

zimHosts Launches FREE SMS Service

A FREE text messaging service enabling users in or outside Zimbabwe to send free text messages to mobile phone networks in Zimbabwe using any web-enhanced devices such as computers and mobile phones has been launched.

Free SMS Zimbabwe, a Zimbabwean company with its new offices in Harare and UK, said users of the platform available on www.text.co.zw can text directly to any Econet, NetOne and or Telecel numbers with no charges being incurred on both sides.

The recipients of the text messages do not need to be online to get the messages as it is delivered straight to their mobile phone and can reply directly to the senders phone number reflecting on their screen . Currently users are automatically allocated 10 FREE texts a day (3650 texts a year) with a plan to increase to UNLIMITED in the next couple of weeks.

FREE SMS Zimbabwe managing director Pearson Pfavayi said the service, which would be supported by advertising, would help Zimbabweans frustrated with paying for text messages stay in touch with their families and friends for no charge.

"We believe in bridging the technological gap between first world and third world countries, hence offering the FREE service to upset the pricy texting in Zimbabwe" said Pfavayi, a consultant IT Lecturer and Project Manager for zimHosts.com Webdesign and WebHosting

"This FREE service is sustained through advertising thus an opportunity for advertisers. With a ratio of 6:1 of mobile phone users to PC users in Zimbabwe and following the introduction of the 3G network and the fibre optic, the mobile web is growing at an alarming rate and companies do not want to miss targeting this new emerging market."

Pfavayi said users would also be able to send bulk text messages at one go as well as SMS any international mobile phone numbers including in South Africa, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Angola, Namibia all these at 3cents/msg (1.8p/msg). Pfavayi who is in Zimbabwe to officialise the launch and have investors on board is also in talks with companies to launch an SMS shortcode marketing service and many other features listed on the website.

The company said with potentially thousands of people texting friends and family for free at any given time, companies keen to advertise are guaranteed an extensive potential market for their services and products.

"FREE SMS Zimbabwe allows SMS signature advertising on every outgoing message. Free messages being sent by registered users are limited to 100 characters leaving the 60 (a single message has 160 characters) for commercial advertising," Pfavayi said.

"Companies can then buy this advert space (60 characters) and have advert campaigns sent out to millions of users thus capturing a heterogeneous market. Text messages have a 94 percent read rate and 25- 40% of received texts are always forwarded thus advertisers are guaranteed a high direct read it."

Some of the main benefits of the service to users are:

- Well, its completely FREE for both sender and recipient
- You do not need to be a customer of any of the 3 mobile phone networks (netone, econet or telecel). Anyone in the world is FREE to join, with or without a phone.
- You text directly to your recipients mobile phone, be it netone, econet or telecel

- Recipient does not need to be online to receive the SMS.
- You can set any of your mobile numbers as your sender number so your recipient can reply directly to your mobile phone. You can even set a name eg "Henry" or "ABC Motors" or "DAD" etc which replaces your number as senderID so you are more specific to your recipient.
- You can view delivery reports of sent messages and access all your sent history with the ability to forward or resend the message.
- You can schedule your messages to be sent at a particular date and time after composing
- You can send bulk/multiple sms in one go
- You can create an online address book to store all your contacts
- For those who want to take a step further, you can text any international mobile phone numbers including SA, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Angola, Namibia all at 3cents/msg (apprx 1.8p/msg). More rates from www.etext.co.zw