



Northwest University Sees 15x Student Engagement with Text Messaging



Overview

Northwest University was founded in 1934 and is located near Seattle, WA. A top ranked Christian liberal arts college, they offer over 70 majors and academic programs to nearly 3000 students. A regionally accredited college, they award associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees through on-campus and online programs.

Business Challenge

The college wanted to increase engagement with potential students to help them complete the application process. The school found that students weren't replying to emails and that getting them on the phone was also difficult.



“SMS text messaging has a much higher reach than email. SMS outperforms in terms of people responding back and you usually have a quick response. SMS is the channel in which they prefer to communicate, as well.

Kyle Hamar
Email Specialist, Marketing,
Northwest University.

Answering the Challenge

Northwest University saw an SMS-Magic demo at a TargetX conference and knew a text messaging solution would help them get the engagement they wanted to develop with students. Another factor that helped them make the decision was SMS-Magic's high rating on the Salesforce AppExchange.



SMS-Magic was easy to implement and start using.

Melissa Eller

Assistant Director of Admissions Operations,
Northwest University.

How Northwest University Messages Students for Better Engagement

The college began by texting application deadline reminders and event reminders, like recruiting event reminders. They also send messages for lead generation and setting appointments.

Messaging for Lead Generation

They have also used texting for lead generation at an education fair. Students sent a text to opt in to communications from the college and be eligible for a giveaway.

Once the student sent the text message, the college sent another message with a link to a form to enter the giveaway. Northwest University generated 900 leads at the event with their messaging campaign.

Messaging to Schedule Last Minute Inquiries

Northwest University's advising office sends one-to-one messages to students. "Our advising office really likes using SMS," says Hamar. They are having a great deal of success in getting students the information they need to register via text messaging.

Sending appointment reminders has helped to ensure that new students keep their meetings with advisors and is especially effective at helping advisors schedule meetings at the last minute, when the need arises.



Last spring, many students were interested in going to Northwest University at the last minute. “The advising office said that they couldn’t have processed those students without SMS, because they couldn’t have met them in a timely manner. There was such a delay with email or phone calls that they couldn’t have gotten them slotted fast enough,” says Hamar.

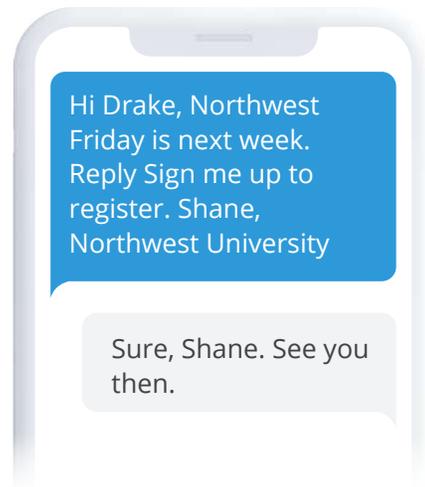
Student admissions counselors also use messaging to converse with students individually. Many of them would call students earlier, but they’ve seen better results with text messaging.



