

Best Practices in Conversational Text Messaging for Recruiting



“ We have been able to decrease our payroll processing times and increase our recruitment numbers with this terrific tool. ”

- Geneva Milne,
Director of Technology,
Therapy Travelers

Overview

Recruiters need to contact candidates quickly so they can get a response, qualify applicants, and fill positions faster. Text messaging helps them do so. People usually respond to texts within three minutes.

As a recruiter, you can use texting to:

- **Reduce your time-to-hire.** Conversational text messaging enables you to increase your efficiency because candidates are more responsive. Faster placement means higher client satisfaction.
- **Turn passive talent into active candidates.** All the good ones are taken, but once you identify what would make them move, they will. With texting, you'll establish a personal relationship with passive candidates, and therefore get more responses.
- **Attract more Millennial candidates.** The better you can understand today's candidates, the easier it will be for you to recruit them. Millennials prefer messaging, so texting will get you the results you want.
- **Place candidates for temp positions faster.** Temp placement requires agility throughout the hiring process. Texting gets you the responsiveness from candidates to increase your efficiency and your client's satisfaction.

Knowing the best practices for text messaging will help you get the most out of this communication method.

Read on for texting best practices recruiters should know, based on our experience with our many clients who are recruiters.

Let's begin with how conversational text messaging will help you reduce your time-to-hire.

SMS Texting: A Recruiting Strategy to Reduce Time-to-Hire

Over 83% of talent leaders say talent is the number one priority in their organization, according to the 2017 LinkedIn Global Recruiting Trends Report. Time-to-hire is one of the top performance metrics for recruiting. With 56% of talent leaders expecting an increase to hiring volume, SMS texting may add the efficiency and effectiveness talent leaders are looking for to reduce cost to hire.

The average cost-per-hire is \$4,129, while the average time it takes to fill a given position is 42 days, according to the Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM's) new Human Capital Benchmarking Report^[1]. With tight budgets a reality everywhere today, it's unlikely you'll have more recruiters to help you quickly attract the kind of talent you're looking for. "As the hiring volume rises, recruiters need to get creative and automate their workflow," says the LinkedIn study.

Efficiency in Hiring is Important to Companies and Candidates

Phone calls are time consuming, as you have to first get your candidates to pick up. If they're currently employed, they might be reluctant to take your call at their workplace. Then, you have to explain the job details to each candidate. Email is unlikely to get you the response rate you want, as your email might get lost in the hundreds of other emails every inbox gets today. Both of these communication methods end up requiring lots of back and forth, adding time to the hiring process.

SMS texting is a less crowded space. It's also unobtrusive- your candidates can message you back even while they're at their workplace, enabling you to converse with them in real time. You can segment your database to message candidates who qualify for a job position. Then, you can send them a bulk message about the position, asking them to reply using keywords to express their interest.

SMS texting allows recruiters to quickly filter for candidates who match the position's requirements and are interested to create a shortlist. Once you've culled your list, you can set up automated texts to send based on workflows from your CRM, so you can begin a conversation with candidates before your competition has a chance. Making the hiring process more efficient is also important to candidates. A study by Robert Half^[2] found that 39% of candidates lose interest and move on when faced with a long hiring process.

It's also important to create a talent pool of passive candidates and build relationships with potential talent so they're predisposed toward your company when the right position becomes available. Nurturing passive candidates with texting is easy. For example, scheduling bi-weekly texts that share valuable career tips help candidates come to rely on you for advice. This proactive approach, coupled with understanding client needs, will help you accelerate your time-to-hire when your clients call with a new need for talent.

Shorten Time-to-Hire with SMS Texting

Top Talent, a recruiting firm was tasked with finding salespeople for a consumer durables company. As a small firm, they knew they couldn't reach out by phone to the hundreds of candidates they needed to contact in the time period their client had specified.

Recruiters had been seeing progressively lower responses to their emails to potential candidates over the last few quarters. Top Talent looked for alternatives and discovered that texting was a channel gaining traction with candidates.

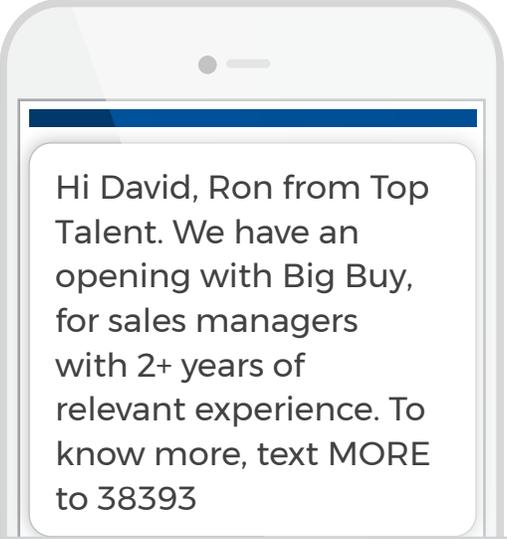
Here's how they put their plan in action.

First, they filtered candidates with sales experience in their database to create a list. Then, they composed their text, personalizing it with the candidate name and including details of the position. They chose to use a keyword-based flow to allow candidates interested in the position to reply to schedule a phone call.

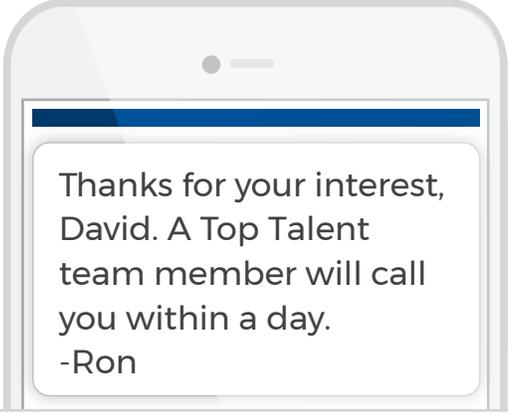
Then, Top Talent set up a workflow to trigger scheduling messages to confirm the phone appointment and send reminders to reduce no shows. They also set up a workflow to notify a team member when a candidate replied to a text.

