

### Technology

## SMS the new link to staff

Hospitality companies find efficiencies in using SMS to contact field staff and coordinate shifts.

SMS is not only a popular communication tool for consumer-driven campaigns, but a new business contact tool between companies and their field staff, judging from the growth of companies like FreeRein.

Founded in 1995, FreeRein supplies a SMS messaging portal which enables businesses to contact their staff through SMS from an email, web page or a mobile phone. Optus and Telstra networks first used FreeRein to SMS football scores and weather forecasts to its subscribers and now Australia's largest companies such as Coca-Cola, Kodak, Dulux, Pricewaterhouse and Spotless Catering are embracing the system.

The growth of SMS has been phenomenal in recent years, says FreeRein, and is forecast to continue to grow to more than 5 billion mes-

sages a year in Australia alone.

The benefits of using SMS are:

- Broadcasting messages to multiple workers at the same time;
- Less cost (20 cents), compared to a landline to mobile (\$1);
- Easy message sending procedure through an integrated system;
- Ability to send complex instructions, unlike a pager message;

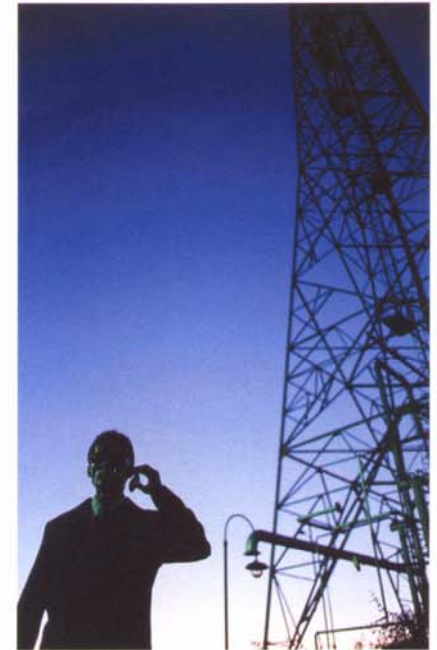
Many hospitality companies are finding SMS a cost-effective and efficient means of co-ordinating their workers out in the field, including casual staff such as chefs and waiters who need to be rostered to cover events and take on last-minute shifts.

"It's great for companies who need to fill casual staff at last-minute notice," says Rohan Lean, managing director of FreeRein. "You can send different messages to thousands of

staff in the database and they can reply straight away to fill in shift gaps, while conventional means may take you days to coordinate the rosters."

The system can send messages to up to 10,000 staff at any one time saving time and money and offering invaluable opportunities for large corporations, catering companies, exhibition organisers during big events such as the Spring Racing Carnival, the Commonwealth Games, or large scale exhibitions.

FreeRein enables companies to send messages from their computer systems (from Outlook), which can be delivered as either an SMS or email depending on what technology the employee has (mobile phone or PDA). The result is substantial savings on call bills and better operational efficiency. Customers are



charged by the volume of messages sent and the system is capable of integrating with backend systems such as rostering systems or escalation systems, which can be programmed to contact different staff during emergency situations if the immediate contact is not available. It can also do cost centre reporting to better manage staff costs.

For more information visit [www.freerein.com.au](http://www.freerein.com.au). - By Pui-Sing Wong