

Here's what SMEs need to know about using their customer communication channels effectively

By [Greg Chen](#)

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As all entrepreneurs will tell you, building a business is difficult. In the SME space, especially, knowing where to concentrate already limited resources can feel overwhelming.



Image credit: Tunisu from Pxabay.

This is as true of customer communications as it is of any other aspect of the business. What channels should you focus on? What kind of content should you send out on those channels? And how frequently should you be communicating with your customers?

While a lot depends on the nature of the business and what it's trying to achieve, there are a few basic things every business can do to ensure that its communication strategy is as effective as possible.



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Start with your existing customers

Ultimately, the best place for any small and emerging business – to start when it comes to customer communication – is with its existing customers.

After all, they're the ones who've already shown an interest in what you're selling. It shouldn't be that difficult to make them a part of your growth story.



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There's a lot more to be gained by engaging with loyal, existing customers too. [Research shows](#) that the probability of selling to an existing customer is 60 to 70%. By contrast, the probability of selling to a new potential customer is just five to 20%. Even more significantly, [80% of a business's future profits](#) will come from just 20% of its existing customers.

It's also worth noting that it can cost [five times as much](#) to acquire a new customer as it does to retain an existing one.

Make it worthwhile

Of course, if you want to build up a database (even if it only includes your existing customers) – you have to make it worthwhile.

In most cases, that means establishing a loyalty programme.

Today's technology means that it's easier than ever to build these programmes and get customer details as well as information about what they're purchasing. Used effectively, this data can help bring new levels of personalisation to your customer communication – increasing its effectiveness.

But data-driven personalisation alone isn't enough. Your communication still has to be relevant, look good and engage meaningfully with everyone who sees it.

Right communication, right channel

That means a business can't simply provide its customers with discounts and offers. It needs to work seriously on ensuring that its most loyal customers are included in their growth story.

Examples of how to do this include sending out communications detailing new product offerings and locations, profiling new high-performing staff members and any relevant customer case studies.



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Sometimes, it's also worth just saying "hi" to make your business more human. There's no greater value than to be able to engage with your customers on a human level.

Getting the right balance takes time and careful analysis of all the available data. But it's also pivotal that SMEs focus their

efforts on the right channels.

Given their limited resources, SMEs simply can't afford to go all out on every channel available to them.



Drive consumer behaviour by addressing the entire supply chain

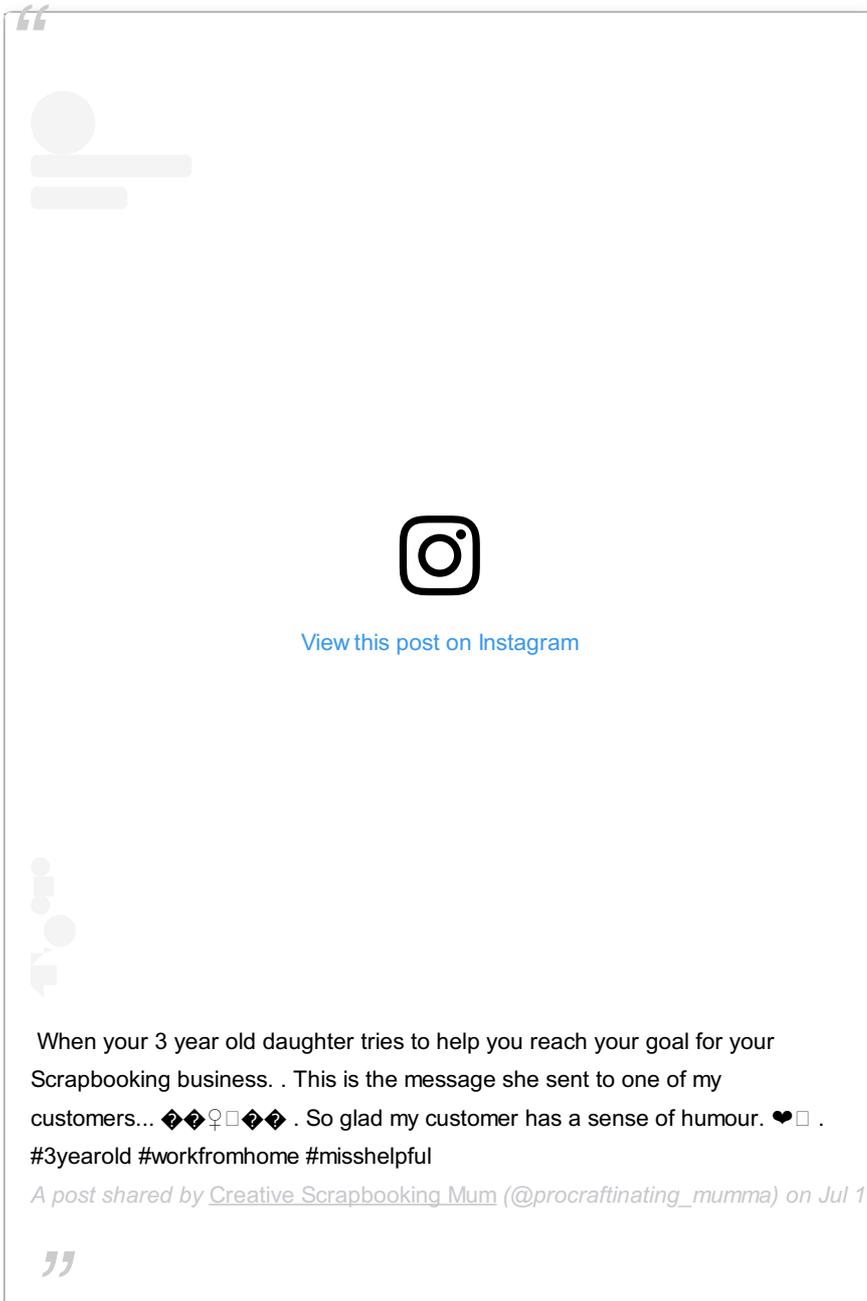
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When it comes to personalised offers, for example, they're far more likely to get a response with an SMS than an email.

Research shows that [98% of all SMSes are opened](#) and that, on average, it takes someone [90 seconds](#) to respond to an SMS versus 20 and 90 minutes for email.

But an ordinary SMS can only do so much. Using Smart SMS technology, you can effectively use the number of characters that make up your SMS as a subject line, before leading your customers their personalised landing page with content that's unique to the individual customer.



It's a tactic that will allow you to entrench loyalty among your existing customers and help make them evangelists for your

business – bringing in new customers and fueling growth.

Evolve and adapt with growth

Finally, it's important to state that the tactics that work for a business today won't necessarily be the ones that work in the future.

As an SME grows, it will need to experiment and adapt to its changing customer base. This applies as much to how it uses customer communication channels as it does to any other aspect of the business.

It's imperative, therefore, that businesses stay willing to learn throughout every part of their journey.

ABOUT GREG CHEN

Greg Chen is the CEO and co-founder of Mbbiz. He has a long history in the South African mobile space and is passionate about the role technology can play in engaging the country's people across the spectrum

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