud prevention. For more information, visit www.iconectiv.com. Follow us on Twitter and LinkedIn.

For more information, visit iconectiv.com or call +1 800-449-9477, ex. 2
or email support@aerialink.com to connect with a member of our customer service team about getting started

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