

Wunderkind

# The Definitive Guide to Text for Travel & Hospitality



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## Want to grow your travel brand efficiently? Stop relying on paid channels

**Picture this:** More and more advertisers are competing to purchase the same ad space on channels like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google. Cost-per-click and customer acquisition costs are rapidly increasing, while returns are diminishing. In fact, there has been a decline in conversion rates across Facebook and Instagram, while brands have been forced to spend more just to hit their goals.

**Advertising or sharing messaging on third-party platforms is becoming more expensive, more saturated, and overall less effective—and those who refuse to invest in first-party data will face the consequences. So, what's the solution? Travel and hospitality marketers need to turn their attention to owned channels.**



Email has historically been the primary owned-channel for many marketers, including travel and hospitality. This is because brands who did attempt text marketing years ago didn't have the ubiquity of internet-enabled smartphones. They were doomed to fail on the channel. However, the cautionary tale of text marketing is a thing of the past as user behavior has officially caught up. Airlines are one example of winning the text marketing game. From texts alerting flyers of gate changes to boarding alerts, they're using this channel for important messaging that travelers find really useful. However, smart travel and hospitality marketers should also be capitalizing on this channel to increase bookings and grow revenue.

For brands to effectively drive incrementality through text, they need to ground their strategies in highly-effective identification. These brands will need to confidently recognize their email subscribers onsite in order to drive text opt-ins without cannibalizing email performance. The best way for them to do this is to work with a channel-agnostic partner that doesn't favor text over email but rather works with brands to determine which channel mix will be the best for their specific business needs. In this guide, we lay out the foundations of text marketing. We discuss how it works, why it's important, and showcase how you should approach your text campaigns to create the highest performance possible. But first, let's dive into a little background on the channel.

## A Quick Background on the Basics of Text

Text message marketing allows for text messages to be sent to mobile devices. To run a text program at scale, travel and hospitality marketers need to use short codes – a 5- or 6-digit number that can send messages at 100x the scale of a normal phone number. They can be used exclusively by one brand. Now, let's discuss all of the players involved with sending text messages for brands.

### Texting Vendors

These are the companies that provide you with all the features and functionality you need to launch and manage your texting programs. Here's everything that these vendors do:

- Provide a platform that marketers can use to send messages.
- Help grow your list in a compliant way and manage your unsubscribes.
- Get you a shortcode. They'll manage your application with the aggregators and carriers by outlining your marketing program, explaining how users can sign-up, and breaking down the program's terms so the carriers know it will be compliant with their governing body (the CTIA) and the law (the TCPA).
- Help you manage compliance with audit trails.

### Aggregators

Aggregators provision short codes and get messages to the right people. When you send a message to 500,000 customers, they ensure the messages are routed to the right carriers quickly.

### Mobile Carriers

Carriers are the ones who actually deliver your text messages to mobile devices. They can also shut down a short code if they feel your program isn't compliant.

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**"Be sure to work with a partner that ensures you maintain an eye on incrementality."**

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## Why Your Texting Program Can Become Expensive

It's much more expensive to send a text than an email. Even if you're only paying your text messaging vendor, the aggregator and carrier also charge fees. You may be looking at a vendor's platform fee, aggregator fees for hosting the short code and routing messages, and carrier fees for delivering the messages.

**Because it's so costly to send these messages, it's critical for marketers to ensure their text messaging program is generating new revenue, not just moving revenue from existing marketing channels into this new one.**

This is why it's so important to work with a partner that can show you how text is adding incremental revenue to your business that wouldn't have existed had this messaging type not been sent to consumers. Costs can be higher, as you can see above, but the performance is often much higher than other marketing strategies as well. Working with a partner that ensures you maintain an eye on incrementality will ensure you see this high performance without any of the costly drawbacks.

## Why Texts Work: For You and Your Guests

The core of why travel and hospitality brands should care about text for them and their travelers and guests falls within four main buckets: sales are shifting to mobile, the sends are simple, it provides travel and hospitality marketers with a less saturated channel to reach consumers, and it offers the high performance of owned-channel marketing.

