

HOW SECURE MESSAGING WITH RCS BUILDS CUSTOMER TRUST



Customer trust has never been more crucial to business success. According to Zendesk, 83% of consumers say they will not do business with brands they don't trust. Although customers appreciate the convenience of interacting with businesses through short message services (SMS) text messages, the rise in text-based scams and phishing attempts has compromised their trust in this communications channel.

Businesses need to keep the convenience and immediacy of text messaging, while providing secure messaging that protects customers and earns their valuable confidence. Rich communication services (RCS) messaging, which is available to Android users and Apple customers using iOS 18.1 or better*, makes it possible to achieve both goals at once. Here's what businesses need to know about RCS, how it can increase customer trust and brand authenticity, and the many other ways it can enhance customer communications.

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The trust challenge in modern business messaging

When it comes to customer engagement, businesses have two major challenges to address. First, they have to make sure their messages reach customers. Second, when messages arrive, they must be presented in a way that increases customer trust while enhancing security. Traditional SMS messaging is widespread, and as a result, most customers know how to use it, but it has become increasingly vulnerable to fraud and abuse.

Seventy-five percent of organizations worldwide were targeted by smishing attacks in 2023, according to a Statista survey. As generative AI makes it even easier for cyber criminals to launch their deceptive texting campaigns, smishing could become even more rampant. Businesses and consumers alike have reason to be concerned about how to maintain trust in this environment.

Unfortunately, because SMS doesn't provide built-in authentication methods, businesses can't easily prove they are who they say they are when reaching out to customers via traditional text messages. Since SMS text messages are short in length, it can be hard to distinguish a somewhat cryptic but legitimate message from a fraudulent one. If your company is sending a one-way message, then customers might see your company name (also known as an alphaname). But if you're using two-way communications, they only see a short code or a phone number in the sender field. Accordingly, they might not readily trust that the message came from an authentic source.

Customers are weary of having to play detective and figure out whether each message they receive is the real deal. They're less likely to click on links arriving via SMS due to security concerns. Customers want immediate verification of each message they receive, they expect visual confirmation of the sender's identity, and they seek assurance that their conversations are secure. This is especially true for exchanges involving purchases, personal information, account updates, or financial transactions.

If customers can't easily determine whether a message is authentic, they're likely to delete it or flag it as spam. Or, at best, they'll simply leave it unread. Accordingly, businesses need a messaging channel that provides robust security features while preserving the immediacy and convenience that made SMS such a popular form of communication.

RCS enhances security and trust in customer communications

Rich communications is the new default messaging standard that mobile carriers are rolling out worldwide to modernize how businesses communicate with their customers. Unlike specialized messaging apps that customers have to download and learn how to use, RCS comes built right into their phone's default messaging app. Already serving more than 1 billion users globally and rapidly growing, RCS is quickly becoming the natural way for businesses to connect with customers via the messaging channel they use every day.

Rich communication services, an enriched form of business messaging, can directly address these urgent security and trust issues by completely changing how businesses and their branding appear on customers' mobile devices. Instead of relying on numerical codes that aren't meaningful to customers and can be faked, RCS messages arrive with full business branding that is verified by mobile carriers — trusted intermediaries that customers already rely on for their communications. This carrier-verified branding includes business names, logos, and sender verification badges that confirm authenticity.

RCS uses an enterprise-grade secure messaging infrastructure based on a new global standard. This infrastructure includes a verified sender system that helps reduce smishing fraud. When a business wants to begin messaging customers using RCS, it must first undergo a careful verification process. This best practice creates a trusted environment in which customers can recognize that an incoming message is legitimate without having to scrutinize it for signs of fraud or deception.

Of course, security involves more than branding and authentication. That's why RCS also supports end-to-end encryption* for messages, which helps shield customer conversations from unauthorized third parties even if they fall into the wrong hands. Businesses that handle personal data or conduct transactions will find this improvement over SMS especially valuable.

In addition to powerful encryption, RCS offers embedded security features that add layers of protection. Businesses can include interactive buttons that link to verified URLs, allowing customers to safely engage with their content. These buttons can be programmed to clearly indicate their purpose, such as to

RCS business advantages go beyond security

Although businesses already have a strong incentive to improve trust and security in their customer communications, RCS offers business benefits beyond secure messaging. RCS includes rich media capabilities, such as high-quality images, video, and interactive carousels that showcase products, that make messages much more appealing to customers.

These enhanced visual features also provide a better customer experience, because they give customers a clear sense of their options without requiring them to switch between applications or click on a link to see more information. Rich media elements conveniently arrive within the native messaging app on their phone, saving time and effort involved with decision-making.

RCS further streamlines the customer journey by providing tappable buttons for immediate actions in place of the links that customers once had to manually copy and paste or the phone numbers they had to manually dial. With that friction out of the way, customers can quickly schedule appointments, buy products and services, or access support with a single tap.

Businesses can accelerate these conversations even further by offering suggested replies that customers can tap so they don't have to write out what they need or want by hand. What's more, with built-in calendar integration, customers can easily add events or reminders to their digital calendars instead of manually creating them.

As customers take these actions, RCS makes it possible to collect and analyze the resulting behavioral data to better understand the customer experience. While SMS only confirms that a message has been delivered — often leaving a business in the dark as to how the customer perceived it or how the information was used — RCS offers read receipts, engagement metrics, and interaction tracking.

With these insights, businesses better understand which messages resonate with customers and how they engage with different types of content, and can then optimize their strategies accordingly. RCS messaging's flexibility allows businesses to deliver everything from simple secure notifications to

RCS builds customer trust and delivers a better experience

Customers love the convenience of texting with businesses, but fraud and scams have them thinking twice about whether they can trust the messages arriving on their phones. Businesses need to find a message channel that improves trust and security, so customers can have peace of mind that their conversations and the information shared in them are protected from bad actors.

RCS messaging's verified sender information, authentic branding, and encrypted messages address the key challenges around customer trust in communications. It also provides native interactive features that deliver a more satisfying and engaging customer experience, along with sophisticated analytics that can help businesses continually improve their customer communications.

Now that Apple users with iOS 18.1 or better** on their devices have access to RCS, worldwide adoption is expected to increase by 900 million over the next two years, reaching 2.1 billion active users globally.. Businesses that embrace this secure messaging platform have an opportunity to build stronger and more secure relationships with their customers, all while delivering a better experience to them.

Discover how Vonage Rich Communication Services can help you create reliable and meaningful conversations with your customers.