



Email x SMS:

Your way to win over holiday shoppers in 2024

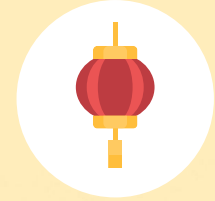


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Introduction: Why you need both email and SMS this holiday season

Black Friday and Cyber Monday are massive opportunities for brands to connect with their audiences, with consumer spending reaching [record highs](#) every year. But as spending grows, so does competition among retailers to stand out.

Here's the good news: Consumers want to hear from you this holiday season.

The key is to meet them where they are – whether that's in their inbox or via mobile messaging – and to do so with purpose.

Our 2023 Global Email Engagement Survey found that email was consumers' top choice for holiday promotions: [68.9% of people](#) prefer it, with social media (22%) and text messaging (19%) rounding out the top three. We also saw brands lean significantly into email during Black Friday and Cyber Monday 2023. Email volumes rose 34% from the previous year and click-through rates hit 13% on Black Friday and 11% on Cyber Monday. SMS also surged, with four billion messages sent during Cyber Week 2023 and a [25,000x increase](#) in RCS messages compared to 18 months prior.

But holiday marketing isn't just about sending more messages – it's about sending the right ones. [71% of customers](#) expect real-time communication with companies and 88% say the experience a company provides is as important as its products. Clearly, **how you communicate is just as important as what you sell.**

This guide will help you strategically use email and SMS (along with other mobile messaging channels) to cut through the clutter, connect with customers, and maybe even boost holiday sales while you're at it.

71%

of customers expect real-time communication with companies.

88%

of people say the experience a company provides is as important as its products.

To begin, let's dive into the first channel you may think you've mastered, but we guarantee there's more to learn: email.



2024 holiday dates to keep in mind

Whether you're sending emails, SMS, or messages via WhatsApp or other channels, keep these high-messaging volume dates in mind, when competition for attention is high:

- **November 22 – 28:** Week leading up to Black Friday.
- **November 29:** Black Friday – historically the biggest shopping day of the year.
- **November 30:** Small Business Saturday.
- **December 2:** Cyber Monday.
- **December 9 – 23:** Pre-Christmas period which starts with Green Monday, considered the second busiest online shopping day of the holiday season.
- **December 22:** Super Saturday – the last Saturday before Christmas that targets last-minute shoppers with one-day sales.
- **December 25:** Christmas Day.

CHAPTER 01

Are you doing email right?



Are you doing email right?

You're probably no stranger to email marketing – in fact, our 2024 Customer Connections report found [92% of businesses](#) already use it to communicate with their customers.

But the real question is: Are you using it right? Email is a powerful tool only if people read it.

In 2023, nearly 70% of people said they prefer email for hearing from brands around Black Friday. And in 2024, Sinch Mailgun found that 75.4% of consumers said email is their preferred way to get promotions, and nearly 75% of consumers would choose email as a preferred channel for receiving transactional messages. Clearly, email isn't just about pushing sales – it's about staying top-of-mind throughout the customer journey.

This section isn't about how to set up an email marketing campaign – you already know that. Instead, it's supposed to make you think: **How can you use email better this holiday season?**

70%

of people prefer email from brands around Black Friday.

75.4%

of people prefer email to get promotions.

75%

of people would chose email as a preferred channel for receiving transactional messages.



Your customers want to hear from you via email

Consumers love email, and the numbers prove it. But if you're among the 8% of businesses not using email marketing, or if you're just sending the odd newsletter every once in a while, here are a few reasons to make email a key channel this holiday season.

- **No character limit:** Unlike SMS or social media which have strict character limits, email allows you to go much more in-depth.
- **Lots of opportunities to engage:** Because you're not limited by the number of links you can send, your subscribers can engage with embedded links, buttons, CTAs, videos, and more.
- **Shareability:** Emails can be easily shared, whether by your audience forwarding to friends or by posting on social media.
- **Great ROI:** Email marketing continues to drive the [highest ROI](#) of any marketing channel.
- **Less intrusive:** Compared to SMS or push notifications, emails are seen as less invasive because consumers can engage on their own terms, at their own pace.