This is what David, a candidate for the sales position, experienced.

Having spent a couple of years in sales in his current job, David was looking for opportunities as his career path with the company had no growth opportunities. While out on his sales beat, he was unable to check email as internet connectivity was poor. Just then, his phone beeped and he saw a new text message.



Hi David, Ron from Top Talent. We have an opening with Big Buy, for sales managers with 2+ years of relevant experience. To know more, text MORE to 38393



Thanks for your interest, David. A Top Talent team member will call you within a day.
-Ron

David was keen to work at Big Buy and immediately replied MORE to the message. He got another text.

Ron's colleague, Pam received a text alert of David's reply.

Hi Pam, David (Phone number) has sent a text with this content- MORE.

Hi David, This is Pam from Top Talent. If I may ask, what makes you passionate about sales?

Pam texted David a screening question.

David replied.

Hi Pam, I love helping customers find success with the products I sell. It just never gets old!
David

Hi David, Good time to talk? Otherwise, please text me a time when I can call. Thanks, Pam, Top Talent

Able to predict a cultural match with the client, Pam set up an appointment with David and texted him the details.

David spoke with Pam, and got an idea of what Big Buy was looking for in terms of a culture fit and agreed it sounded like a good match. Due to the speed of the conversation, Top Talent was able to quickly set up an interview for David with the client.

David aced the interview and got the job two weeks later. Pam kept him upbeat about his status during that time with several texts per week that let him know where the client was in making its decision.

By shrinking the hiring cycle, Top Talent made its client very happy because their average time to hire in the past had been nearly six weeks. David was hired in three. Top Talent also improved its client relationship and the opportunity for placing candidates it will need in the future.

This is just one example of how text messaging will aid you in attracting, engaging, and placing quality talent faster.

As a recruiter, you'll probably agree that it's easier to attract someone who's looking for a job rather than one who isn't. However, most of the time the talent you want is already employed and might not be too keen on changing jobs. In this case too, use texting to get the conversational ball rolling and keep it in motion till you place that passive candidate.

Use Conversational Business Texting to Turn Passive Talent into Active Candidates

Facing a talent shortage? Consider passive talent. Seventy percent of potential candidates are passive talent, says a recent LinkedIn study.^[3] However, since they are not actively looking for a job, getting their attention is a challenge. They would be reluctant to take calls from unknown numbers at work and they might not see your email, as we all get hundreds of emails daily. Conversational business texting can help you build a relationship with them.

How to use conversational business texting to attract passive candidates

1. Look up your candidates' "professional exhaust."

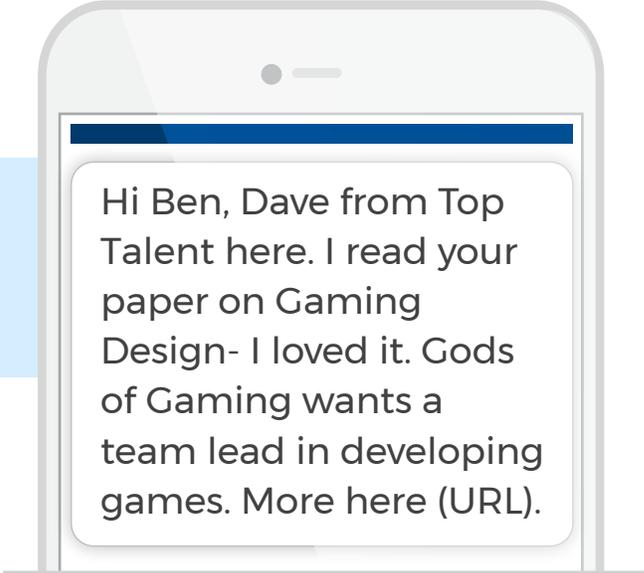
See if they have written white papers or blog posts that show their subject matter expertise. Or if they belong to a professional community online, join that and see how they interact with others. This will help you write more personalized texts when you're ready to make contact.

2. Understand why candidates might be motivated to shift jobs.

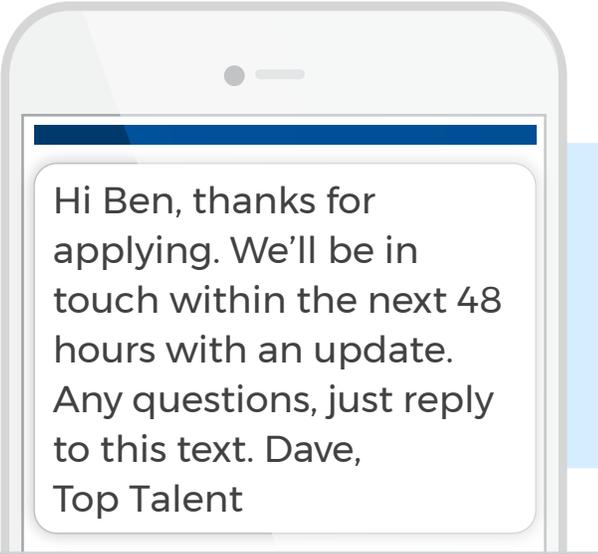
Can you offer something that they're not getting at their current workplace? Discuss with your client on career advancement opportunities that you can offer, as that is often a key motivator for candidates to change jobs.

How a recruiter used conversational business texting to convert a passive candidate into an active one

Here's a text message Dave at Top Talent, a technical recruiter, sent Ben, a developer.



