

eB2B Playbook

WhatsApp in wholesale

How the global messaging technology
is transforming the way food and drink
wholesale businesses work



hello...

... and welcome to the WhatsApp in Wholesale eB2B Playbook, brought to you in by Mars Wrigley and b2b.store.

We've got our heads together to produce this guide to help you pick your way through one of the most exciting advancements in the food and drink wholesale sector – the growing influence of WhatsApp Business API.

In recent years, we've seen the growing influence of the technology, which was born out of the WhatsApp messaging app that is now the number-one digital communication in the world. Some of the industry's biggest wholesalers have spun up their own channels and shown how WhatsApp can quickly become a pivotal part of their business.

OPPORTUNITY

But that's only the start. As one of the biggest suppliers in the sector and the leading B2B digital solutions provider that specialises in WhatsApp, we're seeing the potential of how much bigger this could become and hearing some of the plans already in the pipeline.

The size of the opportunity isn't exclusively for the big boys. WhatsApp costs and usage are scalable depending on what each business needs and the impact of the high engagement the platform offers can be felt across customer groups of any size.

We've heard your questions and requests for support about WhatsApp Business API, so have created this brochure to help you understand what this version of WhatsApp is, how it works and why it could be so valuable to your business – providing you with what you need to get your own channel up and running.

We hope you find this useful and would love to work with anyone inspired to find out more.

Lauren Johnson

Lauren Johnson

Head of Impulse eCommerce, Mars Wrigley

Rob Mannion

Rob Mannion

CEO, b2b.store

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The WhatsApp opportunity

The scale of WhatsApp's reach highlights how tapping into its engagement potential can grow your business's sales

Nearly **three billion** WhatsApp users in **100+ countries**



80% of UK phone users say WhatsApp is their most regularly used messaging service

Meta reports a **98% read rate** for messages, compared to an average of 22% for emails

More than 94% of total global internet users used or visited chat of messaging apps more than one in the past month

(We Are Social/Meltwater Datareportal 2024)

b2b.store customers reported a **9% spend increase** after receiving a **WhatsApp** message compared to SMS



Meta survey found marketers using messaging see a **58% increase** in leads

75% of people in a Gartner survey say they want businesses to communicate by messaging



Read receipts from users of **b2b.store's WhatsApp** platform have seen **188% higher open rates** compared to the average for email



What the **HELL** is WhatsApp Business API?

There might be a buzz around the technology, but while almost everyone has the free consumer WhatsApp, its more premium equivalent isn't so well known

If you stopped the average person on the street and asked them how many versions of WhatsApp there are, you'd probably be met by a puzzled look.

Because with nearly three billion global users of the free consumer app, that's what most people think of when asked about WhatsApp. Yet there are actually three versions to choose from.

ENHANCED

There's also **WhatsApp Business**, a free downloadable app aimed at SMEs with basic upgrades to sell products in small quantities.

The final one is **WhatsApp Business API**, a service allowing software businesses to build apps of their own to interact with WhatsApp's infrastructure – it's more powerful and gives businesses the chance to harness WhatsApp's huge

captive audience with an enhanced messaging experience.

OPPORTUNITY

When using an app that has been developed to work with the API, businesses can send messages that allow users to do almost anything. From event registration, and buying and paying for products or services, to checking stock compliance and answering surveys, the API provides endless potential for businesses to communicate with its customers.

Each message incurs a fee to send (although customers can receive and interact with them for free) and while it's still gathering pace in the UK, it's already prevalent in the likes of India and Brazil, where WhatsApp rolls out new features first.

“The API provides endless potential for businesses to communicate with its customers”





What are the WhatsApp Business API's main features?

- **SCALE:** It allows for an unlimited number of one-to-one messages to be sent at once
- **CLASSIFICATION:** It classifies messages in three different categories: marketing, customer service, and utility
- **COST:** There is a pence-per-message charge to send content
- **CREDIBILITY:** Anti-spamming features ensure content sent is relevant and bars numbers regularly blocked by users
- **ADAPTABLE:** Has the potential to be adapted for dozens of uses to create an in-message experience that could become a business's hub for customer communication

How can I use WhatsApp?