How to ensure your holiday emails land in the inbox

Good email marketing is about more than sending offers – it's about ensuring your messages land in actual inboxes, not spam folders. While deliverability is always important, it's vital during the competitive Black Friday season. Here are a few best practices and strategies from our deliverability experts to keep your messages out of spam.



1. Plan ahead

During Black Friday and Cyber Monday, internet service providers (ISPs) and mailbox providers like Gmail, Outlook, and Yahoo! face a surge in email volume. This high activity can delay their responses to deliverability issues, so it's crucial to plan ahead and avoid last-minute rushes.

Avoiding last-minute emails matters to your customers, too. In 2023, over [half of consumers](#) (56.7%) said they want to hear from brands with holiday promotions well before Black Friday, and 35.5% preferred those messages as soon as possible. Clearly, **starting early is key to staying top of mind.**



2. Warm up your email list gradually

Don't drastically increase your email volume overnight. Jumping from a smaller list of "active" recipients (those who've engaged in the last 3–6 months) to blasting your entire contact list can raise red flags with ISPs, and can lead to your emails being blocked or sent to spam.

Instead, gradually ramp up sending in the months and weeks ahead of the holiday season. Keep volume increases to no more than **25% larger than your maximum daily volume** over the past two weeks. This will help protect your sender reputation and ensure better deliverability.



3. Target active contacts

It's ok to reach out to people in your audience you haven't contacted recently, but do so carefully. Sending to inactive or disengaged contacts can lead to high hard bounce rates, trigger spam filters, and hurt your overall campaign performance.

We recommend keeping your "inactive/disengaged" segment to no more than **10% of the daily volume** you plan to send as a start. If the test goes well, then you can try increasing this percentage the next time you send. But do it slowly!

The only way to optimize your ROI on your active subscribers is by aiming to optimize your email deliverability – this includes abiding by best practices for email like authentication, and sunseting inactive or disengaged contacts.



4. Avoid domain switching before major campaigns

You might be thinking about getting a new domain ahead of the holiday season to start fresh and avoid any pre-existing reputation issues.

However, this can backfire. New domains need time to warm up, so we recommend setting them up well in advance. Start with a few emails daily, focusing on achieving strong deliverability, while gradually increasing volume and monitoring performance to build a strong reputation.



5. Don't send too many emails

During the holidays, many brands not only expand the list of contacts they target with their campaigns, but also increase their email cadence and sending frequency. If that's something you're planning to do, be mindful of inbox noise and don't overwhelm your subscribers with too many messages in a short period of time.

It's okay to increase frequency, but you need to provide valuable content that's worth the recipient's time and attention. Otherwise, you risk being flagged as spam and hurting your reputation.



6. Choose your "From" address wisely

Black Friday and the holidays see a massive uptick in phishing, so choose your "From" address wisely. Use a clear and recognizable sender name – whether this is your company name, a person's name, or a combination like "Alice from Company" to help recipients quickly identify you. You can test different sender names before the holidays, and consider adding a branded image to further authenticate your sender name.



7. Use email to complement your other channels

Email is crucial, but it shouldn't be your only marketing channel, just as SMS shouldn't be either. Consider how SMS, RCS, WhatsApp, and other channels can enhance your strategy – while email can tell your story in detail, SMS can provide immediate, punchy updates. By combining these channels, you can create a cohesive and complementary experience for your audience.

Catch up on the industry benchmarks and get expert advice on inbox placement in [The state of email deliverability in 2024](#) from Sinch Mailgun.

Checklist for sending better email campaigns

Now that we've gone through a few best practices to make sure your emails reach the inbox, here are a few other key things to check off before you hit "send."



Create intentional content

- Is your email meaningful, relevant, and personalized?
- Are you segmenting contacts by demographics, preferences, or purchase behaviors and delivering custom campaigns?



