6 questions every retailer should ask when choosing an email service provider

twilio

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Introduction

In today's competitive retail landscape, driving customer engagement is more important than ever before. Customers expect retailers to offer consistent, personalized experiences whether they're shopping in-store or on their laptops and mobile devices. To deliver on this, brands are seeking a deeper understanding of their customer's needs, wants, and expectations.

Providing omnichannel customer engagement in Retail requires integrating all interactions into one seamless method of engaging with your customers. Differing from multi-channel communications, omnichannel drives collaboration across channels to avoid data silos.

While developing an innovative omnichannel retail strategy might seem daunting at first, you don't need super fancy tools or a team of 100 developers to understand how to engage your audiences. In fact, you can do it with a channel your business is probably already using: email!

Email is an incredibly data-rich channel with one of the highest ROIs ($42/1, in fact) of any marketing channel, but many businesses fail to use it to its full potential.

When done right, email gives retailers the powerful customer insights they need to build hyper-personalized communications that can help their business stand out.

71 percent of consumers feel frustrated when their shopping experience is impersonal and 72 percent only engage with marketing messages customized to their specific interests.

Partnering with the right email service provider (ESP) makes this even easier. Your ESP should provide the full picture of your customer engagement, empowering you to communicate with your prospects and customers on the right channel at the right time, driving customer loyalty for your business.

To help find the right ESP for your business, consider asking these six questions during your evaluation process so you can find a solution that has what it takes to keep up with your email needs.

Question #1

How can your solution meet our email deliverability needs?

When transactional and marketing emails fail to send, your business can lose both sales and your customers' trust. Partnering with an ESP with a proven track record of understanding and improving email deliverability can increase the effectiveness of your email strategy and drive better business results.

Global commerce company Shopify uses Twilio SendGrid to power its own email marketing tool, which empowers over 1.7 million merchants to easily communicate with their customers.

Shopify prioritizes reliable email service and by partnering with Twilio SendGrid, it's been able to deliver a 99.5% deliverability rate and 91.3% inbox rate — performance rates well above the industry average.

Consider if an email service provider's deliverability will be impacted when it matters most for your company — during the holiday shopping season. If you're looking to have a holiday sending experience devoid of delays or outages, you need to find a provider, like Twilio SendGrid, that offers the dedicated support you need to maintain or improve your send rates.

With Twilio SendGrid, you get:

- The visibility you need to take control of your sender reputation and deliverability
- The support of our expert services team to rethink your sending strategy and get every message to the inbox

Wondering what poor deliverability could be costing your business? | Find out with our free Email Marketing ROI calculator.

Question #2

How can your service scale to match our business needs?

If the number of emails you send varies seasonally (as is the case with most retailers), you need a solution that can seamlessly and reliably support your changing volume. This is particularly relevant during the holiday season when marketing and transactional email activity spikes considerably and your business depends on email more than ever to drive sales.

In 2020, Twilio SendGrid processed:

22 billion	**90 billion**	**1 trillion**
Emails during Cyber Week	Emails per month	Emails annually

But, even though we deliver more than 1 trillion emails a year, that doesn't mean your emails will get lost in the fray. We want our customers to make a meaningful impact with their email programs and we know that success rides on every individual email arriving in your recipients' inboxes. Our optimized mail transfer agent and globally distributed, cloud-based architecture works to get your mail to the inbox even on the busiest sending days.

Question #3

How can your platform help us build digital agility through automation?

There's no denying that automation is the future, and your email strategy needs to keep up. In 2020, COVID-19 accelerated companies' digital communications strategies by an average of 6 years as consumer buying activity moved almost exclusively online — a trend that will only continue to expand in the future. In order for your business to keep its competitive edge, you need the best email technology to continue to reach and engage your customers in new ways and at scale.