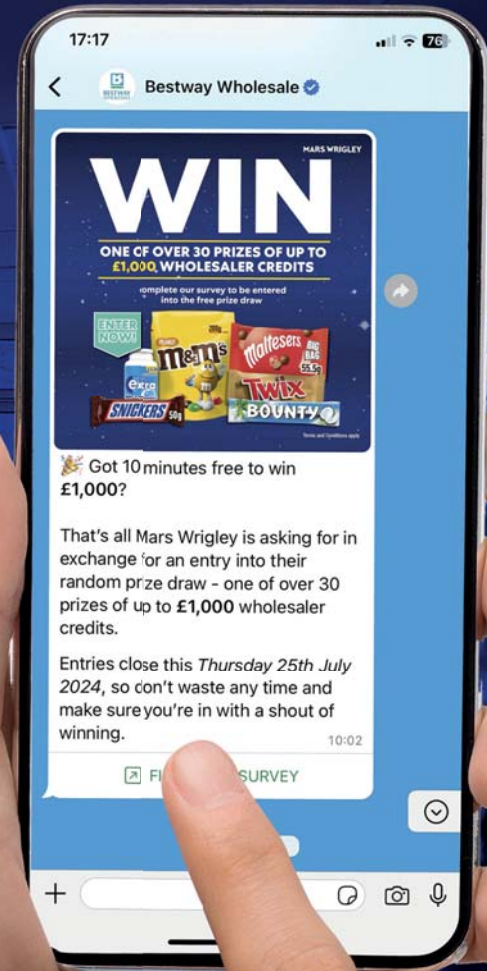
Wholesalers can benefit from using the world's number one communications tool in various ways to benefit their business

If WhatsApp's reach is impressive, the true beauty of the messaging platform is its ability to be adapted in multiple ways depending on a business's objectives.

For wholesalers, identifying a WhatsApp provider that understands their needs and tailors its features to them is important to get the most from the technology, but it doesn't mean it becomes a one-size-fits-all solution.

When deciding the approach to take for any new WhatsApp channel, wholesalers should consider where their biggest communication headaches exist and how WhatsApp can be used to get the best return on investment.

Whichever route they choose, it's of paramount importance that a channel's identity is obvious and doesn't keep changing or it will risk impacting engagement.



Wholesale WhatsApp uses

Sending time-sensitive offers

The speed of the read rates WhatsApp delivers makes it the perfect method to spread the word about limited-time deals as customers can see and act quickly.

Targeting lapsed customers

Re-engaging with former customers is a massive opportunity and WhatsApp allows you to run targeted campaigns to incentivise for them to return.

Sending supplier-sponsored promotions

A big sales driver, but also a great new revenue stream with the right scale, as suppliers, such as Mars Wrigley, can advertise to your customers on WhatsApp.

Cascading product catalogues

Save on print and distribution costs while being more sustainable by sending catalogues by WhatsApp rather than physically.

Generate sales leads

Use WhatsApp messages to encourage customers to call sales reps or make further enquiries.

Customer surveys

Gain customer insights by asking them to take part in surveys that are quick and easy to answer without leaving the message.

Event registrations

WhatsApp technology can be adapted to show event details and gather attendance responses or book appointments from within the message.

Signposting to strategic services

Redirect customers from promotional messages directly to online-ordering platforms to make converting adverts to sales a much slicker process.

Sending business updates

Make sure your key news, such as Christmas opening hours or product recalls, is read quickly by sharing out to your customers on **WhatsApp**.

Love your audience

Whatever way a business decides to use WhatsApp, providing your customers with a professional communication experience is important if a channel is to earn credibility.

While the free versions of WhatsApp require messages to be sent manually by a human physically sending content out to each individual at the time they want to send it, many paid-for WhatsApp platforms offer tools to be more business friendly.