Avoid spam filters

- Have your customers signed up for your email list and are they expecting this message?
- Do you have DNS records in place for [email authentication](#)?
- Can contacts easily unsubscribe and manage their email preferences?
- Are you monitoring [spam complaints](#) and keeping them well below 0.3%?



Segment based on engagement

- Have you prioritized active, engaged contacts?
- Is your "inactive/disengaged" segment no more than 10% of your daily send volume?



Preview and test

- Have you checked to make sure emails display well across devices and inboxes?
- Are they optimized for dark mode?
- Do all links work, and have you corrected any spelling errors?



Conduct a seed test

- Have you sent your campaign to a seed list to monitor inbox placement and catch deliverability issues?



Unsubscribe link

- Is there an unsubscribe link in every marketing message?
- If you're a bulk sender (sending 5000 or more emails at once), have you implemented [one-click unsubscribe](#) to meet 2024 inbox requirements?



Spotlight: Improve inbox placement with Sinch Mailgun

Sending emails isn't enough – you need to make sure they land in the inbox. Sinch Mailgun allows you to send emails through a reliable and scalable email infrastructure, and it also offers innovative tools and insights to make landing in the inbox easier.

Try [Mailgun Optimize](#) to access seed testing, email previews, validations, and other deliverability features to improve inbox placement overall.

[Discover Mailgun Optimize](#)

CHAPTER 02

Is SMS the way to stand out?



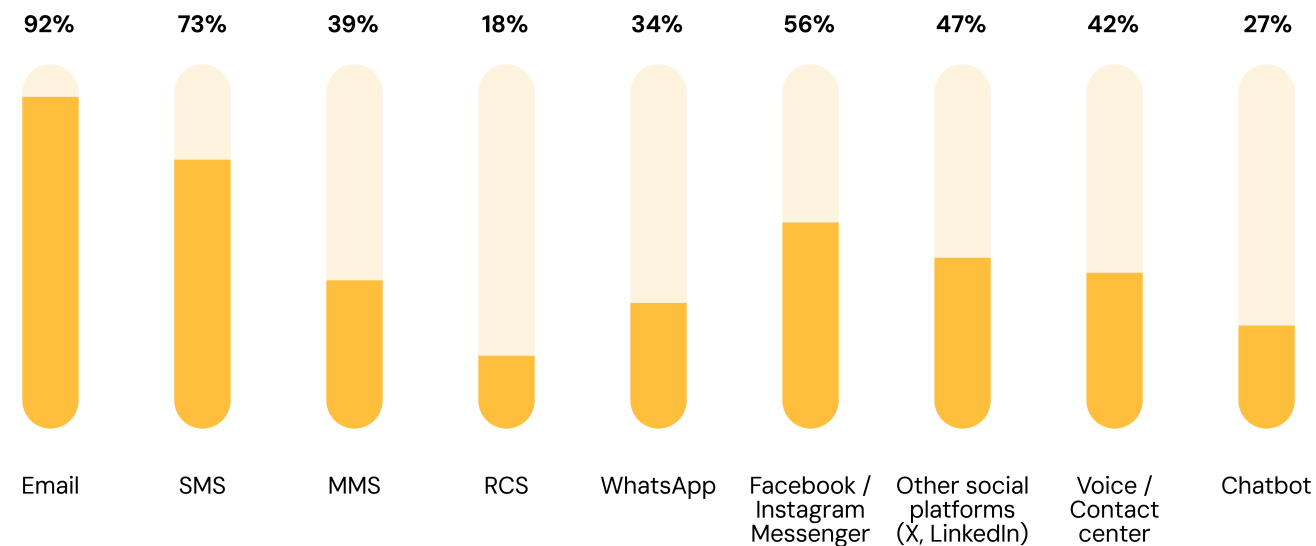
Is SMS the way to stand out?