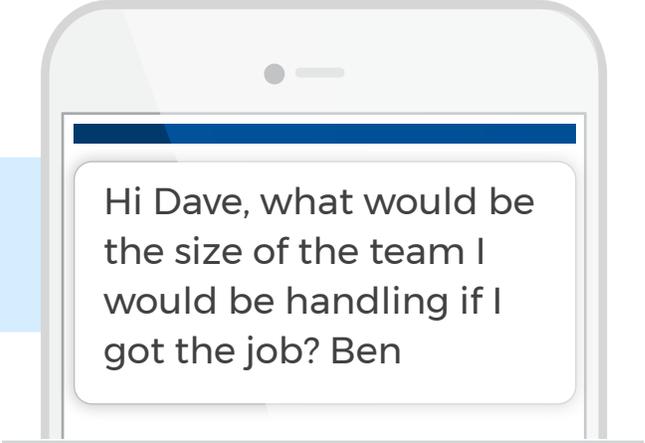
Hi Ben, Dave from Top Talent here. I read your paper on Gaming Design- I loved it. Gods of Gaming wants a team lead in developing games. More here (URL).



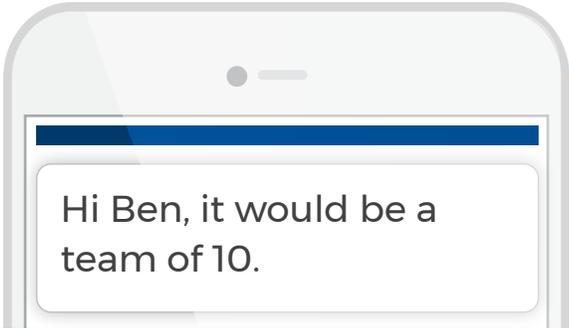
Hi Ben, thanks for applying. We'll be in touch within the next 48 hours with an update. Any questions, just reply to this text. Dave, Top Talent

The URL had the job description and a short form Ben could submit if he had interest in the position. Ben got an automated acknowledgement text message, mentioning by when he could expect an update.

Ben wants to know what would be the team size, so he texts Dave.



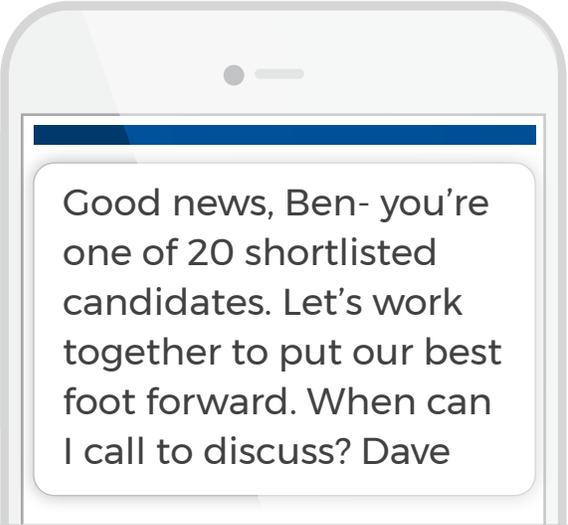
Hi Dave, what would be the size of the team I would be handling if I got the job? Ben



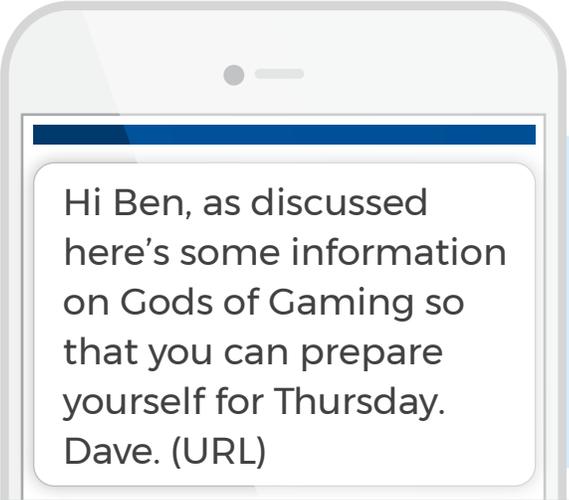
Hi Ben, it would be a team of 10.

Dave had previously had a detailed discussion to understand the job role with the client, so he has this information. He texts back with an answer.

The next day, Dave texts Ben an update. This way, he's building trust, by texting Ben back in the period when he said that he would reply.



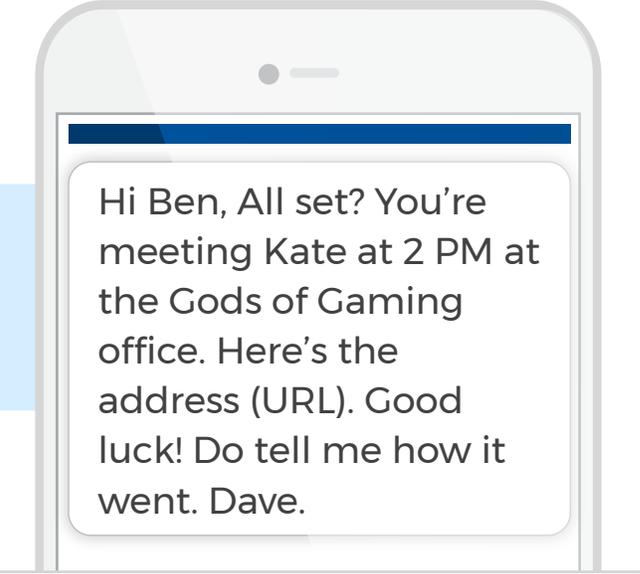
Good news, Ben- you're one of 20 shortlisted candidates. Let's work together to put our best foot forward. When can I call to discuss? Dave



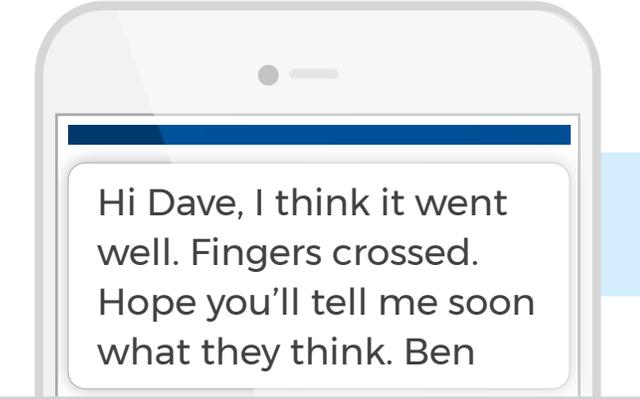
Hi Ben, as discussed here's some information on Gods of Gaming so that you can prepare yourself for Thursday. Dave. (URL)

Once Ben and Dave set up a time to talk, Dave tells Ben that Gods of Gaming will have a test, so he should be prepared. He also texted a URL where Ben could download pre-interview documents.

