



PROFILE



Industry
Plumbing & Heating

Founded
1928

Website
www.stevenson.uk.com

Category
B2C

Customer Since
2002

Stevenson Heating Ltd. saves time and money with automated SMS service

Stevenson Heating Ltd, a third generation, family run business since 1928, install, service and repair domestic and commercial gas central heating and hot water systems. The company also offers electrical and insulation services as well as trade supplies - offering superior workmanship, excellent service and quality products in one complete package.

The original core of the business dealt with the installation of gas central heating systems in Bromley and the surrounding boroughs, but in the last 40 years it has expanded into the other main areas of the heating business such as service and maintenance, insulation (via Puffin Insulation) the supply of spare parts and heating components (through Stevenson Sales) whilst expanding into light commercial, local authority and housing association contracts. Most recently the company has introduced its online spares shop www.gasboilerparts.co.uk and started a dedicated electrical department - Stevenson Electrical.

PROJECT

Objective

Needed to replace existing SMS hardware to reduce costs whilst still exploiting the use of text messaging to contact staff and customers regarding appointments.

Solution

SMS Server integrated into bespoke solution in Microsoft Access, followed by integration with Orbis Software's Task Centre to deliver an automated solution.



Business Impact

Improved communication with remote engineers and customers, resulting in a better service. Out of hours automation service has also saved time and money.

The Challenge

Stevenson Heating Ltd. has been exploiting the use of SMS text messaging for over twelve years, originally adopting it for an old subsidiary company – Keston Boilers Ltd. – a gas and central heating boiler manufacturer. As the company was growing quite rapidly, and before the invention of smartphones and access to email on the go, the quickest way to get information to its local and remote engineers was via text.

“It was like the dark ages back then, in comparison to now, and texting was the only way of getting information to somebody who wasn’t sat in an office,” explained the Managing Director of Stevenson Heating Ltd. “SMS was a lot easier than trying to ring them every five minutes, as they were busy on jobs.”

The company benefitted from using SMS text messaging initially, but after a while the cost of owning its own modem with an aerial on top of a server cabinet, combined with text costs and changes in technology became too expensive and not particularly efficient for the company.

“Originally we were using a product by GFI. GFI had Faxmaker and we also bought our own plug-in SMS modem. The GFI software could send an email via text, but that’s all it could do. We couldn’t automate anything. It was £15 per month for the SIM card, and as our text usage started going down and email started taking over for notifications via Windows Mobiles, we started using it less and less.”

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The Solution

Stevenson Heating Ltd. wanted to continue using SMS text messaging as it realised that it was a very efficient way of communicating with its staff. It was relieved, therefore, to discover M:Science's products and solutions – selecting SMS Server to integrate with its own systems.

"We chose M:Science's SMS Server due to its simplicity and that it had a small footprint. It worked the same way, but was a lot cheaper. In those days, there weren't all the bolt-ons that are available now, or the bulk offers. In those days you paid 12-15p a text. You had no choice. Now we can buy credits in bulk, and if we need more, we buy a bigger bulk, with a better discount. You couldn't really do that with the SIM card set up."

The other redeeming factor was that the organisation had custom built its own system in Microsoft Access to manage its appointments, invoices and stock levels etc. SMS Server easily integrated with this system, and Stevenson Heating Ltd. was able to use SMS as a way to communicate with its engineers out on the road once again.



"When we installed Orbis Software's Task Centre and realised that they worked together seamlessly, that was a great coincidence. If we hadn't purchased SMS Server before that, we definitely would have done once Task Centre was deployed."

"With SMS Server integrated into our system, when a certain job was allocated to an engineer it would text them a message informing them of a new job with some basic information. If it was a job for that afternoon, for example, the engineer would know about it and then, at their leisure, give us a call to ask for more information. If it was for the next day then they knew that when they got back to the office or home they would have a fax waiting with the job information. It simply meant that they knew in advance and had been given a job to schedule in."

Stevenson Heating Ltd. sold Keston Boilers Ltd. about five years ago and since then has rolled SMS capabilities into Stevenson Heating. Its main usage now, and for the past five years, has been the integration with Orbis Software's business process management (BPM) suite – Task Centre – which the company now uses as its main IT and business hub.

"When we installed Task Centre and realised that they worked together seamlessly, that was a great coincidence. If we hadn't purchased SMS Server before that, we definitely would have done once Task Centre was deployed. Within Task Centre we tie in our telephone system so that when a customer rings up our out of hours emergency telephone number they leave a message and Task Centre deciphers whether a message has been left, grabs the telephone number and creates a text message. It then looks up the engineer who is on call and sends that engineer a text saying: 'There's been an emergency call out request left on the voicemail, dial this number, use this code and retrieve the information. It's basically an out of hours automation service.'"

"We use it for contacting our engineers out on site as it's better to send them a text than ring them – otherwise they have to stop what they are doing. So texting is a good way of letting them know what is going on."

"We also still use it for contacting our engineers out on site as it's better to send them a text than ring them – otherwise they have to stop what they are doing. If they are on the phone every five minutes in front of a customer it doesn't look good and the customer won't be happy with us. So texting is a good way of letting them know what is going on."

As well as an effective contact tool for its engineers, Stevenson Heating Ltd. has also been experimenting with SMS to keep its customers up to date.

"We have started using it for notifications to our customers. As we provide annual boiler services we have developed a contact system where we will remind the customer that the service is due. We always do that with a letter, but we also offer them a text and email service as well. More and more customers are taking up the option of a text message – which is automated – because they have their phones on them all the time."



"If you take into account our out of hours service, it means we don't have to employ someone to listen to and manage phone messages, which obviously saves money and time."

The Results

As Stevenson Heating Ltd. has been using SMS text messaging for such a long time it has understood the benefits of using SMS text messaging – especially time saving.

"If you take into account our out of hours service, it means we don't have to employ someone to listen to and manage phone messages, which obviously saves money and time. As for our engineers, we used to trust them to ring in every half an hour to check if there were any messages. In reality, if you're on call, it's not ideal. It's much easier for everybody to receive SMS. People are told there is something wrong, rather than having to check if something is wrong. It's proactive, rather than reactive. It's also the impression to the customer: that the engineer isn't on his mobile taking calls and talking to someone else."

Future plans

With 92% of UK adults owning a mobile phone, all of which are capable of receiving SMS messages wherever they are in the world, carefully created SMS campaigns can be more effective, reliable and cheaper than any other form of marketing activity. It is something that Stevenson Heating Ltd. is contemplating exploiting.

"As more people get used to receiving marketing messages via SMS, we will probably utilise it more. We've thought about other uses for text messaging. We have a shop that sells boiler parts for trade etc. and we have a breakfast morning to engage with our customers. So we might use it to promote and remind people of that."



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