If you're looking to really get noticed, using email alone won't cut it. In 2024, our [Customer Connections report](#) found **the best way to reach consumers is to use both email and SMS for promotions and transactional messages.**

And this kind of approach is proven to boost results, with cross-channel strategies driving [6.6 times more purchases per user](#) and a 46% increase in repeat buyers.

Our Customer Connections report also includes insights from U.S. businesses. When asked how they reach customers, 92% of business respondents said they use email and 73% said they use SMS. No other channel comes close to these two.

How businesses reach customers



The bottom line? Adding SMS and mobile messaging channels to your holiday marketing mix can help keep your brand top of mind – and help keep your customers coming back.



When we say “mobile messaging channels,” we’re talking about more than just text messaging. Think of the apps you use to chat with friends and family – those same familiar, secure platforms can be powerful ways to connect with your customers. Check out details of a few different channels below:

[SMS and MMS](#)

[Rich Communication Services \(RCS\)](#)

[WhatsApp](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Apple Messages for Business \(AMB\)](#)

What people really think about mobile messaging

So, what do consumers think about mobile messaging? In 2023, our research showed that [35.6%](#) showed interest in getting promotional messages via mobile channels. And by 2024, we found that SMS was the [top mobile channel of choice](#) for U.S. consumers.

For a business, SMS and mobile messaging might be the best choice to get messages to subscribers because of their potential for engagement, immediacy, and reach.

Here's what we mean:

- **Immediacy:** SMS messages are delivered almost instantly and [65% of mobile phone owners](#) will read a text message within five minutes of receiving it.
- **High engagement:** SMS has open rates of over 90% and an average CTR of 19%.
- **Conversational:** SMS and mobile messaging apps allow real-time, two-way conversations, which is crucial when [60% of consumers](#) like having the ability to text businesses back.
- **Reach:** [WhatsApp](#) has over two billion active users; [RCS](#) has over one billion active users; and SMS reaches every mobile phone on the planet.

And when you send messages via [Conversation API](#), you can send messages through over 17 different mobile channels with SMS as a reliable backup. SMS doesn't require your subscribers to have a data plan or internet connection, meaning your messages can reach anyone, at any time.

90%

open rate for SMS.

60%

of consumers like having the ability to text businesses back.



Best practices for adding SMS to your marketing strategy

SMS goes beyond instant updates to delivering real value to your customers. Just like with email, ensuring your messages reach the right people takes some planning. Here are a few best practices and strategies from our mobile messaging experts to get you started and make sure your campaigns have impact.



1. Plan ahead

Before you start any creative Black Friday campaign, you'll need to clarify your objectives. Knowing exactly what you want to achieve – and on which channel you want to achieve it – will keep your efforts focused, help align your team, and ultimately help you prove value.

Here are a few strategic objectives you could consider for your first holiday campaign:

- Drive website traffic
- Increase sales with personalized offers
- Digitize product catalogs
- Promote a newly launched product
- Streamline the purchase process

Start planning your campaign at least three months in advance. The more organized you are, the more likely you'll stand out during the holiday rush.

If you're sending SMS in the U.S., planning ahead also involves making sure your [IODLC campaigns](#) are set up well in advance of any holiday send event. This helps you maintain a good sender reputation for the future.



2. Start with a quality subscriber list

To make sure your campaign will be successful, you need to first build a subscriber list of people who have explicitly opted in for your messages. Remember, agreeing to receive transactional SMS updates doesn't automatically mean customers are open to promotional content.

Keep this in mind: Sinch Mailgun's Email and the customer experience 2024 report found that nearly [46% of consumers](#) opt in for texts to get special offers or one-time discounts. You can grow your list by using opt-in forms, promotions, in-store signups, or even email marketing, and offer perks like discounts or early access.

And, of course, make sure you comply with local regulations for each country you're messaging, and always make it easy for people to opt out. Check in with your internal team before you get started with any messaging program.



3. Be mindful of peak sending hours

If you're planning to send promotional SMS on busy holiday days, avoid peak times (9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.). Message networks can be congested during this time, so send before or after this window to prevent delivery delays.