Messages can be created whenever suits the business and scheduled to go out whenever is likely to get most engagement – it's a basic tool, but one that makes a huge difference compared to the alternative.

POWERFUL

It becomes even more powerful when further aided by an ability to segment users into groups based on different criteria, whether that's past purchases or the times they've tended to engage with previous content.

What's more, it's also possible to authenticate WhatsApp phone numbers to customer accounts with the correct integration that means the level of data you will have available to make key business decisions will increase further as you continue to monitor usage.



How to get a WhatsApp Business API

So you've decided to take the plunge.
But how do you get your channel set up?

Easy as 1, 2, 3... right? Signing up to WhatsApp is as simple as having a few digits and downloading the app, but that's not the case when it comes to setting up a WhatsApp Business API channel.

Because accessing the technology requires working an integration with an external app, identifying a WhatsApp service provider – such as b2b.store – is the only way to get

things moving. Your chosen provider will then help you get everything sorted.

WhatsApp prides itself on its tight spam filters in order to maintain its high read rates, so there are a number of prerequisites that every business will need to complete in order to get onboarded on WhatsApp Business API, regardless of the provider you use.

What your business needs to get onboarded

- ✔ Your business name and address registered with Companies House
- ✔ A business email address (i.e. not Gmail or Hotmail)
- ✔ A business landline phone number that is already associated with your business
- ✔ Business documents (e.g. certificate of incorporation, tax registration, business licence, utility bill or bank statement) to upload to Meta that matches your Companies House information
- ✔ A Facebook admin account for your business
- ✔ A phone number that is not already associated to a WhatsApp account. This is the number that customers will see when receiving messages from you.

**VOILA,
YOU'LL BE REGISTERED
AND READY TO GO!**

Meta





Getting your customers on to your channel

- Upload current database of customer phone numbers to your channel. Make sure you have the correct permissions in place to send marketing messages to them!
- Promote your new channel by QR code or web link and include on all communications and around your depot.
- Run email marketing campaign to current opted-in customers to drive people on to your new WhatsApp channel.

Handling personal data – GDPR and security



How you handle customers' personal data safely and securely is of paramount importance to stay on the right side of regulations.

Firstly, when onboarding customers, keeping within GDPR guidelines is crucial as sending unsolicited WhatsApp messages is a breach of rules. WhatsApp's spam rules will automatically weed out accounts with low engagement or being blocked by users.

Just like with email, businesses need the correct permissions to send marketing collateral. Therefore, your first message should outline what you'll be sending from your channel and ask people to confirm they're happy to receive messages from you. At the very least, including a clear way to opt out of receiving messages is advisable in each message you send.

CONCERN

GDPR is a key concern for wholesalers and a responsible WhatsApp service provider will offer guidance on appliance of rules and opt-out policy.

It's a hidden level of support that a paid-for WhatsApp provides, especially considering many businesses that use WhatsApp to message customers on free, personal apps may already be in breach of GDPR. Unless a customer has provided their phone number to an individual with the express permission to message them about promotions, your business is already vulnerable and formalising this in a professional way alleviates this rather than adds to it.

It's not just about how you use personal data, but also how you store it. The easiest way to ensure data security is to pick a WhatsApp supplier with a platform that's compliant to ISO27001 standards, which covers holding and managing customer data.

ASSESSING SECURITY RISKS

The ISO27001 standard means providers must have proved they are identifying and assessing information security risks, and have processes in place to deal with potential threats and how to mitigate against them.



It's almost important to check where data is being stored when using these platforms. If a WhatsApp service provider is based overseas, it's possible they're working to different rules than in the UK.

There is a lot to consider, but it'll easier to deal with with the correct service provider as a partner.

5 things to help with your WhatsApp strategy



Set up? Check! Now all the initial planning is done, nailing your content plan is important to make that effort pay

1 Make and stick to a content plan

At the heart of every successful content channel is a plan and WhatsApp is no different. It's advisable to have a clear map of what you'll be posting when.

