From 10DLC to Short Codes: Why High-Volume Senders Are Abandoning Long Codes for Dedicated Short Code Messaging

As carrier filtering tightens and 10DLC throughput limits frustrate enterprise senders, Tells.co reports surge in brands migrating to dedicated short codes

Tells.co - AI-Powered SMS, RCS and Voice Messaging Platform

ORANGE COUNTY, CA, UNITED STATES, March 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As wireless carriers continue to tighten content filtering on 10DLC (10-digit long code) messaging, enterprise brands sending high-volume SMS campaigns are increasingly abandoning long codes in favor of dedicated short codes — and the migration is accelerating.

Tells.co, a messaging technology company that processes billions of messages through direct carrier relationships, reports a significant increase in brands switching from 10DLC and toll-free numbers to dedicated short codes in 2026. The shift is being driven by three converging factors: aggressive carrier content filtering, restrictive throughput limits, and unpredictable deliverability on shared infrastructure.

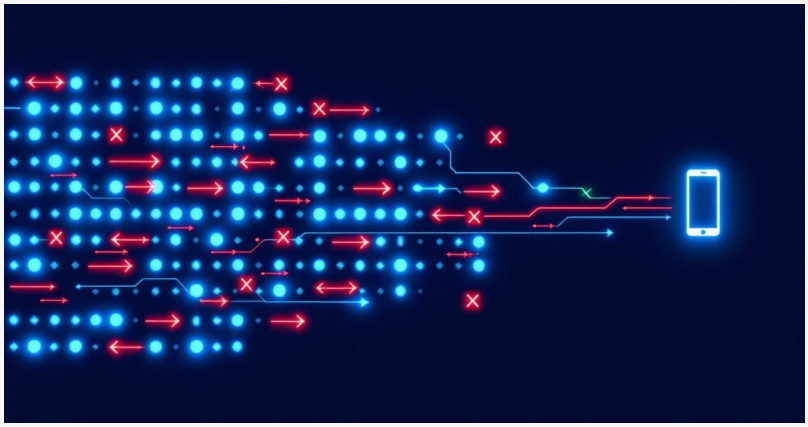
> The brands switching to short codes aren't doing it because it's trendy - they're doing it because they ran the numbers."
>
> *David Schlaegel, Co-Founder, Tells*

The 10DLC Bottleneck

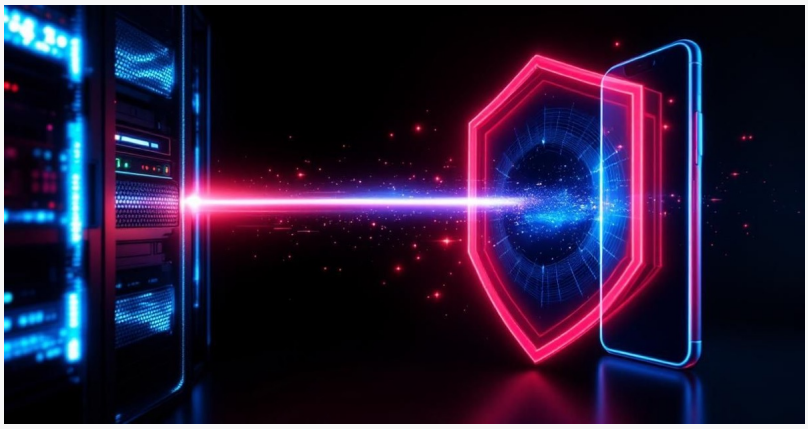
When The Campaign Registry (TCR) and major carriers introduced 10DLC registration requirements, the promise was simple: register your brand, get approved, and send messages at scale. The reality has been far more complicated.

Brands registered through 10DLC face per-second throughput caps that make large campaigns impractical. A brand approved for standard messaging may be limited to just a few messages per

second, meaning a campaign to 500,000 subscribers could take days to complete. For time-sensitive promotions, flash sales, or appointment reminders, those delays eliminate the core value proposition of SMS: immediacy.



Multiple 10DLC numbers attempting to send messages with many blocked by carrier filtering systems



Server attempting to deliver SMS message to phone blocked by carrier firewall filtering

Content filtering has also become increasingly aggressive. Carriers apply automated filtering algorithms to 10DLC traffic that can silently drop messages without notification. Brands discover their campaigns are being filtered only when delivery rates plummet, often after the damage is done.

