Timeout called on online negativity as mobile users are invited to #TextForHumanity

Sinch and Mental Health America launch world's first texting switchboard, inviting people to send positive messages to strangers

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN and SEATTLE, WA, JANUARY 16, 2020 – In response to the spread of online negativity, Sinch AB (publ) has teamed with Mental Health America (MHA) to build the world's first texting switchboard, #TextForHumanity. The new service, developed by Sinch, the global leader in cloud communications for mobile customer engagement, lets people send a positive message to a stranger – and receive one in return.

While mobility and social media have connected the world, they've also created a new door for negative attitudes and behaviors to enter our lives. Several studies in recent years have investigated possible links between social media and smartphone use with poor mental health, including symptoms of depression and anxiety[1]. And with politicians, celebrities and even brands increasingly involved in public arguments online, people are often compelled into online fights of their own, with one poll revealing that more than half of the public engage in online arguments[2].

Meanwhile social isolation is a modern epidemic[3] which affects people of all ages. A recent study among U.S. adults pointed to 30 percent of millennials feeling lonely – the highest rate of all age groups surveyed[4].

"Although we're using our phones to communicate 24/7, many often feel worse mentally, not happier," said Jonathan Bean, Sinch's Chief Marketing Officer. "People are rightly asking tough questions of the digital and social tech that's become so ingrained in our lives so quickly. It prompted us to think – what if we could harness mobile communication as a pushback against online negativity, instead of a trigger? It's why we've partnered with Mental Health America to take on online negativity, one positive text at time. We all love our phones, but it's time for our phones to love us back."

"MHA is thrilled to be partnering with Sinch on this incredible initiative," said Paul Gionfriddo, president and CEO, Mental Health America. "We know there is a lot of negativity online these days - and by taking a minute to deliver a simple, positive message to someone who may need it, each of us can help brighten someone's day and lift up their overall mental well-being."

#TextForHumanity has a broad and inclusive reach given the fact that most mobile devices have SMS capability. It's easy for anyone with even the most basic phone to become a part of #TextForHumanity, by following four simple steps:

1. **Text JOIN to +1 833 421-4726** (additional international number options are available on TextForHumanity.com), and the service will ask for a couple of simple details. All data is stored securely, and no personal or identifying details will be known or shared.

2. **Write a short text that will make someone smile**. It needs to be within 160 characters, and there's tips to help get started on TextForHumanity.com.
3. **#TextForHumanity will share your message with a stranger** somewhere in the world. The service will initially be run in English language only.
4. **Receive a positive message from a stranger**. Texts you receive can also be easily shared from a smartphone on social media, in a colorful template.

In any 24-hour period, users can send and receive up to five positive texts from strangers around the world, and can opt out at any time by simply replying STOP to the service.

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About Sinch

Sinch brings businesses and people closer with tools enabling personal engagement. Its leading cloud communications platform lets businesses reach every mobile phone on the planet, in seconds or less, through mobile messaging, voice and video. Sinch is a trusted software provider to mobile operators, and its platform powers business-critical communications for many of the world's largest companies. Sinch has been profitable and fast-growing since its foundation in 2008. It is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, and has local presence in more than 30 countries. Shares are traded at NASDAQ Stockholm: XSTO:SINCH. Visit us at sinch.com.

About Mental Health America

Mental Health America (MHA) is the United States' leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all Americans. MHA's work is driven by its commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all; early identification and intervention for those at risk; integrated care, services, and supports for those who need it; with recovery as the goal.

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[1] Example studies include:
- Niall McCrae, Sheryl Gettings, Edward Purssell (2017). *Social Media and Depressive Symptoms in Childhood and Adolescence: A Systematic Review*. Adolescent Research Review volume 2, pages 315–330.
- Cheever, N.A., Rosen, L.D., Carrier, L.M., & Chavez, A. (2014). *Out of sight is not out of mind: The impact of restricting wireless mobile device use on anxiety levels among low, moderate and high users. Computers in Human Behavior*, 37, 290-297.

- Ndasauka Y, Hou J, Wang Y, Yang L et al. (2016) *Excessive use of Twitter among college students in the UK: Validation of the Microblog Excessive Use Scale and relationship to social interaction and loneliness.* Computers in Human Behavior, 55, 963-971.
- Lee-Won R J, Herzog L & Gwan Park S (2015) *Hooked on Facebook: The role of social anxiety and need for social assurance in problematic use of Facebook.* Cyberpsychol. Behav. Soc. Netw., 18, 567-574.

[2] The Webby Awards, YouGov (2019). *Under the Influence 2020 Trend Report.*
[3] Health Resources & Services Administration (2019). *The Loneliness Epidemic*
[4] YouGov (2019). *Millennials are the loneliest generation.*