



SHORT CODE MANAGEMENT GROUP NEWSLETTER OCT 2006

It is over two and a half years now since UK Mobile Network Operators and the Mobile Data Association (MDA) introduced a common scheme for reserving UK premium rate short codes from Mobile Operators.

Since June 2003, UK Mobile Network Operators O2, Orange, T-Mobile, Vodafone and 3 have continued to work closely with ICSTIS and OFCOM to further enhance the clarity of short codes for Service Providers, to increase protection for the consumer and, as technology moves forward, to create greater opportunities for new media partnering.

Short Code Success

For Service Providers, Mobile Operators have developed and implemented a single cross network web site which facilitates the process of short code reservation whilst at the same time providing clarification as to the ownership of short codes. Short-codes.com www.short-codes.com has been created to help Service Providers keep track of their short codes, provides a register of available short codes and has an automatic facility to reserve or un-reserve short codes and register new users.

Consumer Protection

Launched in July 2004, STOP provides a simplified and common approach for consumers wishing to un-subscribe from premium rate SMS subscription services. All Service Providers offering subscription services on a single short code via premium rate SMS or services sharing a short code with other services are now required to implement the keywords STOP and STOP ALL (the latter used for services on shared short codes) to allow subscribers to opt out immediately, quickly and simply upon request. Providing a common approach to opt out of services has increased confidence in the capability of subscribers to control their own spending on such services, to which they have previously signed up.

In August 2005, STOP command was extended to allow Service Providers to provide a facility for consumers to cease further marketing messages negating the need to provide telephone or surface mail contact details in the limited space of an SMS

In response to public concern, at the beginning of 2005, Mobile Operators issued a set of guidelines for advertising and operation of Subscription Services and, as part of a further drive towards best practice, a 'Yellow/Red Card System' has been launched to ensure compliance to these guidelines. On receipt of a yellow card, a Service Provider must amend their service offering to fully comply with the guidelines, a red card requires them to suspend the service with immediate effect. Since implementation of the new system in February 2005, consumer complaints have greatly reduced.

Age Restricted Services

For 18+ premium rate services, Mobile Operators have collaborated and agreed a Code of Conduct with a policy to protect consumers. As part of the Code, it has been universally agreed that 18+ premium rate services remain behind relevant content locks for all networks. This move is designed to protect minors from accessing inappropriate content, until they are 18 and able to prove their age.

Interaction with Broadcast Media

In partnership with broadcasters, mobile technology is truly being maximised by the growth in popularity of TV reality shows, along with daytime magazine style programmes, and live debates. Audiences are continually participating in voting activity and entering competitions.

UK mobile content providers can now establish their services with ease across all networks, at the same time subscribers are quick to embrace mobile technology as a means of receiving digital information. Competition in the marketplace continues to rise along with the emergence of new short-code services incorporating voice, image and video content.

Price Restriction on 6xxxx short codes now lifted

It has been agreed to lift the price restriction on the current 6xxxx range. Originally, short codes within this range were given a price restriction of lower than £1 in order to have a lower price range of short codes available for consumers. However, since recognition of number ranges linked to price ceilings does not exist with consumers without extensive consumer education, the price restriction has been lifted and from now on, this range can be used as an open-ended fixed fee per message, call or open-ended time dependent service.

Mobile Operators believe that pricing transparency for consumers has to be provided at the point of promotion or prior to the consumption of a premium priced product and will use the Yellow and Red card process to tear down services that aim to mislead consumers.

Additional 6xxxx and 8xxxx ranges becoming available

Due to a large number of requests from Service Providers and now that the web service, short-codes.com can offer an automated service, it has been agreed to open the remainder of the 6xxxx and 8xxxx range for use. Therefore from 30th October, short codes from 65000 to 68999 and 85000 to 88999 will be available to reserve on short-codes.com. Please note, some of the short codes from within this range were in use pre-launch of the Code of Practice and are unavailable for reservation.

Harmonised UK and ROI 5xxxx ranges

In recognition that many UK or ROI based services are advertised in publications and visual media that are available to consumers in both countries, the SCMG are opening up selected numbers in the 5xxxx range of shortcodes to allow advertisers to use a single shortcode for their services (with Sterling and Euro pricing clarity). The precondition of connectivity to the UK networks will be that relevant licences from ROI regulators for that shortcode (ComReg and RegTel) must be provided with the connection application. Full details will be available from the Codes of Practice on www.short-codes.com

Process for Moving short codes between Service Providers

We are aware that some of you are confused about the process for moving short codes between Service Providers, so here is a reminder of the correct process to follow when moving short codes. Any Service Provider looking to register or connect a short code that is moving from another Service Provider should email the Lead Operator (LO) for that particular short code before contacting any of the other Networks. The Service Provider then needs to provide the LO with written evidence from the old Service Provider that they are happy to release the short code to the new Service Provider. The Lead Operator will then make the necessary changes to the short codes website, allowing the other Networks to see that the move has been approved and the usual connection process for each Network should then be followed. Please note: Written evidence does not need to be provided to all Networks and an email from the Service Provider is not sufficient approval unless the short code is registered in their name and the move is for technical reasons only.

Cross Network Customer Care Form

Mobile Operators have worked together to streamline customer care processes and have developed and refined the universal customer care form. Collaboration on this project has contributed to greater efficiency and has significantly reduced administration for all parties.

The UK Mobile Operators are currently working on new products such as MMS, Voice and Video which will allow services to operate on short codes from the cross network ranges. To allow these services to be offered to consumers it is important for us to be able to collate the required new customer care information and implement new processes. We have therefore amended the current cross network care form to incorporate sections for these new products. Details regarding the new cross network customer care form have been sent to all existing Service Providers and are available on Short-codes.com.

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