We replaced our student call center with an SMS text messaging center

Kyle Hamar

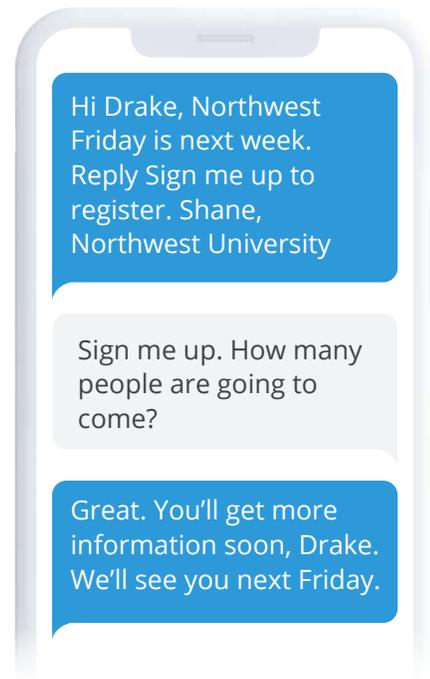
1:1 Conversation



Messaging for Campus Visits

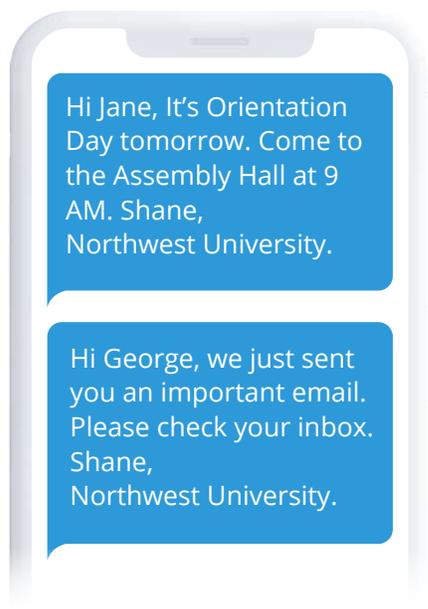
The college uses automated messages to send reminders for events like Northwest Fridays, where students and their parents can visit campus for a day, attend classes, have lunch and ask questions of the faculty.

1:1 Conversation



Messaging for Reminders

Automated Conversation



The college also sends reminder messages to students over summer to finalize their housing. These text messages have a link to a page with information related to housing.

Northwest University also sends orientation day reminders to ensure students reach campus on time on their first day of college.

If the college has both the email address and mobile number of students, they send a text message to remind them about the email to increase event attendance.

Highlighting the Business Value of Messaging

Better reach than email. "SMS has a reach of 95%. With email it is common to have at least 20% of your emails never even reach the recipient's inbox. With SMS you know students are going to get it and most likely open it at some point," says Hamar.

Higher event turnouts. "When we send out an SMS to say sign up for an event, right away our counselors are getting several signups and questions," says Eller.

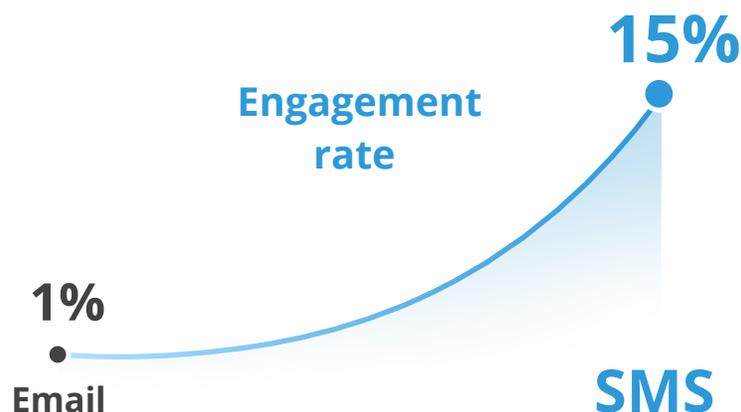
More engagement. An important metric for the college is engagement, especially around on-campus visit events. They want prospective students to ask questions and engage in conversations with their enrollment teams.

Before SMS, they relied on email alone.



Our email engagement rate (measuring started conversations) was between 0.5%-0.1%. After we implemented SMS, our engagement rates with students went to 10-15%! SMS is now a crucial part of our communication plan and the primary channel we use to engage with our students.

Melissa Eller





Fewer opt-outs. Northwest University also noted that when they compared the opt-outs received for both email and SMS, messaging opt outs were only happening at 5% of the rate of email opt outs. More students staying opted-in to receive SMS communications empowers them to continue significantly more conversations.

Increase in productivity. The college has also seen a “huge leap in productivity,” says Hamar, after they started using text messaging. Earlier, student counselors were messaging individually through their phones. Now, they send out one bulk text through Salesforce and reply to the responses that come in.

“Every time we send an SMS, I feel the ROI’s been really good,” says Hamar. The more a student engages with Northwest University, whether it is communicating with a counselor, browsing the website, particularly visiting the campus, the more likely they are to enroll in and go to the college. Messaging helps in this engagement, so students understand and recall the Northwest University brand better and are more inclined to visit campus.



About SMS-Magic

SMS-Magic is a proven, global messaging platform for Salesforce, with over 1500 clients across 190 countries, including small, midsize, and enterprise accounts. SMS-Magic enables Salesforce users to engage buyers and win and retain more new customer revenue, while creating strong customer relationships that drive sustainable competitive advantage. SMS-Magic is the most positively reviewed messaging application on Salesforce AppExchange.

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