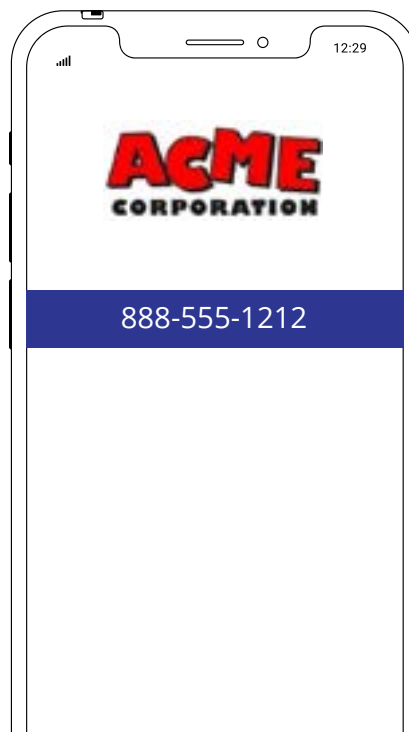# Choosing the Right Texting Channel

There are three types of texting: short code, toll free, and 10-digit long code (10DLC). Because each one has different characteristics, capabilities and costs, picking the right type of channel for sending and receiving SMS and MMS is imperative.

Short Codes

Bartlet for President 2020
★★★★★

12345

Toll Free

ACME CORPORATION

888-555-1212

10 DLC

MAYOR

206-555-1212

Short Codes

Short codes are 5 or 6 digit phone numbers that, hopefully, are easy to remember. Short codes are typically used by larger organizations. Common examples include Presidential campaigns, large fast food chains like Subway, insurance companies and banks, and large national nonprofits.

Short codes offer the very best deliverability and send speeds. Speeds of hundreds of texts per second are possible — over 1 million an hour. If your organization has a very large subscriber base and needs to connect frequently with marketing messages, short codes are ideal.

Short codes require 100% opt in. There are no exceptions made. Generally, short codes are used for notifications and to send special offers or promotional messages — they aren't typically used for 2-way conversation.

Short codes are the most expensive and time-consuming SMS type to set up. Typically the extensive application process can take up to 3 months and will include many conversations with the carriers (AT&T, T-Mobile, etc.) as they vet your intended use case, opt in procedures and terms of service. Short code per message rates vary by provider but usually are higher than 10DLC and lower than toll free. Additionally, there is normally a $1,500-3,000/quarter short code leasing fee and an initial carrier set up fee. Some providers also require a monthly minimum spend.

Historically, some organizations have "shared" a single short code. This practice has been deprecated by the carriers and is no longer supported or considered best practice. Organizations that have been using a shared short code should migrate as quickly as possible to either a dedicated short code, toll free, or 10DLC.

Toll Free

Toll free phone numbers are often used as a primary channel type for business. Due to the nature of toll free, messages received by individuals on toll free carry a "business" connotation. Common use cases include small and medium-sized businesses and nonprofits using toll free texting for conversational customer service, account and delivery notifications, and reminders.

Making an existing voice-based toll free phone number textable is pretty straightforward for most providers. This gives your organization a consistent number for phone and text communication.

Toll free texting offers high deliverability and send speeds. Toll free also offers "delivery to handset" receipts. Capabilities vary by provider but can approach up to 10 messages per second or 36,000 per hour. For organizations with under 100,000 subscribers, toll free is a viable option. However, fees charged per text are typically more expensive than short code or 10DLC.

100% opt-in is required for all toll free use cases. Toll free is not a viable option for "peer-to-peer" texting typically employed by political and nonprofit organizations.

10-Digit Long Code

Phone numbers with local area codes are known as 10DLC, 10-digit long code, or simply "long code" texting. A local area code creates the perception that the texts are more personal, which can lead to higher engagement than via short code or toll free. 10DLC is typically deployed by smaller businesses or nonprofits. 10DLC is the only viable texting type for "peer-to-peer" texting typically employed by political or advocacy groups.

10DLC is typically less expensive than toll free. Texting-specific numbers can be purchased or any existing landline can be converted into a "texting" phone number. Text-enabling an existing landline works well for small businesses with a local area code phone number who wish to provide 2-way conversation for customer service, account and delivery notifications, or other services.

10DLC registration is handled by an organization called The Campaign Registry (TCR). Any organization wishing to use 10DLC must be registered with TCR. Registration is straightforward and inexpensive — about $4 for the initial registration and $4-10/month per use case. However, political organizations wishing to use 10DLC must obtain a valid "vetting token" from an organization called Campaign Verify. Campaign Verify charges $95 and can take 1-10 days to provide a token that will be valid until January 2023. Registration allows the

carriers to understand exactly which organizations are texting into their networks — this in turn helps them reduce spam and "smishing" attacks and ultimately should lead to a healthier and more trustworthy texting ecosystem.

10DLC speeds are typically throttled at 1 message per second though, in some instances and with special configuration, faster throughput can be achieved. This equates to 3600 texts an hour per phone number. Some organizations may be restricted to slower send speeds.

Recommended 10DLC use cases include all use cases where 2-way "conversation" is desired including "P2P" texting for political, advocacy and nonprofits, and small commercial organizations where a "personal" feel provided by the local area code acts to link the business to the geographic area.

Channel Comparison

	SHORT CODE	TOLL FREE	10DLC
BEST USE CASES	Large Organizations	Business, Nonprofit	P2P, Small Organizations
SEND SPEED	100+ / sec	3-100+ / sec	3+ / sec based on brand
VOLUME	Unlimited	Unlimited	Potentially some daily limits to T-mobile
DELIVERABILITY	Best	Good	Better
DELIVERY RECEIPT	Handset	Handset	Carrier
SET UP TIME	6-10 Weeks	1+ day, depending on volume	1-10 days depending on use case
COSTS	High set up costs, short code leasing fees ~$500/month, and low per-message fees, medium carrier passthrough fees	Minimal set up and number leasing fees, high per-message fees	Minimal registration fees, moderate per-message fees

We're here to help!

Picking the right channel for your organization is the first step in your texting journey. Whether you choose short code, toll free, or 10DLC, texting will give your organization an extremely effective and valuable tool for communicating and building relationships with your customers and supporters.

Email sales@prompt.io to get started with texting!