It's also a good idea to not send SMS or MMS messages at the top of the hour, as that's when Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) are busiest. While some research [suggests](#) around noon at Thursdays might be the best time to send messages, we recommend testing and learning from your audience's habits to find the right timing.



4. Watch your message length for SMS and file size for MMS

While it may be tempting to write a lot, remember that mobile messages need to be quick and to the point. Each SMS message is limited to 160 characters, so longer messages will be split into multiple texts, which could hurt readability and increase costs.

If you're using MMS, you also need to make sure your file size isn't too big. We recommend keeping images under 300 KB, and videos under 25 seconds.

Other mobile messaging channels don't have the same character limit and allow for more engaging features like images, buttons, and carousels, but you should still keep your messages succinct and to-the-point to hold attention.



5. Consider message frequency

Over [26% of people](#) we surveyed in 2024 said that receiving communications too frequently would make them less likely to buy from a company. We recommend initiating a **maximum of one to three SMS a week**.

If you're ever in doubt about whether to send a message, think about it from your audience's perspective:

- Does it genuinely add value?
- Is it time-sensitive?

If you answered, "yes," to both questions, craft your message by considering what would grab your attention and enhance your overall experience.



6. Consider your messaging infrastructure

For a retail enterprise, having a customizable [SMS API](#) in place is one of the most beneficial steps to take to get ready for Black Friday. It will help you work smarter and ensure you're sending time-sensitive communications at the right time, every single time. Look for comprehensive APIs, like REST and SMPP, developer support, and clear documentation.

When you're looking for an SMS provider, you should make sure they can handle the volume of messages you plan to send without sacrificing service quality. Avoid grey routes and opt for a provider committed to best practices.



7. Go omnichannel

SMS is great for sending promotions around the holidays. And adding other channels like [RCS and WhatsApp](#) can help you include content like images and videos.

When it comes to adding messaging to your holiday marketing mix, think strategically about how SMS and other messaging channels can complement your email strategies, particularly for time-sensitive promotions. Integrating these channels can significantly boost your campaign's impact.

Checklist for sending an SMS campaign

Before you're ready to send, let's go over a few key things to ensure everything's in check for your mobile messaging campaign.

- ✓ **Get consent**
 - Have these people specifically consented to receive this type of message from you on this mobile channel?
- ✓ **Remember opt-out instructions**
 - Does every message have clear opt-out (STOP) text?
- ✓ **Make sure you've personalized your message**
 - Do you address your audience directly using their first name?
 - Is this relevant content that speaks directly to each person on your list?
- ✓ **Keep it simple**
 - Do you have one clear call-to-action in your message?
- ✓ **Provide value**
 - Does the message provide clear value, like a discount or timely reminder?
 - Is the message's content [SHAFT-free](#)?
- ✓ **Timing and frequency**
 - Is the timing of your message appropriate for your audience?
- ✓ **Send a test**
 - Have you sent yourself a test message to make sure everything looks good, is free of typos, and all links work?
 - If you're including a discount code or offer, have you made sure it works properly?



Spotlight: RCS messaging

Rich Communication Services (RCS) is set to become a strong alternative to SMS this holiday season. RCS combines SMS reach with rich, interactive messaging including buttons and carousels, leading to three- to seven- times higher click-through rates and up to 45 seconds of engagement.

Brands like [Picard](#) and [EasyPark](#) are already using RCS to get ahead. Check out the full potential of [RCS messaging for retailers](#).

[Discover RCS messaging](#)

CHAPTER 03

How to combine email and SMS



How to combine email and SMS

Whether you're an email marketer venturing into SMS or a mobile marketer looking to enhance your email efforts, mastering both channels can give you a competitive edge.

Here are a few use cases for both channels.