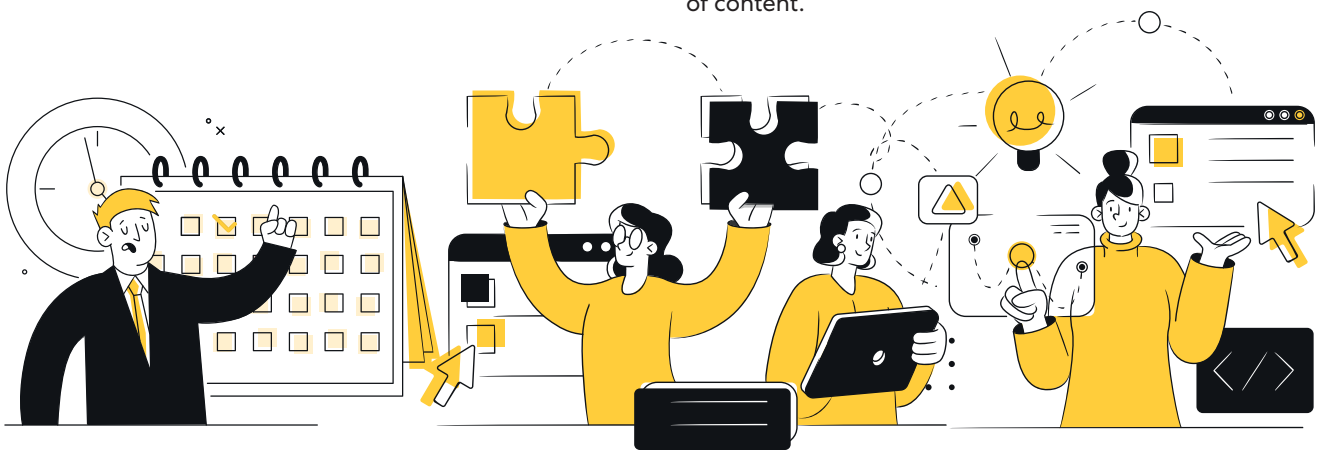
This will help you manage how often you're sending messages, ensuring any posts are well spaced out and don't overwhelm your audience, and make it easier to vary what you're sending.

A content plan can be made on a simple Excel table for the month ahead. Making a forward-thinking plan gives you time to create posts and adapt if anything new or unexpected comes up.

2 Have clear calls to action

It sounds like an obvious point to make, but having a clearly defined idea of what you want a customer to do before planning to send a message is THE place to start. Sometimes the whole point of sending a message gets forgotten.

Start by considering if you want people to buy a product, visit a certain destination, sign up to an event or any number of other things, and how they're going to do that. Once that is in place, build your message with that in mind – it's amazing how much easier it'll be to craft a winning piece of content.



3

Speak to people how they want to be spoken to

Tone of voice is crucial in any communication, but it's doubly important on a platform like WhatsApp because it's primarily an informal place to chat with friends and family.

As a result, avoid the temptation to be too formal in speech because it'll jar with everything else your audience is receiving.

Use more colloquial language while retaining your business's own way of speaking to customers. Also consider extending that approach into the type of things you send too.

Lots of similar messages that are too salesy in tone will eventually cause engagement to drop off, so try to be fresh, current and different in what you send – if someone is going to engage with what you send, they need to be getting something from it.

4

Split your strategy

Content is rarely a one-size-fits-all thing, so segmenting your customers depending on their preferences could be the best way to maximise engagement.

Segmentation paves the way for personalisation in messages, whether that's targeting a certain group of customers with a promotional campaign, sending messages at a different time to suit them, or using different types of language. This also allows for testing different messages to see what resonates best, as it provides an easy way to A/B test approaches and track the elements that make communications more or less successful.

5

Keep an eye on the results that each message achieves

Track what's working – and what's not – by watching the message analytics to see what's being read and engaged with most. Having the ability to see message performance isn't available on the free versions of WhatsApp, so is a clear example of an added service that professionalises your messaging strategy.

It's also possible to add UTM codes to your WhatsApp messages to see direct impact of what you send on sales or other engagement metrics.

