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Weston texting firm helps businesses draw traffic

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By Marcia Heroux Pounds, Sun Sentinel

7:14 p.m. EDT, October 6, 2013

Robert Livingstone set out to be an English teacher, but he couldn't find a job after graduating from Florida Atlantic University in 2007.

His girlfriend, Amy — now his wife and business partner — recognized his inner entrepreneur and encouraged him to start a business in credit-card processing.

"When we were dating, I saw that Robert had so much potential to start his own company," Amy Livingstone said.

Robert, 29, and Amy, 25, have been married for more than three years and already own two companies. They began their entrepreneurial careers with IdealCost.com, a company that monitors merchants' credit-card processing costs for overcharges. The company was launched in 2009 and was profitable by its second month, they said.

The Weston couple's latest enterprise is RoyalText.com, a mobile text-marketing firm that works with retailers, restaurants and auto repair services.

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The Livingstones work with independent contractors for IdealCost.com and with advertising agencies for RoyalText, currently operating in 10 states. This year, RoyalText acquired two texting competitors, one in Indiana and another in **Cooper City**. The company expects revenues to exceed a half million dollars this year, more than double 2012 sales.



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Mobile marketing is growing as more Americans use smart phones. Among U.S. adults, 41 percent receive push-based text alerts at least monthly, according to a 2012 report by Massachusetts-based **Forrester Research**.

Robert Livingstone said his firm's text messages are only sent to customers who sign up for them. The response rate of the text offers or embedded coupons varies.

"Between 5 and 20 percent of people who receive a text message will redeem, and often they'll buy more," he said.

Businesses say text-alert marketing can help boost business during slow months.

During the summer, RoyalText did a mobile-text promotion for Footprints Boutique's "Girls' Night" promotion.

"We had a lot of people turn out as a result of the text. Several said, 'I got your text reminder today, so I stopped on my way home from work.' I know it works," said Peggy Jenkins, manager of the Plantation jewelry and apparel store.

Vincent Violi, owner of D'Lites ice cream stores in Hollywood, said RoyalText alerts such as "Buy one, get one free" have driven traffic to the store.

When RoyalText sends out a promotion, "within 10 minutes, people come in the door showing me the text," he said.

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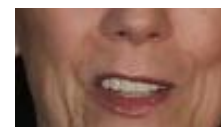
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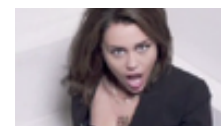
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