On Thursday morning, Dave texted Ben a reminder and the interview location, to reduce the chances of a no-show.



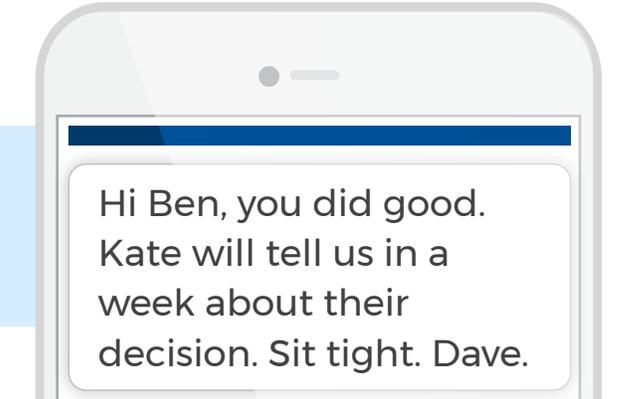
Hi Ben, All set? You're meeting Kate at 2 PM at the Gods of Gaming office. Here's the address (URL). Good luck! Do tell me how it went. Dave.



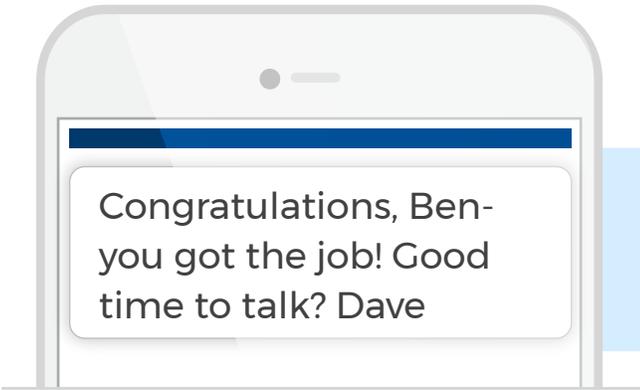
Hi Dave, I think it went well. Fingers crossed. Hope you'll tell me soon what they think. Ben

Ben texted Dave after the interview about how he did.

Dave then checked with Gods of Gaming about how Ben did and by when they would make a decision.



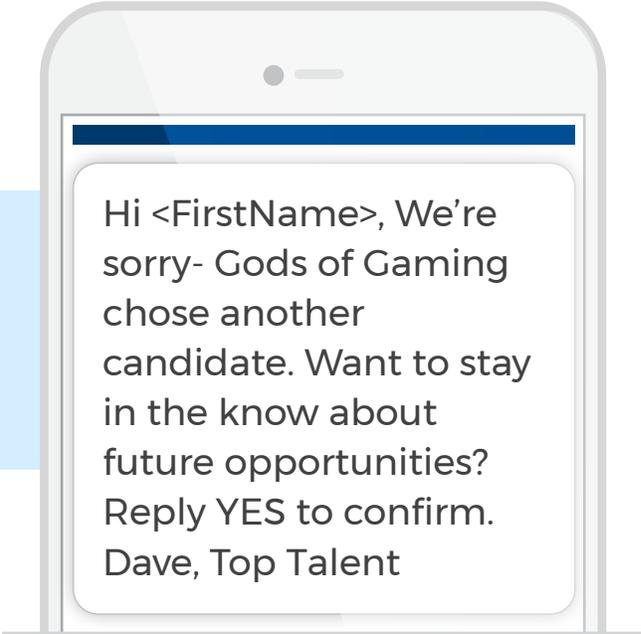
Hi Ben, you did good. Kate will tell us in a week about their decision. Sit tight. Dave.



Congratulations, Ben- you got the job! Good time to talk? Dave

Once Dave followed up with Kate after a week, he learnt that Ben had got the job. He sent a congratulatory text.

At the same time, Dave texted the other candidates to update them and motivate them to stay in Top Talent's texting database.



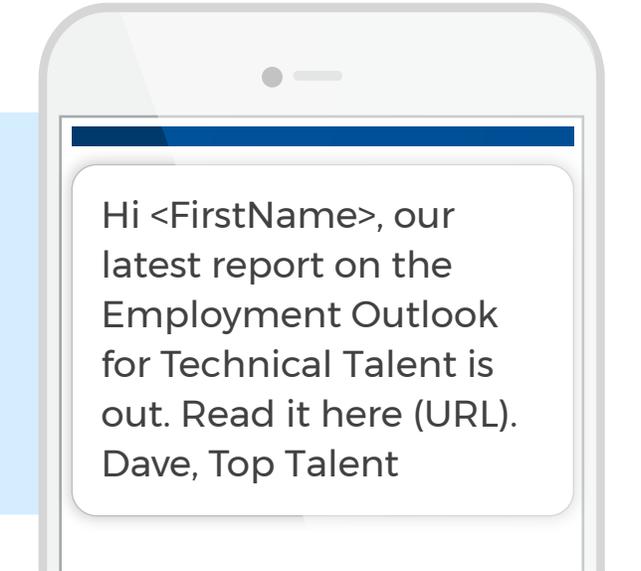
Hi <FirstName>, We're sorry- Gods of Gaming chose another candidate. Want to stay in the know about future opportunities? Reply YES to confirm.
Dave, Top Talent

Most candidates replied YES, choosing to stay in Top Talent's texting program.

