PARTNER SPOTLIGHT
Google and RCS

"A2P SMS is a thriving market with a vibrant ecosystem. We're excited that the GSMA is engaging the ecosystem to create alignment around the Universal Profile and excitement about the possibilities of RCS business messaging."

—Amir Sarhangi,
Head of RCS, Google

1. Can you tell us a little about RCS business messaging (A2P)?

This year, businesses, service providers and brands will send over 2T SMS messages to their customers. Business SMS is estimated to be a $40B+ market in 2017. But business SMS is limited to just 160 characters of text. With RCS we can upgrade the business messaging experience by enabling richer and more interactive messages. So rather than just sending a link to a website, a message from an airline, for example, could now provide a full check-in experience, with boarding pass, visual flight updates and terminal maps, all directly within the default messaging experience. Businesses can create a branded experience with messages that come from their brand rather than from a shortcode that users don't recognise.

2. What is Google's vision for RCS?

We believe it's important to upgrade carrier messaging standards to improve the Android native messaging experience for billions of mobile users worldwide. SMS is one of the most widely used messaging technologies today, but it's a decades old standard. It's important that we upgrade this experience for people, and take advantage of all the rich features that smartphones now provide while relying on its ubiquity and reach.

We've been working with carriers, device manufacturers and the GSMA to align on a Universal RCS Profile which details how we can enhance the standard messaging experience on mobile devices. There's strong support across the industry for the Universal RCS Profile, and we've already started launching services with carriers based on this standard, including Sprint, Rogers, Telenor and Orange among others.

About The GSMA RCS Initiative

The GSMA RCS initiative brings together the mobile industry's leading operators, vendors and service providers to shape the RCS specification and implementation. Participating operators have the opportunity to work with software and handset developers, and product and technology experts, to shape the personal and business messaging future for the mobile industry.

Learn more about RCS >

3. What benefits will companies gain from signing up to Google's Early Access Program for RCS Business Messaging? Can you tell us what companies have signed up so far?

Our Early Access Program makes it easier for brands and their messaging partners to get started with RCS business messaging. Participants in the program get a first look at the technology, and have the opportunity to influence the roadmap and standards. So, far we've seen a great response across verticals from brands like Virgin Trains, Walgreens, FICO, IHG, Phillips, Sky, Time Inc. and Uber.

4. How will RCS improve the messaging services consumers can already access?

RCS enables much richer messages compared to what's possible today with SMS. RCS messages can be interactive, allowing people to get more information and engage with businesses right from the chat. Previously, messages had to be very simple or drive customers off to a website to engage further. Now, customers can have a conversation with the brand and even take action such as completing a purchase. Since messages can be more visual, the brand can also deliver rich media, QR codes and images, right in the chat, such as a boarding pass.

5. What's being demonstrated this week at MWC Americas?

At MWC Americas, we're showcasing the broad interest and momentum that we've seen with RCS business messaging (A2P). Our messaging partners include 3Ci, CM, ICF Olson, mGage, Mobivity, Movile, OpenMarket, Tiaxa and ZipWhip, and will be showing RCS agents from their brand partners.

For example, 3Ci and Walgreens will show how you can print your photos or order cosmetics right from the messaging experience, CM and Booking.com will show how RCS can make booking confirmations much richer and more engaging, and OpenMarket and MGM Resorts will show how you can plan an unforgettable visit to the Bellagio using the rich features of RCS business messaging (A2P).

In 2017, the Business SMS market is worth an estimated:

$40bn

About Amir Sarhangi

Amir leads product strategy and rollout for Google's RCS solution including the Android Messages app, Jibe Cloud and Jibe Hub. Before Google, Amir was the founder and CEO of Jibe Mobile. Jibe, which was acquired by Google in 2015, was a pioneer in providing cloud-based virtual IMS, IP Messaging, video chat and developer API gateways to mobile network operators.

6. What challenges does RCS face in being more widely adopted?

To achieve seamless interoperability, in the same way with what we have with SMS today, it's important that all carriers and device manufacturers embrace the GSMA's Universal Profile for RCS. We're making great progress toward this, with support from most of the largest carriers and OEMs. As these networks begin launching RCS and interconnecting through RCS hubs, we'll see ubiquitous availability for people around the world.

7. Why is Google supportive of the GSMA A2P Future Messaging community?

A2P SMS is a thriving market with a vibrant ecosystem. We're excited that the GSMA is engaging the ecosystem to create alignment around the Universal Profile and excitement about the possibilities of RCS business messaging (A2P).