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Two stunning RCS success stories

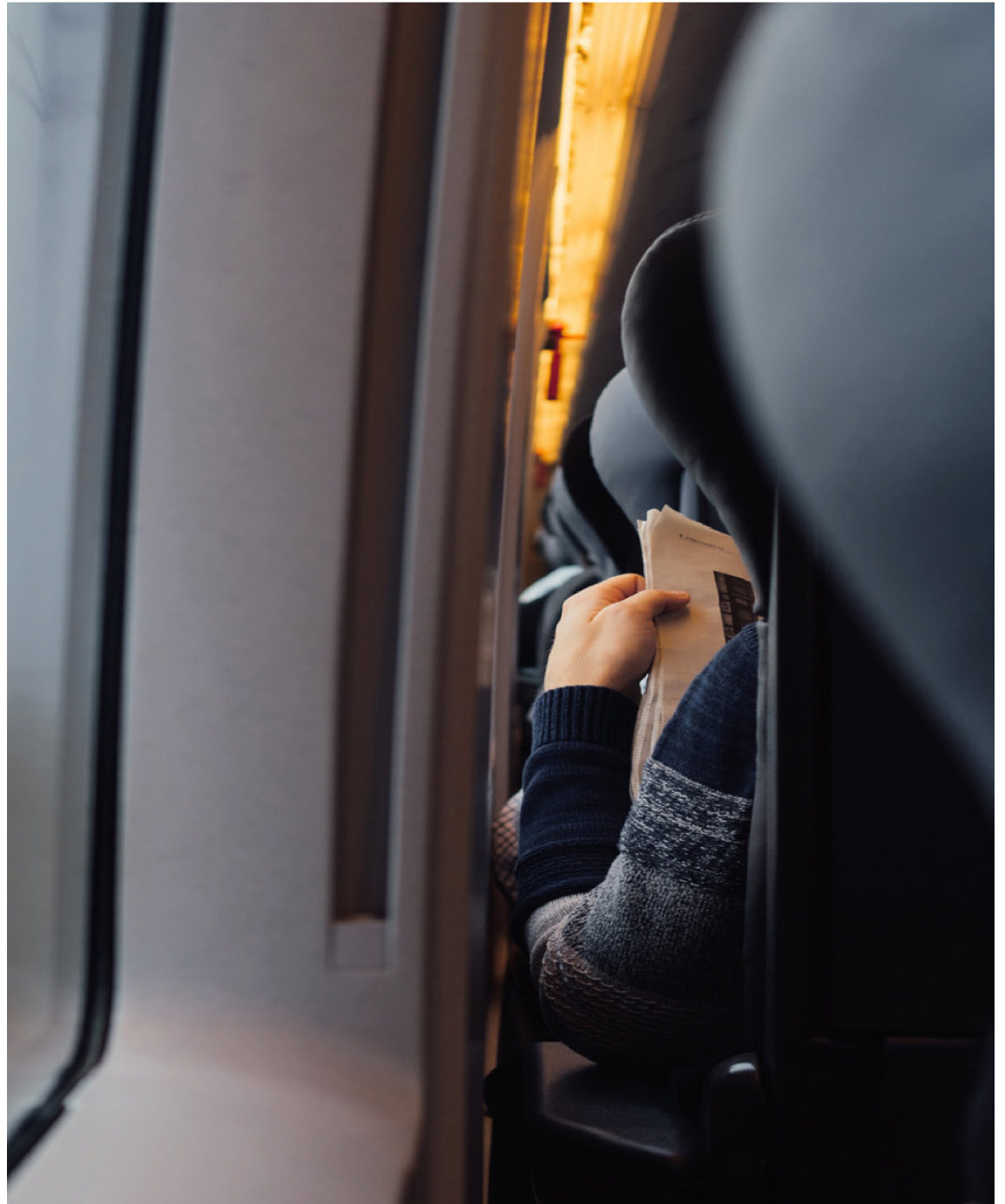
Better engagement and a big sales lift – how pioneering RCS rollouts by Virgin Trains and Subway have rocked the business world



For years now, CX experts have been shouting from the rooftops about the interaction potential of RCS Business Messaging.

But now data from two of the first RCS rollouts is here. And it turns out even the loudest RCS optimists wouldn't have dared to predict the uplifts in engagement and sales conversions.

Here are two game-changing RCS stories from two RCS pioneers – the UK's Virgin Trains and international sandwich chain Subway.