Nurturing passive talent with conversational business texting

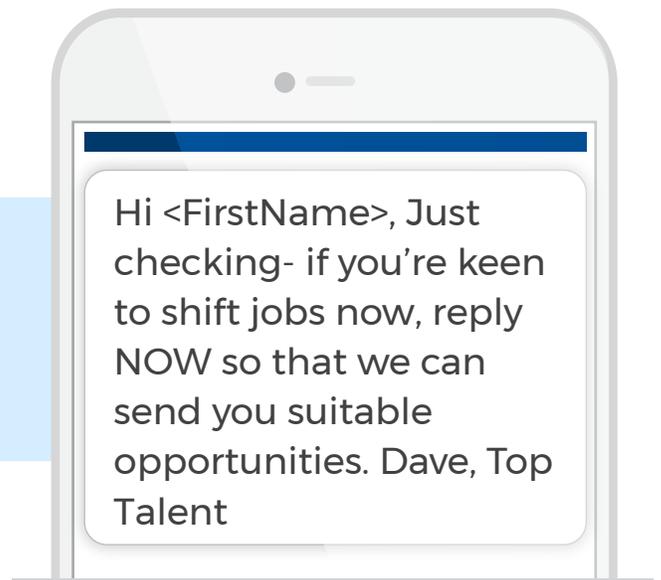
More than a third of North American firms make less than 25% of their total placements from candidates already in their ATS or CRM, according to a 2017 Bullhorn study.^[4]

Top Talent kept sending career tips to its database to keep them engaged. This ensured that the candidates remembered them when a suitable position came up and Top Talent contacted them. Here's an example nurturing text message-



Hi <FirstName>, our latest report on the Employment Outlook for Technical Talent is out. Read it here (URL).
Dave, Top Talent

An automated message was sent every quarter to check which candidates in the database were now looking for jobs. Here's what it said.



Those who replied entered Dave's list of prospective candidates, widening his talent pool. This made it easier for him to restart a conversation with them, as they knew him and no icebreakers were required. He could then fill more open positions and reduce his time-to-hire, too.

This is just one example of how conversational texting can help you turn passive talent into active candidates.

Now that you've seen how recruiters use text messaging to engage with the candidates they want, let's look at how you can attract younger candidates with different preferences than past generations - Millennials - using the way they like to communicate with their thumbs.

Recruiting via Texting Attracts More Millennial Candidates

Millennials are now the largest generation in the United States, according to Pew Research Center. However, recruiting them is challenging because they are motivated by factors different from those valued by previous generations. Additionally, recruiters have their work cut out for them because competition for this talent is fierce. As always, quality talent remains in short supply.

Recruiters, what do Millennials want?

Today's generation values intangibles like flexibility at work as much as tangibles like compensation. Over half of them say opportunities to learn and grow are extremely important to them when applying for a job, says a 2016 Gallup study.^[5]

How can you be the first to get their attention? Recruiting via texting can help. Millennials like this form of communication because it's real-time and continuous. Most Millennials would choose a text only phone over a voice only phone, according to a recent survey.

As a recruiter, how can you attract Millennials for your clients?

Your client's employer brand can help you attract more of the talent they've tasked you to recruit. Millennials want to work for companies that stand for something they can get behind and that have a culture that supports them in reaching their goals-whether personal or career.

Nearly all companies have recognized the importance of building an employer brand, but many don't have the resources to maximize their exposure to the right talent. By sharing the collateral they do have, you'll be strengthening your relationship with them as a partner and advisor, not just be seen as a recruiter.

Involve hiring managers in developing your sourcing strategy for recruitment. Together, you can create a candidate persona and based on what they value, come up with an Employee Value Proposition (EVP)^[6] to ensure that you source the talent with the best cultural and skills fit for their position.

With these pieces in place, you've got the tools you need to put your sourcing strategy in play. While email and social media are great tools, recruiting via text messaging can help you to attract and engage Millennials using a channel that gets their immediate attention, is unobtrusive, and preferred by this generation that's never without their smartphones.

You can continue your conversation via text messaging during the hiring process to shorten time to hire by sharing videos of employees talking about a day in their lives, providing links to your client's career site, and information about their sustainability or charity initiatives and other collateral that helps encourage candidates to favor your client over other employers that may be pursuing them.

Recruiting via texting is also an efficient way to schedule and confirm interviews, provide directions, interview tips, and other information candidates find valuable. Much of this can be automated to nurture candidates and keep them informed of where they stand in the hiring process—a key source of frustration voiced by many.

How recruiting via texting helped to attract and engage Millennials

Top Talent, a recruiting firm, was spending too much time calling potential candidates and many of them were not picking up the phone. Staff time was wasted in calling candidates back repeatedly and leaving voicemails which could remain unanswered for days.

A client, Fast Movers, a consumer goods company, wanted to hire quality Millennial talent to staff a new office opening in six months, which happened to be a month after college graduation.

Top Talent knew that the way Fast Movers' employer brand was presented would be key to attracting Millennial talent in the competitive market where the new office was located. The recruiters also knew that using traditional channels like email and phone calls wouldn't deliver the results their client needed.

Positioning an Employer Brand to Attract Millennials

Top Talent involved Fast Movers' hiring managers and human resources executives to create a candidate persona. They used exit interviews and research to identify what candidates wanted and where the gaps were in what Fast Movers was offering as an employer based on their desire to hire Millennial talent.