When to use SMS

- **Building awareness:** Share newsletters, blogs, customer testimonials, and more.
- **Nurturing leads:** Convert subscribers with welcome emails, product highlights, and personalized offers.
- **Onboarding new customers:** Welcome new customers with step-by-step guides, videos, or forms.
- **Promoting events:** Announce events and share sneak peeks.
- **Transactional messages:** Nearly [75% of consumers](#) prefer email for transactional messages, making it ideal for shipping confirmations and tracking updates.



When to use email

- **Hyper-personalized promotions:** Send offers based on customer behavior.
- **Discounts and flash sales:** Notify customers about time-sensitive deals and offers.
- **Customer loyalty programs:** Reward loyalty with instant rewards, discounts, and reminders.
- **Customer surveys and feedback:** Quickly get feedback and insights.
- **Contests and giveaways:** Use a keyword that participants can text to your number to enter.

1.

Making the channels work together

Here are some winning strategies for using email and SMS together:



In a retail sales campaign:

- Send an email a week before Black Friday to build anticipation, and then follow up with an SMS right before the sale.



To remind people of their abandoned cart:

- Send an email 30 minutes after items are left in a cart. If there's no response, follow up with an SMS four hours later, and create urgency by saying the items will be removed, the sale is ending, or stock is running low.



For transactional purposes:

- While email may be best for sending order receipts, try sending SMS for delivery notifications. When a gift is sitting outside someone's door, they'll know ASAP.



For list building:

- BFCM is the perfect time to offer exclusive rewards for opting in to both texts and emails. Use your email list to drive text sign-ups, and vice versa.



The right combination of email and mobile marketing can help you connect with your audience in more meaningful ways. Here are some resources for both email and SMS to help you take advantage of both.



Email resources

- **Deliverability tips:** [Avoiding the spam folder this holiday season](#)
- **Timing insights:** [The best time to send holiday emails](#)
- **Inbox strategies:** [5 tips to land in the inbox and stand out on Black Friday and Cyber Monday](#)
- **Customer satisfaction:** [Building customer satisfaction during Black Friday with email](#)
- **Open rates:** [The magic behind successful email open rates](#)
- **The ROI of email:** [How deliverability impacts your ROI](#)



Email x SMS resources

- **Multi-channel strategy:** [Cover your bases with email and SMS for transactional messages](#)
- **Transactional messages:** [The power of email and SMS for transactional messages](#)



Mobile messaging resources

- **Timing strategies:** [Timing is everything: Strategies for overcoming BFCM messaging delays](#)
- **SMS marketing:** [How to use Black Friday SMS marketing to build trust and engagement](#)
- **Mobile marketing:** [10+ examples of campaigns to inspire you](#)
- **Tips and examples:** [Capturing Black Friday attention with mobile messaging](#)
- **About SMS:** [SMS vs MMS: Key differences and when to use each](#)
- **About RCS:** [RCS vs. SMS: How are they different?](#)
- **Explore WhatsApp:** [WhatsApp Business API: The ultimate 2024 guide](#)



More Black Friday resources

- **Infrastructure prep:** [How to prepare your infrastructure for Black Friday](#)
- **Marketing ideas:** [12 engaging Black Friday marketing ideas to drive sales](#)
- **Webinar:** [Black Friday email deliverability strategies](#)
- **Avoid disasters:** [Black Friday email disasters and how to avoid them](#)
- **Marketing calendar:** [Dates you shouldn't miss in 2024](#)

How can Sinch help

If you're focusing on email, SMS, or both around Black Friday, your strategy likely involves sending timely, high-volume messages. If that's the case, you'll need a provider with a proven ability to handle large message volumes while also being able to support your long-term needs. Here's how Sinch, the Customer Communications Cloud, can help you achieve success this holiday season. Backed by a global Super Network, Sinch powers secure, scalable communications across messaging, voice, and email – simply and reliably. No more juggling multiple complex solutions and partners. The result? Meaningful customer connections.

Our solutions encompass:



Messaging

Build flawless mobile experiences with solutions for SMS, MMS, RCS, and all the leading messaging apps.