The Multi-Number Nightmare

To work around these throughput limitations, high-volume senders are forced into an increasingly complex workaround: spreading their traffic across dozens or even hundreds of individual 10DLC numbers. What starts as a simple messaging operation becomes an operational headache that grows with every number added to the pool.

Managing a fleet of 10DLC numbers means maintaining separate registrations, tracking which customers are tied to which number, rotating numbers to distribute load, and monitoring each one individually for deliverability issues. When a single number gets flagged or blocked by a carrier, the sender faces a scramble to migrate those customers to a different number without disrupting service or losing message history.

The compliance burden multiplies with each number. Every 10DLC in the pool needs its own campaign registration, its own opt-in records, and its own monitoring. A sender running 50 numbers is effectively managing 50 separate messaging programs, each one a potential point of failure. One compliance issue on one number can trigger carrier scrutiny across the entire pool.

This fragmented approach also creates a poor customer experience. Recipients may receive messages from different numbers over time as numbers rotate in and out of service, eroding the brand consistency that drives engagement and trust. Compare that to a single short code that

every customer recognizes and trusts from day one.

Why Short Codes Are Different

Dedicated short codes (5-6 digit numbers like 12345) operate on fundamentally different infrastructure. Each short code goes through a carrier-by-carrier approval process that, while more rigorous upfront, provides dedicated throughput and carrier-level whitelisting once approved.

The key differences that are driving migration include:

Throughput: Short codes can send hundreds of messages per second compared to single-digit MPS on 10DLC. A campaign reaching 500,000 subscribers completes in minutes rather than days.

Deliverability: Because each short code is individually vetted and approved by every major carrier, messages bypass the automated content filtering that plagues 10DLC traffic. Delivery rates consistently exceed 95%.

Reliability: Short codes are not subject to the shared infrastructure congestion that affects 10DLC. Each code has dedicated routing that does not degrade during high-traffic periods.

Brand recognition: Consumers are familiar with short codes from major brands. The shorter number format builds trust and improves engagement rates compared to messages from unfamiliar 10-digit numbers.

The Cost Equation Has Changed

Historically, the primary argument for 10DLC was cost. Short codes required lease fees, setup costs, and longer provisioning timelines. But the calculus has shifted as the hidden costs of 10DLC become apparent.

Brands are discovering that low delivery rates, filtered messages, and throttled campaigns translate directly into lost revenue. A promotional campaign that reaches only 70% of its audience due to carrier filtering is not cheaper than a short code campaign that reaches 98%, even with higher per-message costs.

Registration and compliance requirements have also converged. Both 10DLC and short codes now require detailed campaign registration, opt-in documentation, and ongoing compliance monitoring. The regulatory burden is comparable, but the performance gap continues to widen.

For high-volume senders currently managing pools of 10DLC numbers, the math becomes even

clearer. The combined lease costs, registration fees, and operational overhead of maintaining 50 or 100 long codes can approach or exceed the cost of a single dedicated short code, while delivering inferior performance.

Who Should Consider the Switch

The migration trend is strongest among specific sender profiles: brands sending more than 100,000 messages per month, companies in regulated industries where delivery confirmation matters, businesses running time-sensitive campaigns, organizations managing multiple 10DLC numbers to achieve adequate throughput, and senders that have experienced unexplained delivery failures on 10DLC.

Industries leading the shift include insurance, financial services, healthcare notifications, retail and e-commerce, and lead generation, sectors where message delivery directly impacts revenue and regulatory compliance.

Looking Ahead

As carrier networks continue investing in RCS (Rich Communication Services) and advanced messaging formats, short codes are positioned to support rich media, interactive messaging, and AI-powered conversational experiences that 10DLC infrastructure was never designed to handle.

For brands evaluating their messaging infrastructure, the question is shifting from "can we afford short codes" to "can we afford not to have them."

Tells.co provides dedicated short code provisioning, carrier registration, compliance management, and high-volume messaging infrastructure for enterprise brands. For more information, visit www.tells.co.

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