1. Getting candidates to Opt-in to a texting program

Top Talent visited campus job fairs within a 50 mile radius of the new office and encouraged students to opt in to receive information about the available positions available with Fast Movers, using a keyword. Students who replied with the keyword were automatically logged in the Top Talent CRM as leads. Then, Top Talent sent a text with a URL where students could complete their profiles. This helped them to identify potential personality, skill, and cultural fit to create a shortlist for assessments and interviews.

Also, rather than sharing standard job descriptions, they opted to show rather than tell, sending MMS videos where Fast Mover employees talked about company culture and a day-in-the-life of the role.

2. Reduce time-to-hire with texting

Candidates responded much faster to the texts and MMS messages than Top Talent had experienced in past recruiting efforts that relied on phone and email.

This helped them set up interviews faster. They also provided interview coaching, to reassure the candidate and ensure the interview went off well. Sending reminder texts with directions helped to ensure that interview appointments were kept and that candidates stayed informed and engaged in the hiring process.

After a candidate's interview at Fast Movers was over, the recruiters surveyed to collect feedback via text message from the candidate about the process. They also messaged what the next steps would be from Fast Mover's side, and by when the candidate could expect to hear back from them.

Simultaneously, Top Talent followed up via text message with the hiring managers at Fast Movers, to ensure they replied quickly. In this way, Top Talent reduced its time-to-hire significantly by using a channel that their candidates preferred.

3. Sustain candidate engagement with texting

Top Talent continued to nurture quality candidates who did not choose to apply so that they would stay viable in their talent pool and be predisposed to apply when new positions-with Fast Movers or other clients-became available. They sent career tips through SMS periodically to help the new graduates hone their interview skills and remain a valuable resource as these new graduates looked to launch their careers.

A little extra effort and thought about what matters to Millennials and how they prefer communicating can help get better results when recruiting them.

You've read about some ways in which recruiters can attract and engage permanent candidates. Temporary staffing agencies have a few unique challenges, which texting is particularly suited to solve.

Temporary staffing agencies, place candidates faster with texting

Forty-eight percent of recruiting firms expect temporary placements to increase, according to Bullhorn's 2017 North American Staffing and Recruiting Trends Report.^[7] Temporary staffing demands agility throughout the recruiting cycle.

You need to be prompt in responding to new candidates, checking the availability of old ones and placing work orders. A quick communication tool like texting will help you get faster responses from candidates and increase your revenue.

As our client, Geneva Milne, Director of Technology, Therapy Travelers says,^[8] "We have been able to decrease our payroll processing times and increase our recruitment numbers with this terrific tool."

Benefits of texting for temporary staffing agencies

1. Meet sudden demand spikes faster.

Many industries require more personnel at certain times of the year, like retail in December, to meet the Christmas rush. Temporary staffing agencies usually need five days to find candidates, but with batch texting, you can reduce this to just a day.

2. Keep candidate quality high and increase client satisfaction.

In the rush to provide candidates fast to clients, temporary staffing agencies often neglect quality control checks. Temporary agencies need to check whether candidates have given accurate information about their skills and experience. Texting can help you collect paperwork related to this from candidates and to make it convenient for them to take relevant tests to demonstrate their skills.

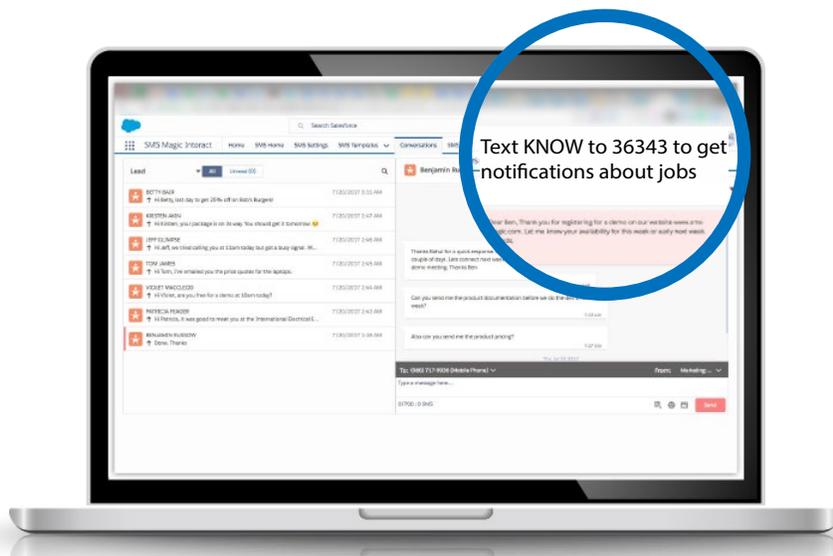
3. Create a talent pool to keep candidates engaged.

Although temporary staffing is a short-term requirement, temp staffing agencies should think long-term. When you've worked hard to find quality candidates, you should keep the conversation going with them, so that it's easier for you to fulfil a client's requirements the next time round. With automated texting, you can compose messages with interview tips etc and schedule them to be sent at periodic intervals.

How a temporary staffing agency placed candidates faster with texting

Top Temps, a temporary staffing agency, wanted to increase its candidate pool size and quality, so that it could meet client demands faster. It decided to try texting. Top Temps created a texting program, Know First, in which it asked candidates to sign up to be notified of jobs.