### Mobile-First Bookings

Text messaging arrived before smartphones and even online booking. Some marketers launched text programs years ago, before it was easy — or even possible — to convert online. That's changed. Mobile is turning into a browse-first, buy-first platform. With text, you can send a message directly to their texting app that includes a link to your website (and 10%+ CTRs). And with mobile-optimized checkouts, text can help them tap into their travel FOMO and buy quickly.

### It's Simple to Send

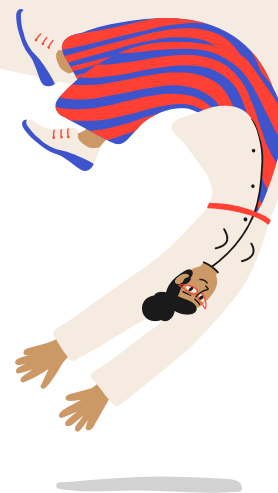
Launching a new channel can take months of strategy. You may even need new creative or technical resources to support something that is often complicated or nuanced. But, with text, the sends are simple. Much of it can be automated with one-to-one triggers. When you want to send a mass message, it only takes a few minutes to create and schedule a simple text. We discuss these triggers in more detail later in this guide.



## Less Saturation

Easily, one of the best things about adding text as a channel right now is that it's being underutilized by many travel and hospitality brands. Companies that use text message marketing have a much higher chance of getting in front of their target customers because they won't be exclusively competing in bid-based channels. Text message marketing isn't as crowded as email, and travel marketers should move quickly to take advantage of that.

## Owned-Channel Success



# 5-15%

submission rates for onsite captures

# 10-13%

click-through rates on all sends

# 3-7%

onsite conversion rates

Marketing through your owned channels lets you reach customers without being reliant on the increasing cost associated with players like Facebook, Google, and Amazon. Moreover, owned-channels often perform better than display or CPC. Texts have traditionally also performed incredibly well – seeing click-through rates in the double digits and onsite conversion rates ranging from 3-7%.

## How Identification Scales Text Performance

Identification is the engine that drives the success of text marketing. In fact, it's the key driver of success for all owned-channel marketing. By identifying your site visitors, you'll be able to understand the specific actions they took while browsing every webpage you own. With this information, you'll be able to move past batch-and-blast marketing practices by creating hypergranulated audience segments that allow you to send one-to-one messages that are personalized to where the consumer is in the sales funnel. Look for a vendor that gives you these [identity resolution capabilities](#). Once in place, you can ensure you're creating scalable, one-to-one text messages that drive true performance for your brand.

### How to Drive These One-to-One Opt-Ins

One struggle that travel and hospitality marketers often face is the ability to sustain and grow an active CRM list. With proper onsite identification technology in place, it's easy. Look for identification technology that goes beyond cookies to help you recognize your customers and new prospects during their visit. Once in place, you can then automate onsite experiences to capture both emails and phone numbers. To have a truly effective opt-in strategy, you shouldn't just be focusing on text but rather on all your owned channels.

But growing both lists doesn't mean text and email should be run by separate point solutions. You can't have strong capture rates across channels while maintaining a good user experience if different vendors are running separate campaigns.

In fact, marketers can make a big mistake by having their text vendors manage email capture. Most won't validate if emails are already on your list and they won't recognize users who are already subscribed either. This creates an annoying experience, especially when offering discounts to your current customers. You need one partner across channels who can recognize your email subscribers and deploy a series of experiences that talk to each other. It should be about maximizing revenue per unique user in a premium, non-disruptive way. So, take advantage of the scale in marketable opt-ins that texts provide by working with a vendor who gives you the ability to mix and match your strategies between both email and text. This will give your site visitors more choice between how they receive marketing messages from you, improving your onsite experience, and growing your lists for both channels.



## TRUE BOTANICALS

“One of the biggest reasons we moved over to Wunderkind for SMS after we initially switched back was primarily because we wanted to provide that seamless experience for opt-in. We were experiencing challenges on a different platform with SMS between opting into email and opting into SMS, which meant we were losing a lot of data in the process and consumers we could have been signing up for SMS. **We saw a 122% lift in revenue driven by SMS once we switched back.**”



Molly Delp  
VP eCommerce, True Botanicals

[Watch the Story](#)

## Scaling Triggered Messaging

Once you've begun identifying more visitors, you'll be able to automatically scale triggered messages based on the actions they took on your site. And there are a ton of different text triggers that the modern travel marketer can utilize. Welcome messages are table stakes and require no personalization. Identification scales your product abandonment and cart abandonment triggers that remind your site visitors to come back and complete that trip purchase. Additionally, you can use text triggers to send reminders around things like seasonal deals or offers that a customer may want to book before the offer expires.

