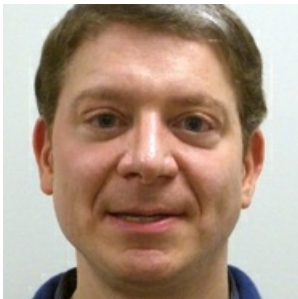


COLUMNS

Three keys to building a mobile-optimized Web site

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By **Simon Buckingham**

If you are an online retailer and you are unsure whether your company has a mobile-optimized site, it almost certainly means you don't. And that is a major problem.

It might not have been a problem in 2009 when on Black Friday only 0.1 percent of visits to retail Websites were on a mobile device, but on Black Friday in 2010 more than 5 percent of retail site traffic was on the smartphone. In just one year mobile traffic jumped fifty-fold, and that growth is only going to continue in the coming years.

Sooner than most retailers realize, it will be difficult to be successful without an engaging and intuitive mobile-optimized site for browsing and purchasing.

There is no time left to build a mobile-optimized site in 2010, but if you are an online retailer without an optimized site, your resolution for this year needs to be to build one ASAP.

Here are three most important considerations to remember when building your mobile site:

1. Mobile screens are small, so keep it simple

Check out m.amazon.com to see how the online retail giant has created an elegantly simple mobile site.

Another successful retailer, BackCountry.com, has been similarly successful in creating an intuitive and simple mobile site with m.backcountry.com.

Simplicity is the first goal of any mobile site, and a simple layout should never be compromised for other goals.

When designing a mobile site, too often retailers attempt to figure out ways to squeeze in every tab and feature from their regular site.

Screen space is limited on mobile devices, so only display critical information. If Amazon can keep it simple, so can you.

2. The technology behind the mobile Web is unique

Thankfully, the fragmentation of the mobile Web is coming to an end.

You no longer have to develop specific mobile sites for each individual platform, but the tools you need for mobile optimization are still unique.

With WebKit as the mobile standard, companies such as Usablenet, Digby and Moovweb are experts in creating mobile sites optimized across all new smartphones.

3. Consumer psychology is different on mobile devices

As you proceed with user interface design, it is also vital make sure that the layout of your mobile site adheres to the three-click rule.

If it takes more than three clicks to get from your homepage to your checkout page, then you need to redesign your layout.

Short attention spans become even shorter on a mobile device, and mobile users are looking to make quick purchases, not browse.

Amazon has one-click purchasing on their mobile site, which is ideal, but your site needs to get a consumer from the product to checkout in three or less clicks.

It is not easy, but if you develop a mobile-optimized site on a platform which targets your consumer base and is simply designed, easy to use and can get your customer to the checkout page in three clicks, you will have an edge over the competition.

Looking for another edge?

Try using a URL shortener to make your site more accessible on a mobile device.

The boost in sales might not be instantly noticeable with a well-designed mobile site, but by the time Black Friday 2011 rolls around, donot be surprised to see 5-10 percent of your sales coming from a mobile device.

And unlike most New Year's resolutions, mobile optimizing your site is a resolution you should be happy to keep.

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