With Twilio SendGrid, our Email Automation tool empowers you to create time-saving automation without time-draining complexity. You can easily create personalized experiences, tell stories, and invite conversations in a way that's scalable and relevant to your audiences. From onboarding series to lead nurture campaigns to holiday promotions, you can build personalized email automation in the time it takes to develop your usual one-to-many campaigns.

Knowing you're serving your audience relevant content at the right time in their customer journey can give you the peace of mind and time back in your day to focus on other strategic projects that help achieve your business goals.

Question #4

What collaboration tools do you offer for our internal teams?

A strong ESP won't just benefit your email marketing team — it can streamline how all your teams work together. Creating a seamless experience across marketing and transactional mail requires engagement and maintenance from both marketers and developers, so it's critical the ESP solution you choose is equipped to serve both audiences.

With Twilio SendGrid, cross-team collaboration is seamless and easy, empowering your marketing and development teams to effortlessly build, test, and approve new emails.

Together, your teams can build better emails and experiences for all your customers and prospects. All it takes is the right platform to drive collaboration.

Twilio SendGrid for...	
Marketers	**Developers**
• Easily upload and edit contacts lists	• Quickly and easily integrate with the v3 Web API in 7 different languages
• Confidently personalize email content to your audiences	• Set up emails fast with dynamic transactional templates
• Design and build emails with a drag-and-drop editor or pre-made <u>templates</u>	• Integrate with the Contacts API for programmatic updates to contacts data
• Quickly set up automated drip campaigns or send one-off emails	• Access and edit email templates using HTML, without breaking structural code
• Learn what's working and what can be improved with actionable insights and analytics	

Question #5

How easily can your solution integrate with our other channels to create an omnichannel strategy?
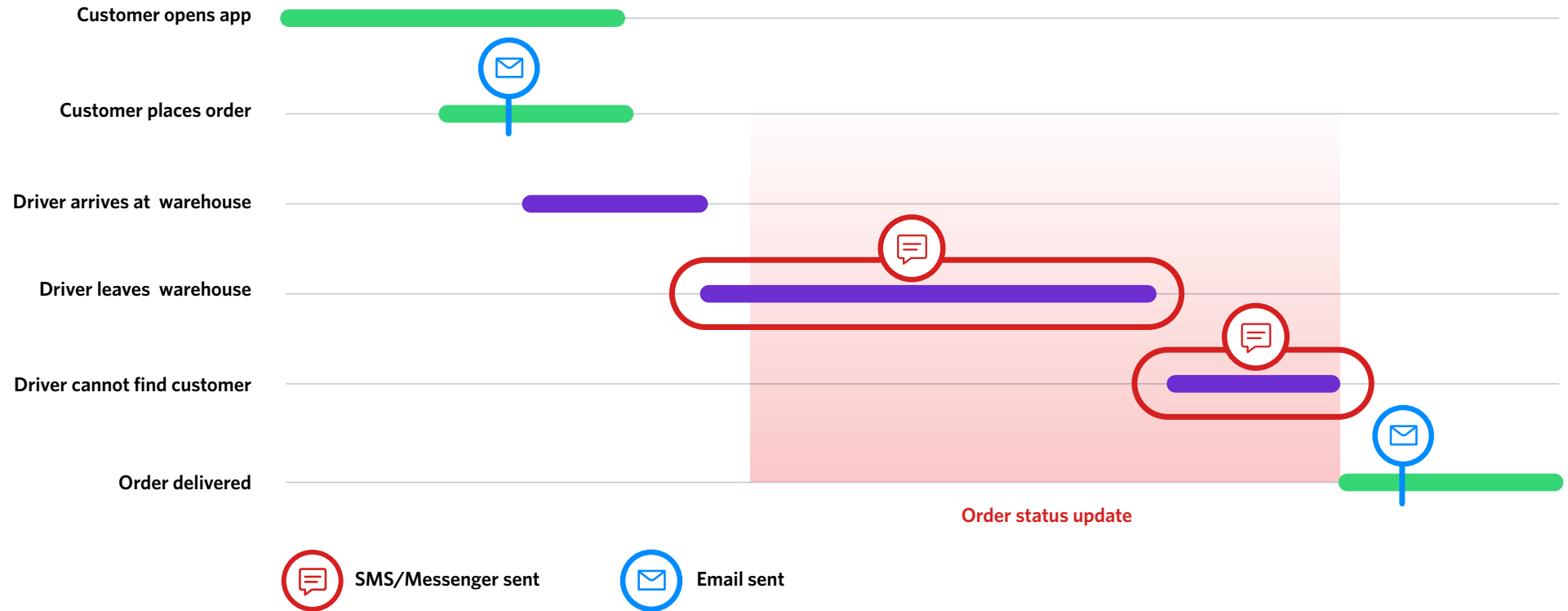
Effective communications strategies can't exist in a vacuum — they need to work together to reach out to customers and give them timely, relevant information across email, SMS, WhatsApp, chat, in-app messaging, or whatever their preferred channel may be.

