



# **SMS Notifications: Comparing SMS Texts to App Notifications**



WHITEPAPER

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# Introduction

Even just a few years ago, the internal communications landscape looked very different. SharePoint, Email, and in-person meetings dominated as the top channels IC pros could use.

A lot has changed since then. We now have more employee communication channels than ever.

The State of the Sector has always talked about communication channels. In the past, the list of channels they review has been pretty sparse. Full of the usual suspects.

But not this year. The 2023 report identified 12 broadcast channels, 12 collaboration channels, and 6 self-serve channels. That's 30 possible ways that companies can communicate with their staff.

If you find that overwhelming, you're not alone!

But the truth is, you don't need every single channel to have an effective communication strategy. You just need the right channels and functionality to break through, engage, and drive action.

So, in this guide, we're going to focus on those broadcast channels. And, specifically, we're going to talk about SMS notifications and how they compare with the push notifications you can send with employee communication apps.

Before we dive into these channels in detail, let's cover some important background.

What are **broadcast channels**?

Gallagher's State of the Sector defines a broadcast channel as a tool that allows corporate messages to be pushed out.

That makes these channels great for top-down communication, but not necessarily for interaction and driving engagement.

Here are some examples of the different channels that fall into that category:

- Text Messages
- E-Newsletters
- Email
- Calls
- Printed/Direct Mailed Materials

As you can see, the distinction is fairly broad. You're probably already using email, newsletters, calls, and direct mail. But are you using texting yet?

In this guide, we'll share not only why you might want to consider SMS texting, but also how to use it strategically with the rest of your channel mix.

# Important Definitions

## What Are App Push Notifications?

**Push notifications are a type of alert generated by an application** (e.g. email, Slack, an employee app) to let the user know of activity or updates. These pushes can be sent when the application is not currently in use. And you can receive these notifications on a variety of devices—these banner, sound, and haptic notifications can display on a phone, tablet, or computer.

The beauty of app push notifications is that you can customize your notification preferences for every application you download. For example, theEMPLOYEEapp users can choose:

- If they want to allow notifications
- How they want alerts to be displayed (e.g. on their device lock screen or as a banner)
- What tone or haptic do they want associated with the notification

## What Are SMS Notifications?

SMS notifications (text messages) are **text-based messages sent over carrier networks**. These notifications will appear on your cell phone just like with app push notifications. Like push notifications, you can customize the sound and haptics for SMS notifications on your phone.



# SMS & App Notification Analytics

Visibility into how your channels are performing is important. As communicators, you need to know who you're communicating with and if that communication was successful. And you need that information in real-time so you have time to pivot your internal communications strategy, if needed.

Let's break down the different push notification and SMS metrics you would have access to if you use theEMPLOYEEapp's channels for employee communication:

Metric	App Notification Definition	SMS Notification Definition
Sent	The total number of push notification messages sent to your audience, including failed messages or errors.	The total number of text messages sent to your audience, including failed messages or errors.
Delivered	How many push notifications were successfully delivered to the destination.	How many SMS notifications were successfully delivered to the destination.
Failed	The number of devices where the app has been uninstalled or push notifications disabled.	The number of devices reported as "unsubscribed" from SMS.
Errored	The number of devices with an error that prevents a successful send.	The number of devices with an error that prevents a successful send.
Total Users	The number of users in your database.	The number of users in your database with a mobile phone number.
Total Subscribed Users	N/A	The total amount of users in your database who are opted-in to receive SMS metrics.
Total Registered Users	Total users in your database who registered to use theEMPLOYEEapp's mobile app or intranet.	N/A
Total Views Accessed Via Notification	Total views of your app message via the push notification.	N/A
Platform Delivery	Number of messages delivered to Apple and Google platforms.	N/A

## Understanding Push & SMS Metrics

All of these metrics are helpful to know, but some are more important than others for your analysis of an SMS or Push Notification campaign.