While it's important to keep a watchful eye on how messages are performing, try not to be too reactive. Make sure you're understanding what you're seeing, consider the different factors that might be having an impact, and leave enough time for trends to bed in so you can be sure that what you're seeing is an accurate picture of what's happening out there.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?



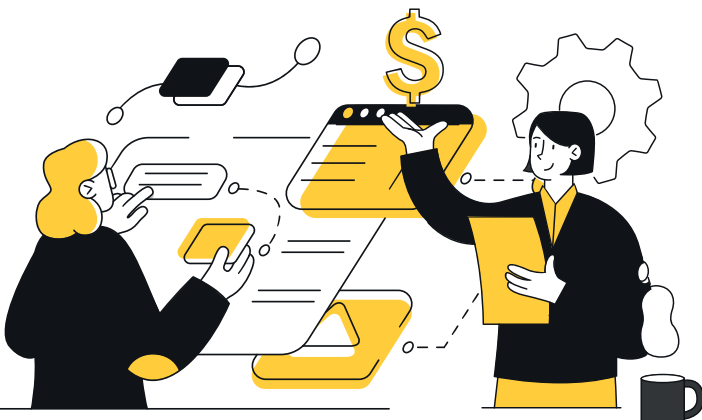
Messages sent using paid-for WhatsApp platforms incur a single-pence-per-message cost, therefore understanding the budget available each month is a key part of devising a strategy.

There is a variable base rate dictated by WhatsApp to send messages, but a service provider will also have a fee to sit on top of this depending on the service and guidance they're offering. How this scales will depend on the number and type of messages sent, with some providers applying a discount based on higher volumes.

CONTROL

As such, wholesalers have control over their WhatsApp costs and can amend their strategy in accordance to that, so effective approaches can be found for bigger and smaller players.

Especially when working in a sector with specific needs, it's not advisable to simply go for the cheapest option because not all service providers will carry tailored functionality.



How to build your message

We're all familiar with WhatsApp's free consumer messaging, but the paid-for version offers a more powerful experience with a few noticeable differences

Image/video asset

As with the free version of WhatsApp that we're all familiar with, the real draw of messaging is the ability to send multimedia content at no extra cost. The more eye-catching a message is, the better – both on the message preview and when it's open – so including a strong image or video is key to getting the best engagement.

Main body of message

We're all familiar with the mechanics of sending a WhatsApp message, but there are some simple rules to follow to make sure what you're saying has the desired impact. Avoid long messages and try to break lines up to make it easily digestible, while dropping in emojis to break it up. Any message of more than five lines will be shortened, with the full message hidden behind a tappable 'read more' button.



Header

Writing a punchy header to intro the message will draw eyes to the copy. Setting a clear hierarchy is crucial on a platform like **WhatsApp** where attention spans can be shorter and users want to understand the essence of a message quickly and easily. The header needs to grab your customer to engage, so outlining what's in it for them or building intrigue with the words you use will get best results.

Opt-out clause

As when sending marketing emails, users should be given the opportunity to unsubscribe from your channel on every communication. It's possible to add a greyed-out footer at the bottom of a message with unsubscribe information that will trigger an automated response if actioned.

Calls to action

It's possible to add as many as three calls to action at the bottom of a **WhatsApp** message to get a user to engage with you. These buttons are displayed in a distinctive way that makes sure they stand out from the rest of the message, increasing the likelihood of them being tapped. Having a clear idea of a user journey when choosing a call to action is key to getting best results.

WhatsApp messaging for the future... now

WhatsApp offers potential to give users an even more enhanced messaging experience through functionality exclusively available to businesses using the paid-for version.

The technology offers dynamic messaging that's fully customisable, providing a slick and effective way to get things done without leaving a message.

INTERACTIVITY

It allows users to do almost anything within a message including registering for events, buying and paying for products, collecting live data, or taking pictures. This makes these messages a great way to generate new leads, pre-sell products or carry out compliance checks.

