

Business Technology Productivity Tip

Your cell phone, email, and notifications

By: Matthew Moran

One of the great underutilized productivity tools might be right at your fingertips – literally. I'm talking about your cell phone. In particular, the text message capabilities and how they integrate with email. Nothing complicated here, no technical setup, and yet the time savings and smoother communications offered are dramatic.

It is likely that you can begin putting this to use in the next 10 minutes.

Most cell phones and service plans offer text messaging and the ability for you to receive text messages sent from an email address. Instead of the message originating with another phone, someone can use their standard email program (Microsoft Outlook, for instance) and send a text message directly to your phone.

How does this save you time?

Consider the following scenario...

You are out of the office; at a meeting or on the road. An important call comes into your office and is answered by your assistant or other office personnel. Rather than have them call you, potentially interrupting your meeting or requiring you to retrieve a voice mail and/or write an important number down while driving, you can have them send the information directly to your phone via email. It will arrive in your phone as a standard text message.

This is far more accessible during meetings or while driving. It is much easier to glance at a text message during a meeting than it is to excuse yourself to take a call or to retrieve a voice message later. In fact, if they mark the message urgent, my cell phone provider (Verizon) includes a red dot on my phone's display indicating the importance level.

If, in the message, they include the phone number (*or numbers*) of someone you need to call, you will not need to write the numbers down or even type them into your phone. While reading the text message, you only need to press the "Send" button. Your phone will show you any numbers included in the message, allowing you to select one of them and have your phone dial it or save it to memory for later use.

This is a huge time-saver, much safer while driving, and you have a digital record of the message and any necessary phone numbers.

How does it work?

If your cell service allows text message (*they all do these days*), it is likely that you have everything you need. Simply take your phone number, area code included, and add the email address domain of your cellular provider. I've listed several of them in the following table.

If your phone number is: **480-555-1212**, you would use:

Provider Phone message email address

Verizon 4805551212@vtext.com or
4805551212@vzwpx.com (with an image)

T-Mobile 4805551212@tmomail.net

Sprint 4805551212@messaging.sprintpcs.com

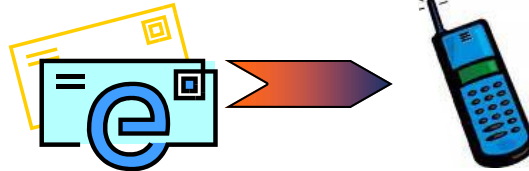
Cingular 4805551212@cingularme.com

ATT 4805551212@mobile.att.net

Nextel 4805551212@messaging.nextel.com

With mergers and the like (*Cingular/ATT*), these may have changed. You should contact your cellular provider to determine the email address to use. Many providers allow you to setup an alias email address too – an email address that is easier to remember than your phone number at: For instance, on Verizon's service, you could make your

phonenumber@vtext.com also receive messages at:
abco@vtext.com. This assumes your company is ABC Co, of course.



Points to consider

- **Phone numbers:** For your phone to be able to recognize phone numbers in the text message, format them as either 10 digits without any spaces or use hyphens to separate areacode-prefix-suffix - as in the following: 555-555-5555. Do not use spaces or periods because your phone may not recognize the number. If they are sending multiple numbers, simply put a space between them.
- **Message Length:** Text messages are often limited to 160 characters. Teach your office personnel to make their messages short and sweet.
- **Format:** Unless you are sending a picture, do not include images. If you are sending an image, attach one image per message. Make sure the person sending the message does not have a picture in their signature.
- **Fees:** These messages typically count as text messages. If you pay for text messages, watch how much you use this feature.

There are a number of other ways this technology can be put to use:

1. Notify an on-call tech support or customer service person. Forward a company email address to whoever is on-call for your company. We use: help@KreativeKnowledge.com
2. Send your Google Calendar or Yahoo Group/Calendar Notifications to your cell phone. **If you use Exchange server, we can help you set this up.**
3. Use an Outlook rule to forward emails from a specific person to your phone.