When running your text campaigns, don't work with a vendor that promises you the cart without giving you the horse to get you anywhere. It's true that having the ability to personalize all of your marketing messages is important but scale will be impossible unless you work with a triggered messaging partner that can get your messages out to the right customer, with the right message, at the right time.

## Automating Performance with On-Demand

The foundation of any strong batch-and-blast program is awareness of everyone's stage in your customer lifecycle. Separating your prospects and your customers is the most basic element. For an efficient program that avoids ballooning costs, you also need to know who is currently shopping, who isn't, and who is becoming a churn risk. But you can't effectively target active or inactive users if you can't recognize your site traffic at scale—you'll have no idea who is inactive or active. Once you do recognize this traffic, you can automate on-demand messages that increase send volume at key lifecycle moments so you can minimize costly list-wide sends.

Here are a few segments we suggest to get you started:

**Prospect vs. Customer:** On major list-wide sends, remind prospects of their first-time discount while keeping a customer send promo-free. And consider your time-to-repurchase. If a customer won't reasonably be traveling for another few months (vacationer vs. business traveler), suppress them from your customer segment.

**High-Intent Mop-Up:** Every week, send a message to prospects who took deep-funnel actions 3-4 weeks ago without returning.

**Sale/Promo High-Intent Mop-up:** To apply targeted urgency on the last day of a promotion, send a blast to all users who engaged with the promo without converting.

**High vs Low Intent:** Try targeting those mid-intent users who made it as far as the scheduling page, but didn't add to cart.

**Win-Back:** Send a special promo to previous customers who haven't visited in several months. Bonus: Combine it with a Wunderkind coupon bar for continuity on-site!

**Get a Review:** If you have a review platform, use text to drive participation. Build a segment of users who purchased in the last 8-14 days and ask for their feedback and send something every week.

**Big Spenders:** Target users who have a large purchase history with special access.

Once you have this in place, you'll be able to more effectively scale your owned-channel outreach by automating triggered messages that are sent to site visitors as they qualify for your different audience segments. And this is important because unlike display, social media, or other top-of-funnel channels it's important to personalize all of your outreach through text. This is because the message goes directly to the person—right on the device they use most often. Essentially, to avoid giving your consumers a sour taste in their mouths, personalization

# Growing Text Opt-Ins Without Sacrificing Email

While this guide is focused on text message marketing, you don't need to focus on that list independently. It's possible to grow each without hurting the performance of the other. Let's take a look at 5 key strategies for how you can do this.

## 1

### Empower Visitors to Choose Their Channel

**What it is:**

Scale both capture and channel engagement by letting the user pick what's best for them.

**Why it's effective:**

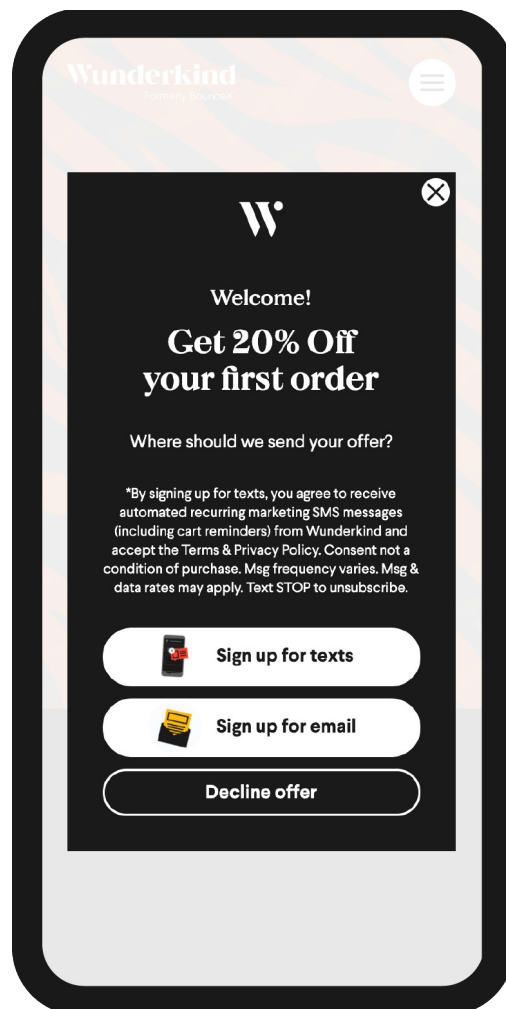
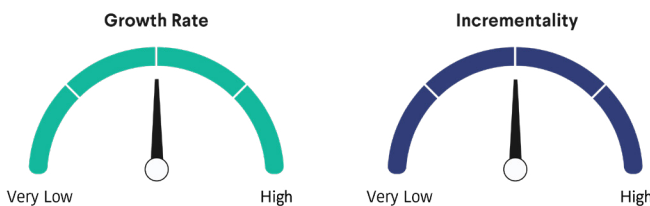
Channel choice ensures you're reaching your customers on the channel they prefer most – side-stepping poor brand experiences and increasing the chance they click through to your site.