Paired with WhatsApp's high read rates, this level of interactivity within a WhatsApp message promises to deliver unrivalled results and conversions if used effectively.



Messaging *best practice*

With so much power at your fingertips, it's easy to think any message will be a hit – but there are some best practice tips to follow to make sure that's the case



Mix it up

Variety of messaging and assets is important to retain interest and build intrigue. Being predictable will have a negative impact on engagement and read rates.



Liven up your post

Every message should include images and videos in order to differentiate them and make them more visual when somebody receives them.

Think previews

Consider which part of a message appears as a preview when a user receives a notification or when they first open the message. Key, eye-catching information and imagery needs to be at the top to grab attention and get them to read on.



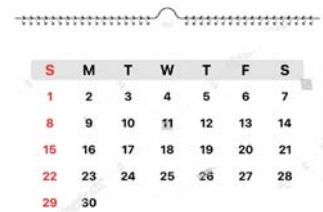
Don't be too formal

First and foremost, **WhatsApp** is a personal messaging app, so soften your tone and use more informal language. Make it too formal and your audience may switch off.



Make it snappy

Clean, concise messaging is a winner on **WhatsApp**, so keep what you're saying to a minimum and don't be tempted to send a long block of text just because you can.



Keep it relevant

Link your updates to something that's happening now, whether that's weather, a sporting competition, or big new event such as a general election or royal celebration. Feed into what everyone else is talking about.



Embrace emojis



Use emojis to liven up communication and feel more akin to **WhatsApp** messages they receive from friends and family. Just be careful not to over-emoji or use in an illogical way to spoil message flow.

Brilliant basics

Grammar and spelling are basics, but they're sometimes forgotten. You can't recall sent messages, so proofread or use AI tools to help curate accurate copy that's right first time.



Know your audience

Speak directly to your customers by sending messages that are relevant to them and monitoring engagement data to understand what they're most likely to engage with. Apply further personalisation by creating customer segments.



Set a clear goal

Make sure you know how you want customers to act or feel before sending a message and make sure that's reflected in your calls to action. Follow that up with following up with a defined customer journey (e.g. to an online-ordering site).



Don't ask for too much

Using buttons to make a call to action stand out in a message is a great way to increase engagement, but there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. It's recommended to use only one or two so not to deter people with too much choice.

Don't always sell

While B2B provides more allowance for trying to get that sale, too many messages with the sole aim of trying to sell products is likely to turn people off. Even if sales are the ultimate goal, consider taking a less direct route.



Break it up

Split messages up so they're not a big block of text. Using one sentence per paragraph or bullet points are great devices to avoid putting people off reading.



Time is running out

If you're running a time-sensitive promotion or sending an important update, make sure this is clear, either by using an image or by bolding up the deadline in the body of the message. Don't use this too much to lose impact.



Remove the context

It's easy to forget that people don't know as much as we do about something we're working on. So always try to read messages as if you have no prior knowledge of the topic to see if you're hitting the right tone.



Got what it takes?

Cover all the bases to set up a successful WhatsApp channel

- ✓ Identify which WhatsApp use is most relevant to your business
- ✓ **Understand your audience and what type of messages will resonate best with them**
- ✓ Pick a WhatsApp solutions provider
- ✓ **Fulfil all WhatsApp Business API criteria to successfully set up an account**
- ✓ Double check all GDPR and data security considerations are taken into account
- ✓ **Create a full content strategy to plan out when and what you will send**
- ✓ Work on message templates and ensure you're using all relevant functionality to make best message experience
- ✓ **Follow messaging best practice in order to get best possible customer engagement**
- ✓ Continue to review analytics and amend approach based on data



Want to find out more?

b2b.store
Rob Mannion CEO
 M/W: 07813 325486
 E: rob.mannion@b2b.store

MARS WRIGLEY
Matt Pettit Digital B2B KAM
 M: 07890 257306
 E: matt.pettit@effem.com

Zoe Goncalves Digital B2B KAM
 M: 07387 240450
 E: zoe.goncalves@effem.com