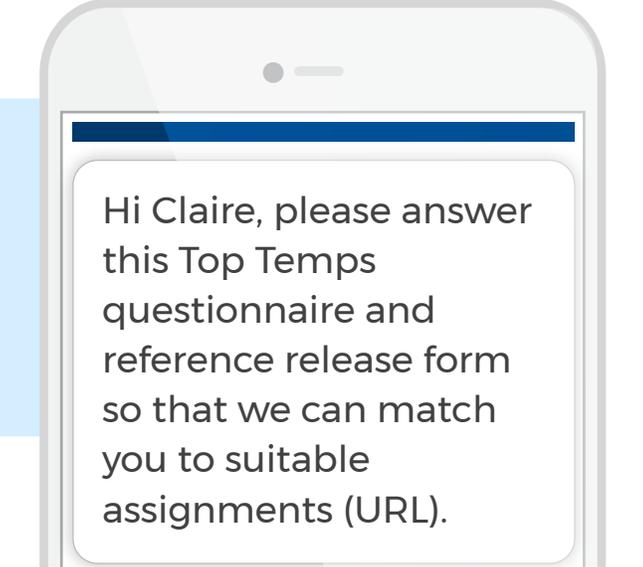
Know First worked both ways- candidates could also alert Top Temps when they were available for assignments. Top Temps advertised this program on its website.



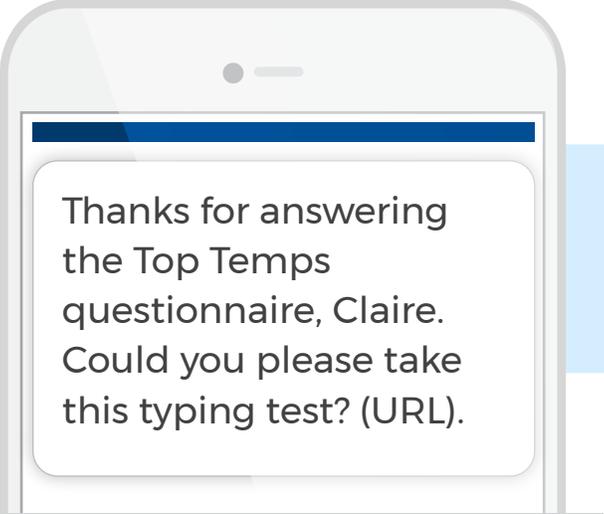
After Claire, a candidate replied with this keyword, the message was automatically logged in the Top Temps CRM. Top Temps then sent a confirmation text. Next, it triggered a message that asked for Claire's resume and identification, which she could send via MMS.

Thanks for joining Know First. Please message us a photo of your resume and identification for our records or email them to knowfirst@toptemps.com.

Next, Top Temps asked Claire to complete a reference release form to allow her former employer to give information to Top Temps, plus a questionnaire so that Top Temps could better understand her skills.



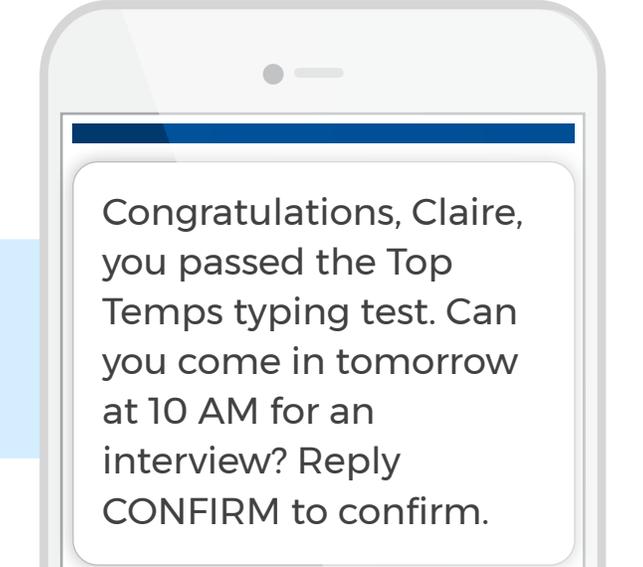
Hi Claire, please answer this Top Temps questionnaire and reference release form so that we can match you to suitable assignments (URL).



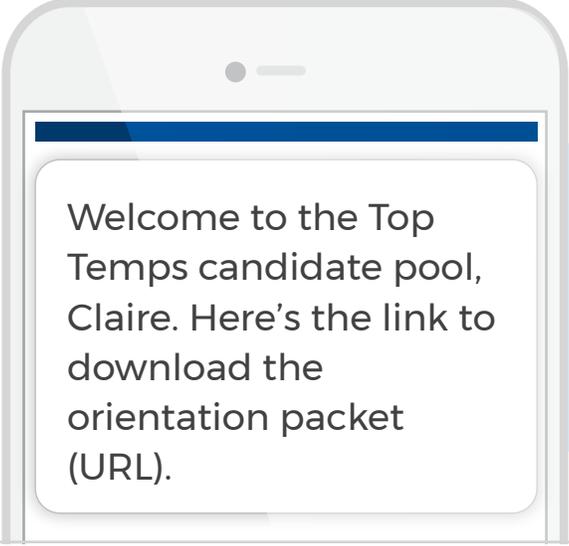
Thanks for answering the Top Temps questionnaire, Claire. Could you please take this typing test? (URL).

Based on Claire's answers, Top Temps thought that she would be a good fit as a temporary secretary, so it asked her to take a typing test.

After Claire took the test and passed, Top Temps used texting to set up a suitable time to interview her.



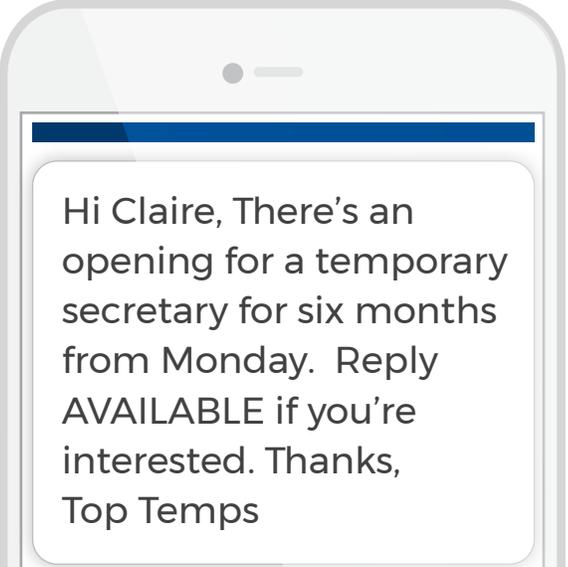
Congratulations, Claire, you passed the Top Temps typing test. Can you come in tomorrow at 10 AM for an interview? Reply CONFIRM to confirm.