**When you should use it:**

Email is performing well. You want to introduce text while keeping the experience premium with minimal capture experiences.

**Helpful protip:**

Make it clear that you're giving your customers the option between either email or text with your messaging. The split between channels will shift between businesses, but know that most users will likely still choose email.



# 2

## Offer Text Entrance Capture, with Email Exit Intent

**What it is:**

Prioritizing getting text opt-ins over email, in a way targeted specifically for mobile traffic.

**Why it's effective:**

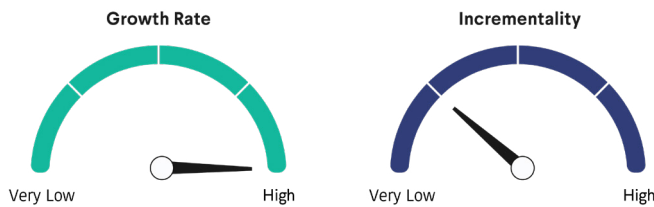
The channel they're signing up for will often align with the device they're using, and a text opt-in experience is much smoother for the visitor when they're already on a mobile device. Additionally, if visitors decline to opt into text, you can take advantage of disengagement as an opportunity to opt into email instead.

**When you should use it:**

You already have a healthy email list and you're focused on growing your database of phone numbers as quickly as possible.

**Helpful protip:**

If you want to ensure that your text capture promotion doesn't get left behind on the entrance page you can add a persistent text CTA that appears throughout the site to remind visitors of the deal you're offering.



# 3

## Entrance Email Capture, with Text Later

**What it is:**

Prioritizing email opt-ins. If users don't submit their email, offer text capture on the third page view or exit.

**Why it's effective:**

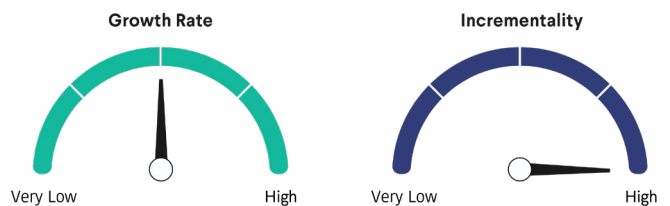
You'll largely keep the emails you'll already getting, but for those uninterested in submitting their email, you can offer them a different way to engage and capture their phone number.

**When you should use it:**

You want to ensure you're building a text list/channel that is "additional" to your high-performing email channel. This way you can build the list at a more steady pace without limiting the growth of your primary channel.

**Helpful protip:**

Feature a persistent dot at the bottom of your page that users can expand to create an always-on capture opportunity.



# 4

## Pairing Text & Email Capture Together

### What it is:

Requiring both email and text in order for site visitors to unlock certain promotions.

### Why it's effective:

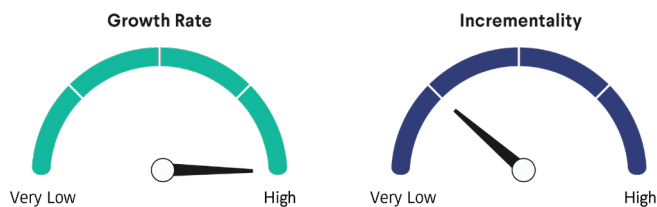
It places equal emphasis on both email and text data—growing your list more quickly than any other strategy while maintaining healthy email subscription rates.