Virgin Trains

Connecting with customers

Virgin Trains are famous in the UK for their customer service. They've long worked hard to dream up and deliver pleasing experiences to passengers at every stage of their journeys.

That's why SMS has been such an important channel for the business. It lets them offer information and help at specific moments in specific places. To Virgin Trains, small touches are everything.

The RCS rollout

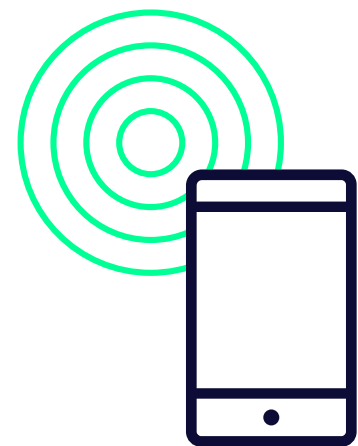
In 2018, the Virgin Trains team began thinking about how they could use RCS Business Messaging to help their customers. They partnered with Vodafone and OpenMarket to become the world's first company to roll out an RCS communications program on a commercial basis.

As part of the program, RCS messages were sent to customers' smartphones 10 minutes before they arrived into London's Euston Station. The messages delivered latest updates for underground train services, complete with buttons to find out more information.

Passengers fell for the experience immediately. Every single person that fed back awarded the service a five-star rating. Not one chose to opt out.

Impressive.

Check out this [case study](#) on how Virgin Trains customers get to their train seats ahead of rush-hour crowds – thanks to platform notifications sent via SMS.



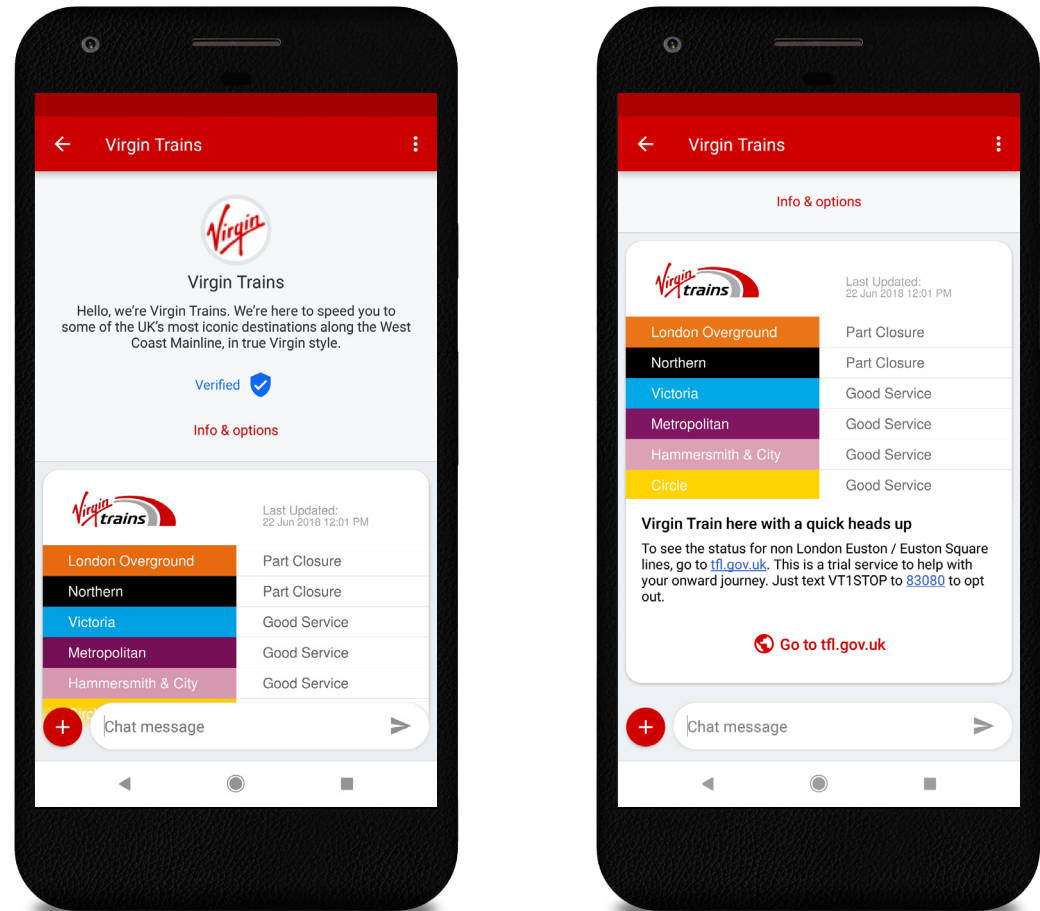
No need to wait for full adoption

Virgin Trains have long known there was little point in waiting for every phone to become RCS compatible, or for every mobile operator to facilitate the service. Every RCS message they send through OpenMarket simply reverts to an SMS format for passengers that can't yet receive it.