Email

Make email comms a breeze with our powerful, intuitive email solutions, and build connected experiences in no time.



Voice

Give customers easy, reliable options to reach you with scalable, toll-free numbers and service, or a local presence in multiple markets.



Conversation API

Keep things simple and connect multiple messaging channels with one integration for a seamless omnichannel conversational experience.



Verification tools

Enhance app security with a purpose-built verification solution.



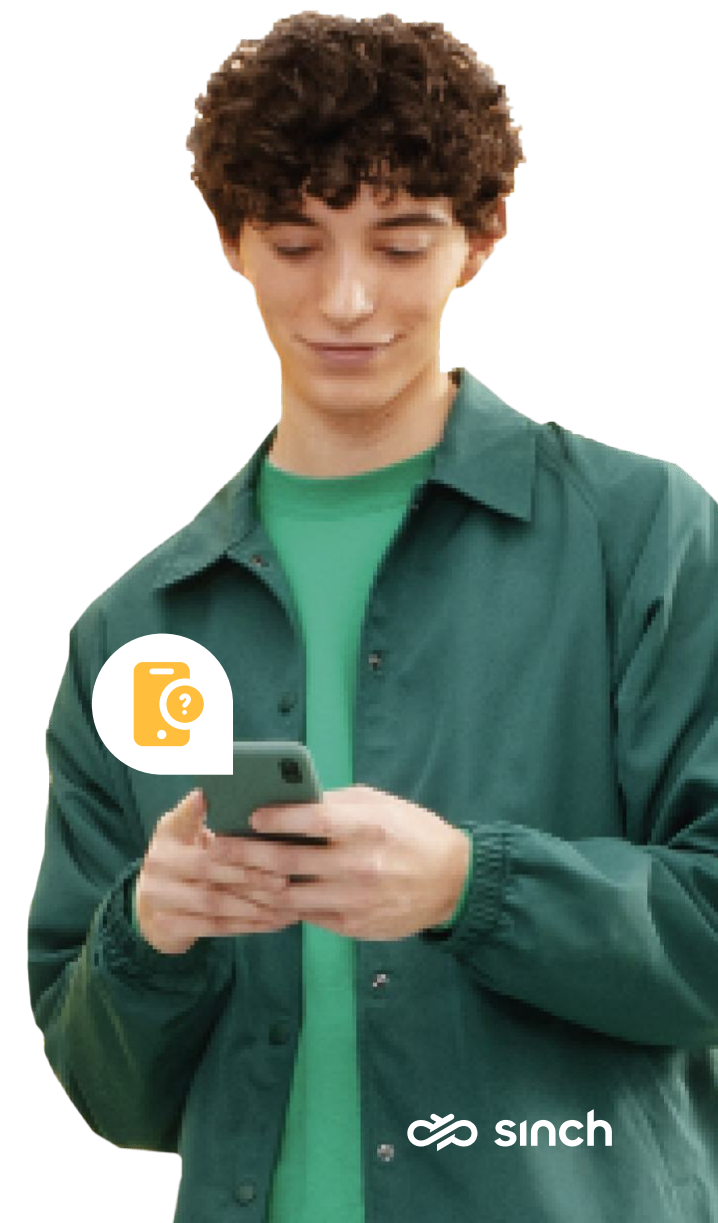
Sinch AI

Scale personalized conversations, automate content creation, enable advanced message analytics, and more.



Omnichannel contact center

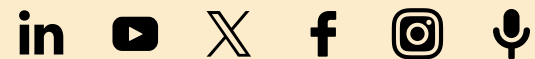
Deliver a unified customer service experience across voice, video, chat, messaging, and email with our all-in-one cloud contact center solution.





The Customer Communications Cloud

Sinch is pioneering the way the world communicates. More than 150,000 businesses — including many of the world's largest tech companies — rely on Sinch's Customer Communications Cloud to improve customer experience through mobile messaging, voice, and email.



Let us help
you succeed
— talk to us

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