### When you should use it:

You have an aggressive acquisition goal. Email is a healthy channel for you but you recognize the immediate importance of text as a channel and want to get that list to maturity as quickly as possible. You're okay with a scenario where all of your text subscribers are also email subscribers.

### Helpful protip:

When asking site visitors to opt into both text and email, it's easy to seem like you're demanding a lot of information from your site visitors. Your opt-in message should highlight how customers can unlock or redeem a promotional offer by giving their information.



# 5

## Customer Capture Only

**What it is:**

Give your customers exclusive promos or access in return for their number. One related way to do this is to utilize triggered emails to drive opt-ins.

**Why it's effective:**

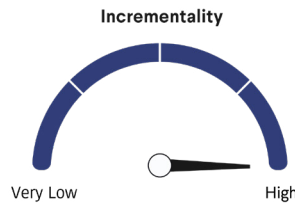
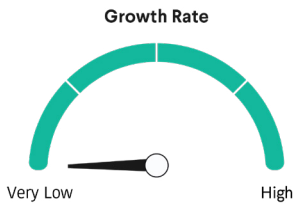
Additionally, text is, by nature, a high-visibility channel where visitors already familiar with your brand (like current customers) will likely be the ones who respond the best. So, use texts to reach out to these consumers and increase their LTV.

**When you should use it:**

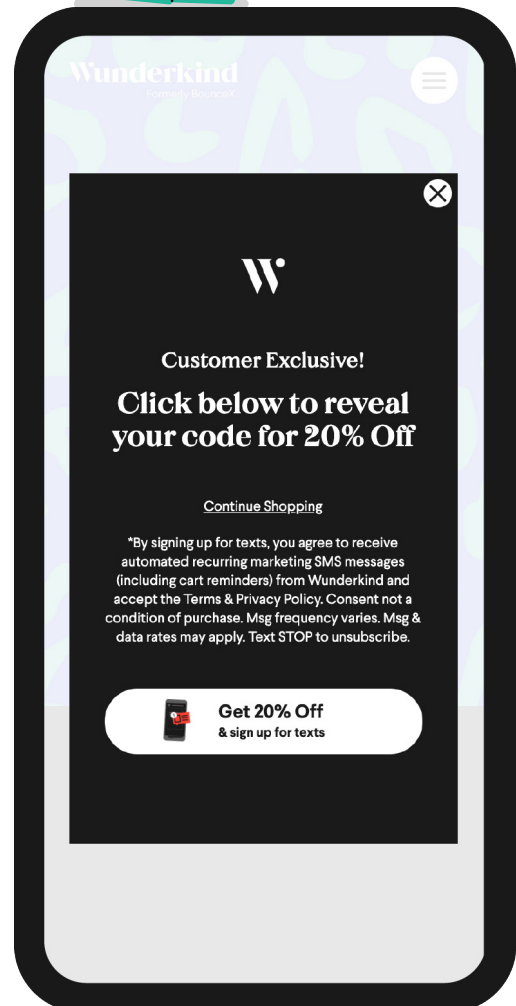
You don't see texts working as an acquisition strategy for your business, or you want to keep costs at a minimum.

**Helpful protip:**

Add a post-purchase capture, or use dedicated emails to your customers asking them to sign up for texts instead of waiting for them to come back to your site.



**Remember:** customer-only strategies require a Text partner that can reliably recognize your customers on-site.



## Additional Text List-Growth Strategies

**Pop-ups and onsite overlays are the most straightforward ways to drive scale. These tactics are most successful when you can identify your traffic and know who is already on your email list. But, there are other ways to grow your list beyond site entrance and exit if list growth is a major priority.**

### On-site Persistent Capture

Use a simple, subtle persistent capture experience across your site that users can expand to opt-in. While it lacks prominence and urgency, the high impression count will help with growth.

### On-site Cart-level Capture

Use text capture in your checkout to drive more phone number captures from your highest-intent prospects and customers.