When looking for an email service provider, you need to think beyond just email. Consider the full picture of your communications strategy and how your different channels can work together to give your customers the best possible experience. After all, retailers should prioritize building a seamless path to purchase for shoppers, as 9 out of 10 consumers say they're more likely to choose a retailer based on how much convenience they offer.

At Twilio, we not only help our customers grow their email programs, but we also empower brands to use:

- SMS
- WhatsApp
- Chat
- Voice
- Video

Here's how your retail business can leverage email and SMS together to keep customers informed on the progress of their order:

Customer opens app

Customer places order

Driver arrives at warehouse

Driver leaves warehouse

Driver cannot find customer

Order delivered

Order status update

SMS/Messenger sent   Email sent

Leveraging all of these channels together to create a smooth omnichannel customer experience. For example, UK-based retailer Marks & Spencer allows consumers worldwide to speak with their business in a variety of ways — in-store, via email, on the phone, through webchat, and by text message. With Twilio, they were able to modernize and enhance their customer's shopping experience with a centralized cloud-based contact center and a sophisticated SMS notification strategy during COVID-19 and beyond.

MARKS &
SPENCER

Question #6

How can your platform help us leverage data to personalize our customer experience?

Using email, you can collect first-party customer data to power personalized messages and supercharge your engagement strategy. With 91 percent of consumers saying they're more likely to shop with brands that provide offers and recommendations that are relevant to them, perfecting personalization can be pivotal for your business.

Leveraging Twilio SendGrid's analytics dashboard, you can learn first-hand what resonates most with your recipients and get to know your contacts with audience insights. From there you can carefully tailor your emails to match your subscribers' preferences and send emails based on behaviors customers take on your website.

Ecommerce giant eBay moved from "batch-and-blast" emails to hand-authored targeting criteria for each of their marketing campaigns – thanks to help from Twilio SendGrid. After building a custom CRM system on top of Twilio SendGrid, the eBay team was able to send real-time offers to their customers based on their past interest in products and how other customers responded to similar offers. These emails performed significantly better than their more general campaigns, winning improvements in both click-through and sales driven by email.

These hyper-personalized communications show your customers you know and understand their unique interests and needs, which is the key to unlocking both omnichannel communication and customer engagement.

Getting started with Twilio SendGrid

Remember, the right email service provider can help uplevel your business's communications strategy. From improving cross-functional collaboration to increasing digital agility to creating the building blocks of an omnichannel communications strategy, partnering with a provider like Twilio SendGrid can help your business better engage your customers and stand out in today's increasingly competitive retail landscape.

Interested in learning more about Twilio SendGrid and finding the right solution for your email program? Speak to a member of our team and start building more meaningful relationships with your customers over email.

Thanks for reading

If you would like to learn more about what Twilio SendGrid can do for your business,
please contact the Twilio sales team or give us a call at 844 814 4627.