RCS uplift

As well as reverting any RCS message to an SMS format, OpenMarket can automatically transform a message from UP2.0 (the current version of RCS) to UP1.0 (its predecessor). This means even older RCS phones get an enhanced experience over SMS.

John Sullivan, Chief Information Officer at Virgin Trains, couldn't be more excited about the channel's potential. He said: "My big ask is for the other mobile operators: Can they get on board with RCS? Following the surprise and delight from our customers, we just want to make sure we continue that momentum. We want to push it as hard as we possibly can. We are now an absolute believer in RCS because our customers love it."



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John Sullivan, Chief Information Officer at Virgin Trains

Subway and RCS

A marketing leap

Subway's story is very different from Virgin Trains'. The global sandwich chain teamed up with mobile comms specialist Mobivity – an OpenMarket partner – to test the effectiveness of RCS for customer promotions.

The team sent one group of customers two offers via SMS, then sent another group the same two offers via RCS. The wording for the offers – a two-sandwich deal and a \$20 meal deal – matched exactly, but the branded RCS version included interactive buttons and product images.

The conversion rate was an incredible **140 PER CENT HIGHER** than SMS for the two-sandwich offer, and **51 PER CENT** higher for the meal deal.

Subway were already a huge advocate of SMS marketing – and had permission from millions of their customers to receive deals via SMS. But RCS blew SMS out of the water.



Conversion rate

140%

higher than SMS

Engaging everywhere

The Subway team ran the initial campaigns in Los Angeles, Houston, and Cincinnati, before expanding into more US markets. Wherever campaigns went, the results were similar.

They used RCS to practice fundamental marketing strategies with rich content. They also experimented with RCS to make it easy for customers to order and reorder food.

Subway chief digital officer Lisa Ganelli has lauded the response rates as “blow-the-doors-off” impressive. She said: “As marketers, we know that images usually sell more and lift conversion rates, and that you can't do any of that in SMS. Consumers don't have to download anything to get that graphical interface since RCS lives within the native messaging app. The only thing that would have surprised me is if it didn't have a higher response rate.”



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Lisa Ganelli, Chief Digital Officer at Subway

The final takeaways

The two campaigns shared some similar overall findings. Data from both revealed the time between users receiving an RCS message, then reading it, was typically under two minutes.

In a sense this is no surprise. SMS has long been known for its high opening rates – with a reported 90% of messages read within three minutes. However, this opening-rate data has always been gathered from customer surveys, as it can't be extracted from the SMS channel itself.

RCS, on the other hand, provides great insights into delivery and read data. So for the first time, the Subway and Virgin Trains RCS campaigns could demonstrate that almost all messages were opened in under two minutes.

No user training required

Despite the fact RCS is a brand new technology, neither Virgin Trains or Subway customers required user training or instructions. And opt outs were non-existent. The campaigns demonstrate that RCS programs can be rolled out with no customer action (in the form of an app download) or effort required. There is zero user friction. Few technologies can make this claim.

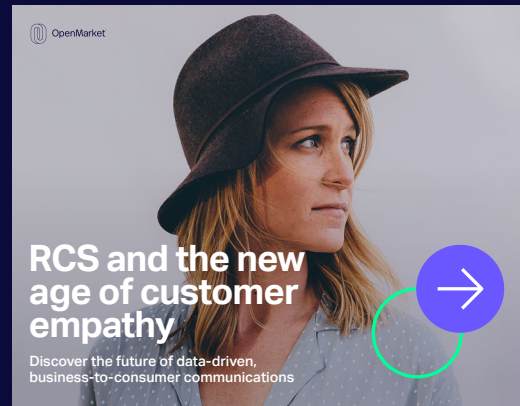
Factor in the SMS fallback feature, and there is little reason not to start exploring what RCS can do for your company.



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We're OpenMarket

We help the biggest brands in the world use mobile messaging to connect with their customers in the moments when it counts. When they need to be there and be responsive in real-time. When customer experience isn't just a buzzword: it's an obsession.



For more on RCS, [check out our RCS ebook](#). Or simply [get in contact](#) for a chat. We'd be happy to help in any way we can.