### Email Promotions for Text Sign-Up

Your email list is a highly-qualified audience for subscription to texts. Drive cross-channel opt-ins by letting users know they'll get first-access to an upcoming promotions if they sign up for texts.

### Text-to-Join

Subscribers can opt into your text channel by texting a keyword like JOIN to your short code. You can advertise your keyword in your stores, emails, and even in your product packaging to give would-be travelers an extra nudge.

### Catalogs, Mailers, and Postcards

Instead of just including a coupon code on a mailer, you can ask users to opt-in to your text channel to unlock an offer, either by driving them to a landing page or again using a simple QR code they can scan.



## Maintaining Compliance

With these tactics in place, you'll be able to identify more users than ever to your site—allowing you to build a view of their onsite actions and create more personalized messages to them in order to bring them back to your site should they leave before making a purchase. But before you even begin running campaigns, the absolute first thing you'll need to do is obtain consent from your audience.

Pop-ups are one of the quickest and easiest ways you can do this. But they're not the only way. You can look at tactics like an in-person (or virtual) event, where consent can come from the physical sign-up, or you can also do it as part of the first message you send. Additionally, you'll need to give people a way to opt-out of your text messages. If you're featuring relevant content and reasonable frequency caps you shouldn't need to be very worried about this happening. But, it's still a requirement for ensuring campaigns are maintaining compliance.

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**“Before you even begin running campaigns, the absolute first thing that you need to do is obtain consent from your audience.”**

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# Best Practices for Your Text Campaigns

## 1

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### Think X (formerly Twitter)

- The total copy length for text messages is only 160 characters, including the link (which is roughly 25 characters). Therefore, your brand message should only be 135 characters.
- Use the iPhone and Android preview in Wunderkind's message builder to ensure it fits in one text.

## 2

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### Include company name/brand in every message

- Your texts will be sent from a numeric short code, so users won't immediately know what brand sent it.
- Many brands begin texts with their name so it appears clearly on a phone's preview screen. But you don't need to include your brand name at the beginning of each message — get creative!
- Keep in mind the preview text is short, depending on device and carrier. Lean into similar strategies you use for your email subject lines.

## 3

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### Focus on the user value first and keep the message simple

- New travel promotions are great (bonus points if your text subscribers hear about it first).
- Highlight urgency for specific promo periods. Use first-time booking and/or customer discounts. Include native value props such as flexible cancellation policies.
- Reuse some of your YouTube content if you're producing it.

## 4

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### What about emojis

- Much like email, if it makes sense for your brand voice, include them.
- Try to limit it to the emojis that work across all devices.
- The newest releases will come up blank for users who don't update their software.
- Don't have an emoji keyboard? Use a searchable website like [getemoji.com](http://getemoji.com).

Here it is short and simple.

Wunderkind is the only partner that gives travel and hospitality marketers the ability to truly scale one-to-one messages across channels. We help brands launch text in a completely channel-agnostic way that ensures we don't cannibalize any of your email revenue by creating a cross-channel opt-in strategy that's right for your business. We leverage our industry-leading identification technology to create the most personalized experience possible. This leads to revenue for travel and hospitality brands at a price that doesn't make you pay to reach your customers. If you're interested in seeing how Wunderkind can help drive texts and email success for your hotel, airline, car rental or cruise line, [get in touch with us](#).

# Wunderkind

Wunderkind is the leading AI-driven performance marketing solution that collects consent-based, first-party data and identifies anonymous traffic for brands in order to scale hyperpersonalized one-to-one messages. Brands lean on the Wunderkind Identity Network, a proprietary database recognizing 9 billion devices, 1 billion opted-in consumers and observes 2 trillion digital transactions per year, to trigger the most impactful offers to their target audience at the right moment and in the right channel. This proprietary data is accessed by Wunderkind's Autonomous Marketing Platform, an AI engine which integrates seamlessly into a brands' existing ESP to boost performance across email, text and advertising channels. Wunderkind is the only performance solution that guarantees a lift in revenue for its clients and delivers over \$5 billion in directly attributable revenue annually for brands across a number of industries, often ranking as a top 3 revenue channel in clients' own analytics platforms. Brands such as SeaWorld, Omni Hotels, and Gate 1 Travel partner with Wunderkind to drive top-line revenue through its guaranteed results.