- **Sent, Delivered & Remaining:** These numbers are validations that you have successfully sent your message to the right groups. Otherwise, you won't have to watch these very closely.
- **Failed & Errored:** These metrics are more important to watch as they indicate changes in your deliverability. If you see too many failed sends, for instance, that indicates that more employees are opting-out of texting. In that case, you'd want to learn why your employees are unsubscribing and what you can do to improve texts and participation.
- **Total Registered & Subscribed Users:** Knowing your adoption rate in your texting program is an important KPI. You'll want to see this grow and remain relatively constant, which will require a strong rollout and ongoing adoption strategy.
- **View Rate (not for SMS):** When you use an app push notification on a piece of content in your employee app, you'll want to know how many people accessed that post via the notification. This helps you know how people are finding your content—organically or through the notification—so you can know how to best get your employees' attention on important messages.
  - » **Note:** Because text messages are delivered via carrier, you cannot collect analytics (regardless of vendor) on how many views your SMS received like you can for push notifications.



# Analytics

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## How to Use Push & SMS Metrics

So, why are all these metrics important? And how can you use them to understand if your strategy is working or not?

Like with any type of analysis and measurement you do, it all comes back to the goals of your internal comms campaigns. If you are just starting out with a texting or an employee communications app, you may be much more focused on your adoption rate—your registered and subscribed users. And your content might be geared towards increasing engagement in the channel.

Or maybe you're really hoping to increase your open rate on important HR communications (e.g. benefits information or open enrollment), you'll be much more focused on your views.

**PRO TIP:** Any metric can be a vanity metric if it's not tied to some larger goal or KPI. Looking at views or adoption in a vacuum doesn't mean much unless you tie it back to a broader business impact. For instance, is using SMS messages/push notifications leading to a more informed and engaged audience?



# Pros & Cons of App vs. SMS Notifications

Internal communicators need a multi-channel approach to communicating. But how do you know which type of notification to use for your internal communications? And how can you use all three types of notification strategically to have the greatest impact?

These are the main features of push notifications vs. SMS.

Feature	SMS Notification	App Notification
International Use		✓
Easy Opt-In	✓	
No Data Charges		✓
No App Download Required	✓	
Multimedia Content		✓
"View" Analytics		✓

## Pros & Cons of Each Tool

- 1. Subscribing and unsubscribing.** Although SMS has a very easy opt-in process, this is also a downside of texting. Legally, your employees have to opt-in to receive texts and they can opt-out at any time.
- 2. Speed.** Our platform is designed with a familiar UI that makes sharing any kind of message easy. That said, content push notifications are not only text-based. Posts on theEMPLOYEEapp can be any kind of multimedia content, which requires more work to create. Sending an SMS or Broadcast Alert is very quick as these messages are only text. This makes SMS and Broadcast Alerts ideal for time-sensitive or urgent messages.
- 3. Notification fatigue.** One problem with broadcast channels is that every message sends a notification. This is the beauty of being able to selectively choose which pieces of content send an app notification. This allows you to only send notifications on the content you want so you don't overwhelm employees.
- 4. Data charges.** An employee app for communication does not require a data plan to access. So, users can use wifi to receive notifications and view content. The trade-off here is that they do have to download the app. SMS is different. Depending on the employee's plan, they might incur a charge, which isn't an ideal experience when you're sending texts for work.
- 5. International coverage.** Unfortunately, no texting vendor has relationships with all the cellular carriers worldwide. This makes it very difficult to send messages internationally via SMS.



# How to Use Notifications Strategically

Using push notifications to notify employees of important, time-sensitive information is one of the best ways to grab their attention. By selectively applying notifications to content posts or sending SMS texts/Broadcast Alerts, you can avoid communication overload and help employees know what messages require more immediate attention. Let's talk about how to use push notifications in this strategic way.

## How Many Push Notifications Should You Send?

It can be hard to know how many push notifications are too many for our teams. What content really warrants one? Will they be annoyed and turn off notifications on your app or unsubscribe from your texts? It's a fine line. And the threshold or tolerance for push notifications can be different at each company.

So, how do you figure out the right balance?

The truth is, you can send a lot of notifications as long as you **keep the quality high**. Always ask yourself if the message is important. Is it need-to-know or just nice-to-know? Can it wait until the employee comes into work or until they open their app again?

