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Transport Code Types and their Uses
Short Codes, TFNs, and 10DLCs

Definitions

10DLC: 10-Digit Long Code

A2P Messaging: Application-to-Person messaging is the process of sending mobile messages from an application, online platform, to a mobile user.

Carrier blocking: the carrier use of systems that automatically block/filter SMS traffic that appears to violates carrier compliance rules.

Short code: a 5 or 6-digit SMS-only number that is provisioned directly with the carrier network

mms, inc.: mobile messaging solutions, inc.

MO: Mobile Originated. A message sent from a mobile phone

MT: Mobile Terminated. A message sent to a mobile phone

NANP: North American Number Plan

QoS: Quality of Service (throughput, deliverability)

SMS: Short Message Service, commonly known as "text-messaging".

Toll-Free Number: a 10-digit number with specific toll-free prefix (800, 888, 877, etc.)

Transport Code (TC): term used for the number (10DLC, TFN, or short code) used as the originator or senderID of an SMS application

Introduction

Different types of transport codes (10DLCs, TFNs, or short codes) can all be used as part of your mobile communications strategy. Each type of TC has advantages that are important to evaluate before deciding which fits your needs.

- Short code: High-throughput, rock solid SMS that comes at a higher cost and longer deployment time
- TFN: Lower QoS than short codes, but can be deployed quickly at a fraction of the cost. Can be used for limited traffic while awaiting registration approval.
- 10DLC: Lower QoS than short codes. Local numbers can be used. Must wait for 10DLC registration approval before using

This guide is focused on the USA and countries within the North American Numbering Plan (NANP). For countries outside of NANP please consult the International Communications guide.

Short Code Overview

Short codes are 5 or 6-digit numbers leased from CSCA (Common Short Code Administration) and provisioned directly with the mobile carriers. All mobile services running on short codes require specific approvals from the individual mobile carriers. Approvals are based on CTIA (Cellular Telephone Industries Association) and MMA (Mobile Marketing Association) guidelines.

Pros:

- Scalable throughput – can send 10 - 10,000+ messages per second
- Good for high-volume, time sensitive messaging
- Message delivery is not subject to automated carrier filtering or blocking
- Easy to remember 'short' number
- Short codes have a higher trust factor with the public

Cons:

- More costly (CSCA fees of $500/month lease for a random code; $1000/month lease for a vanity code)
- Lengthy carrier provisioning process (4-6 weeks)
- No voice capabilities, configured for text-only
- Country specific

Examples of campaigns:

- Marketing communications (daily/weekly messages with coupons, specials, etc.)
- SMS alerts (school cancellations, weather alerts)
- Updates and notifications (prescription ready for pickup)
- Voting and Polling
- Contests (e.g. text-to-win promotions)

Toll-Free Number (TFN) Overview

Toll-free numbers (TFNs) are 10-digit numbers with specific toll-free prefixes (800, 888, 877, etc.) typically used for business voice communications. TFNs can also be text-enabled for SMS services. TFN campaigns are subject to carrier approval. All TFNs must go through Verified Sender submission process. While numbers can be used for low volume traffic almost immediately while the submission is in pending status, full approval can take up to 10 days.

Pros:

- Inexpensive and quick deployment
- Scalable throughput able to handle high volume campaigns

- Can be used for all A2P, P2P, and broadcast (outbound) applications
- Numbers can support both SMS and voice traffic

Cons:

- Cannot be used outside NANP
- Troubleshooting delivery to handset level not possible
- Some use cases (mortgage loans, credit repair, etc.) are not allowed
- Message delivery is subject to automated carrier blocking mechanisms*

Examples of campaigns:

- Appointment reminders
- Updates and notifications
- Customer service ("call or text us at this number: 1-800…")

10DLC Number Overview

Any standard 10-digit number can be text-enabled through the 10DLC network. 10DLC numbers are directly regulated by the carriers through The Campaign Registry (TCR) and can be used for all P2P and A2P type campaigns and services. To provision a 10DLC number on the network, mms will first register your company and brand with TCR, then register the SMS campaign and 10DLC number(s). Carrier approval times are generally 1-2 weeks. Numbers cannot be used until approved by the carriers.

Pros:

- Virtually any US telephone number can be text enabled
- Numbers support both SMS and voice traffic
- Registrations of company and campaign helps prevent carrier blocking

Cons:

- Carrier restrictions on message volume and throughput*
- Numbers cannot be used until approved by the carriers

Examples of campaigns:

- Call center conversations between agent and customer
- Confirmation messages
- Customer feedback
- Package tracking, delivery confirmations, etc.

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* AT&T and T-Mobile currently restrict messaging volume based on company and campaign type.

Subject to change. Please contact info@mms.us for the latest information from the carriers.