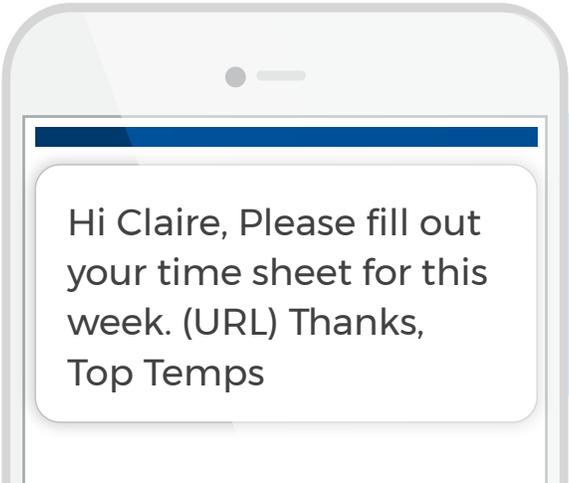
Welcome to the Top Temps candidate pool, Claire. Here's the link to download the orientation packet (URL).

Once Claire cleared the interview, Top Temps shared an orientation packet with her, which explained how the timesheet system worked, payment schedules, and other pertinent information.

Once a temporary secretary job came up, Top Temps filtered candidates with the relevant skills in their database on Friday and sent them a batch message about their availability. Claire was one of them.

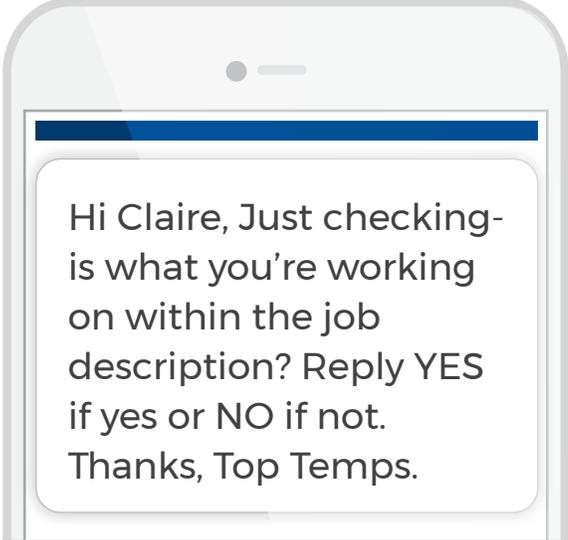


Hi Claire, There's an opening for a temporary secretary for six months from Monday. Reply AVAILABLE if you're interested. Thanks, Top Temps



Hi Claire, Please fill out your time sheet for this week. (URL) Thanks, Top Temps

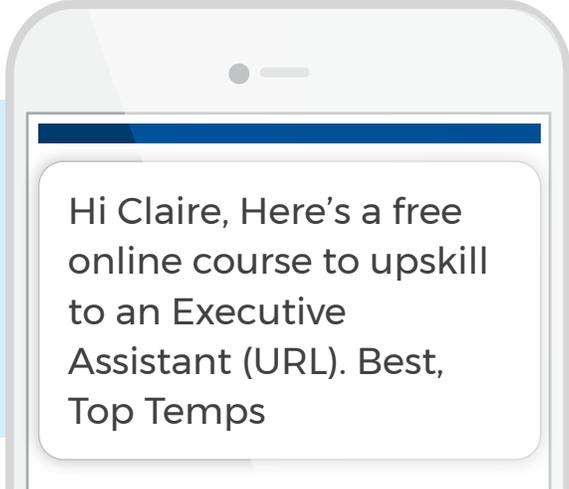
After Claire got the job, Top Temps sent her automated weekly reminders to fill her timesheet every Friday evening, so that it could pay her on time.



Hi Claire, Just checking-
is what you're working
on within the job
description? Reply YES
if yes or NO if not.
Thanks, Top Temps.

Top Temps also sent Claire an automated follow-up message a couple of weeks after she joined, to check whether the job was as quoted by the client.

Claire was happy with her experience of working through Top Temps and continued to stay in their texting program. After her assignment was over, Top Temps sent her industry related information every two weeks, using automation.



Hi Claire, Here's a free
online course to upskill
to an Executive
Assistant (URL). Best,
Top Temps

This is just one example of how a temporary staffing agency can use texting to engage quality candidates and place them quickly, increasing both client and candidate satisfaction levels.

The Bottom Line

Now you've seen how texting adds efficiencies throughout your recruiting cycle. Whichever segment of candidates you are targeting, you'll see your performance improve as you incorporate text messaging conversations to reduce time-to-hire, turn passive candidates into active talent, attract and engage Millennials, and actively recruit for temp positions.

Sources:

- [1] <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Documents/2016-Human-Capital-Report.pdf>
- [2] <http://rh-us.mediaroom.com/2016-08-11-Are-You-Taking-Too-Long-To-Hire>
- [3] https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/talent-solutions/global/en_us/job-switchers/PDF/job-switchers-global-report-english.pdf
- [4] http://pages.bullhorn.com/rs/131-YQK-568/images/2017_Trends_Report_NA.pdf
- [5] <http://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/193274/millennials-jobs-development-opportunities.aspx>
- [6] <https://www.interact-intranet.com/employer-branding-millennials/>
- [7] http://pages.bullhorn.com/rs/131-YQK-568/images/2017_Trends_Report_NA.pdf
- [8] <https://appexchange.salesforce.com/appxListingDetail?listingId=a0N300000024XvyEAE>

About SMS-Magic

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