We recommend creating a policy around what receives a push notification or is sent via Text/Broadcast Alert. You can then define these categories of message that receives a notification.

## How Do You Use Different Notification Tools Together?

Ideally, you have many channels and ways to notify your employees of important information. In a crisis (e.g. weather closure or layoffs) or when the communication is very important (e.g. HR materials), you would never only rely on one channel to notify your teams.

As long as the message is truly urgent or time-sensitive for your targeted groups, you can use all your broadcast channels together. Why can you get away with this? Because each of these channels might be reaching a different part of your audience.

The most important thing in this situation is to make sure the message is adapted for the medium. Your SMS/Broadcast Alert should look a little different than your content push notification, for instance.

# What Content Should Use Push Notifications?

If you're new to using broadcast channels like texting or using employee apps that let you choose when to use a push notification, here are a few suggestions for the type of content you might want to push out.

## Emergency & Safety Messages

Critical and time-bound messages are key to keeping your teams safe and generating the correct response to incidents or hazards within a workplace. This could include:

- Weather closures and warnings
- Active shooter
- Shift changes or cancellations

## New Hire Communication & Onboarding

You want new hires to get off on the right foot and feel like they are informed and equipped to take on their first day. Use texts/app notifications to eliminate first day confusion. For example:

- Information on where/when to show up for their first day
- Links to documents like employee handbooks for review
- Links to videos for new hire training

## Company Culture

Each message you send has an impact on your employees' impression of the company and the culture. Effective use of broadcast channels gives you the ability to deliver a meaningful message or reinforce a brand promise. Examples include:

- CEO videos thanking employees for hard work or sharing key updates
- Announcing a key milestone in the business
- Sharing new benefits or employee perks

# SMS Notification Templates

Want to send your employees texts that are effective? Use our templates to get started.

## How to Use Our Template

- **Update the copy for your business.** Your brand voice is unique. So, we suggest using these templates as a starting point. Take the time to update the language and tone to match your company's voice and values. You know your employees best, so make sure these messages make sense to your target audience.
- **Track your results.** No one strategy or approach will work for every company. Track what kinds of messages are most effective as SMS notifications as well as what style or approach works best.

[Download Template](#)



# theEMPLOYEEapp's Notification Tools

It's important to have a variety of ways to notify employees about important information. This variety helps both the end user as well as the communications professionals administering the channels.

## Content Push Notifications

Within our mobile app, you can enable a push notification on a specific piece of content. You can include a notification when you post either a piece of content to your news feed/explore folders or a calendar event.

This notification will be sent to anyone the post or calendar event is targeted to. They can then click on the notification to view the content within the application.

## SMS Alerts

Our SMS Alerts are text messages that you can send to targeted employee groups. These notifications come through like any other SMS notification.

Because these are text-only messages, they are used for different things than a content push notification would be. For example, SMS texts are good for:

- Reminders
- Onboarding instructions
- High-level messages
- Closure/urgent communication regarding the business

## Broadcast Alerts

A Broadcast Alert is very similar to an SMS notification. These are text-only messages that can be sent to a targeted group of employees. The main difference between a Broadcast Alert and an SMS text is that Broadcast Alerts aren't sent through a carrier. So, they can be received by anyone with our employee app downloaded to their phone with push notifications enabled.

# About theEMPLOYEEapp

theEMPLOYEEapp was created by communications and HR professionals to address the challenges organizations face communicating with a dispersed and deskless workforce. theEMPLOYEEapp is an internal communication and engagement solution that allows workers to have fast and easy access to the information, documents, and resources they need to succeed in their work.

Our app allows you to target information to your employees when and where they need it on their smartphone, tablet, or computer, and empower leaders and frontline managers to engage and activate employees across the organization. Unlike most traditional communications channels, theEMPLOYEEapp creates a customized experience for employees, encouraging your workforce to join together on a suite of mobile-first channels.

**Our Mission is to enable the effortless flow of meaningful information for organizations driven by frontline workers.**

Request a Demo

