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Does an SMS campaign pay off? Working out cost, response and break-even

SEO & Marketing

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Does an SMS campaign pay off? Working out cost, response and break-even

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The short answer: a campaign pays off when the **margin on the sales** it brought in is greater than **what it cost**. You work out the cost before sending (credits × price per SMS at your tier); you measure the margin afterwards, with a code or a link of its own. The number that tells you whether it is worth it is the **break-even point**: how many sales you need to pay for the campaign.

1. The cost, before you send

Credits = numbers on the list × parts in the message. Cost = credits × price per SMS at your purchase tier. The SMS Center shows the credits before you confirm, and the price tiers are on the **SMS page**.

List	Parts	Credits
2,000 numbers	1	2,000
2,000 numbers	2	4,000
5,000 numbers	1	5,000

Add what the campaign gives away: the discount, the gift, the free coffee. A "20% off everything" campaign costs the credits plus 20% of every sale it brings in.

2. The break-even point

Sales needed to cover the campaign = campaign cost ÷ margin on one sale. The margin is what is left from a sale after paying for the product and the discount.

An example without prices: if the campaign costs the same as the margin on 10 sales, you need 10 sales to break even. On a list of 2,000 numbers, that is 1 response in every 200 (0.5%). If experience tells you that you usually get more than that, the campaign pays off; if you are unsure, test on a small group first.

3. The result, afterwards

1. **Count the campaign's sales** with a code of its own, a UTM link or a dedicated page. See **how to measure a campaign**.
2. **Add up the margin** on those sales.
3. **Return = margin – cost.** If it is positive, the campaign paid for itself and made a profit.
4. **Log it in a spreadsheet**, to compare campaigns, groups and offers over time.

What the maths misses

Effect	Why it matters
Customers who come back	A customer won back by a campaign may keep buying for months. The real value is more than the first sale.
Sales without a code	Some customers come because of the SMS and forget to show it. What you measure is the minimum.
Opt-out requests	A campaign that sells but drives lots of people off the list spoils the next ones.

Cut the cost before you give up.
A 1-part message instead of 2 halves the credits; a well-chosen group instead of the whole list cuts even more. See **rewriting messages** and **segmenting with groups**.

Do not measure only the first day.
Count responses until the offer ends. And compare like with like: a Christmas promotion and a February one are not comparable.

RECOMMENDED

Done the maths? See SMS Marketing and the price tiers.

See the SMS Marketing page →

SEE ALSO

- Measuring an SMS campaign: offer codes, UTM links, redemptions and cost per customer
- SMS credits and price tiers: how buying works and how to pay less per message
- How many credits an SMS uses: 160, 153, 70 and 67 characters explained
- Testing two versions of an SMS campaign: a simple A/B test with contact groups
- Segmenting SMS campaigns with contact groups: by purchase, area, interest and activity

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