

# “SMS 2.0” Takes Off

Now, get ads with your mobile text messages.

PLANNING TO SIGN UP FOR THE do-not-call registry or already have? Don't bother. Marketers have figured out another way to reach you, the mobile phone user. It's called SMS 2.0. Developed by Affle, a tech start-up based in the UK, India and Singapore, SMS 2.0 is a service that adds colour to text messages as well as contextual news items on the messaging menu screen. And in December last year, Airtel became the first cellular operator to roll out SMS 2.0 nationwide. “We have a good product that consumers like and the initial response has been very good,” says Anuj Kumar, Executive Director of Affle, which was one of the companies featured in *Business Today's* Cool Companies list last year (See *Business Today*, November 24, 2007). “Our feedback indicated that 97 per cent of users liked the product and 80 per cent of them would recommend it to friends after the pilot project in Delhi in mid-2007,” adds an Airtel executive.



Over the recent past, Affle is said to have fine-tuned the product, adding some features that consumers particularly liked—such as more emoticons, more entertainment and fun content. Kumar says that Affle would keep SMS 2.0 an Airtel exclusive service for the time being. “It makes sense to stick to the leader,” he jokes. Currently, SMS 2.0 only supports devices operating Symbian Series 60 software, and those are mostly high-end Nokia Eseries and Nseries phones. However, the Airtel executive says that SMS 2.0 will support more devices soon.

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