

COLUMNS

## 6 tips to make your Web site mobile-friendly

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How to make the retailer's site friendly to mobile users as more interactions and transactions migrate to mobile sites and applications?

Here are six simple tips to help retailers and marketers as they deal with mobile commerce and mobile marketing.

### 1. Make existing site content reliant on external CSS

Most small to midsize businesses will need to leverage the content from their current site to save development time and costs.

If you have built your Web site on external style sheets, you can control the look and feel across devices with the same content.

As mobile screens are usually 320 pixels wide, it is critical to optimize and resize for mobile, but you do not want to build a whole new site.

One of the easiest ways is through CSS. You can then create and edit the content from one central system and then have it properly displayed based on device with specific CSS for those browsers.

### 2. Move away from Flash

Companies are experiencing a huge increase in mobile visitors both from traditional mobile devices such as smartphones as well as new tablet devices including the iPad.

One online retailer that sells musical instruments, for instance, experienced a 1,600 percent increase in mobile visits in 2010 compared to the previous year.

This also resulted in a 3,600 percent increase in revenues from phone purchases alone.

Businesses will not experience such revenue increase from the mobile medium, however, if consumers cannot view the content.

It is important to keep in mind that Apple products cannot recognize Flash. Instead, use HTML 5 or Javascript to display videos or animation on mobile devices.

### 3. Reconsider the use of images

While many businesses opt to select resize when dealing with images, in reality they should just opt for the "Do not display" option for the majority of marketing graphics.

If you resize an image from a small screen, more often than not you diminish the image quality and the message...

If you resize an image for a small screen, more often than not you diminish the image quality and the message you wish to convey.

It is acceptable to retain some graphics, but it is generally a best practice to remove 75 percent of your existing marketing images and downsize product images.

People tend to know what they want when visiting your mobile site, or are already drawn to a specific page based on the content not the image.

#### 4. Keep mobile navigation clean

Nothing detracts from the mobile shopping experience more than being unable to easily navigate a mobile site.

On small smartphone screens, hyperlinks become crowded and difficult to cleanly select.

To help your users move around your mobile site, make text links larger so they are easily "clickable."

Also, integrate the mobile shopping experience by making it easy for browsers to call you.

Phone numbers normally displayed in text can be coded to call upon touch. If coding is not your strong suit, tap-to-call is an app that does it for you and smoothly integrates with your mobile site.

#### 5. Learn from others, test on different devices

Look at sites that have well-built mobile versions and how they contrast with their traditional desktop site.

Amazon, Newegg and CNN are a few examples where you can draw inspiration and best practices.

You will find that they have removed animation and hover text Web features that do not transfer over to mobile devices well.

Take a cue from the leader in the industry and then test based on your own customer demographics.

#### 6. Focus on expanding, not segmenting, your audience

Several companies currently opt to create mobile apps as their Web sites.

While mobile applications may be a good idea for some companies, a mobile-friendly Web site will avoid alienating certain smartphone users.

A mobile app means you are creating a mobile version for that specific phone.

Instead, creating a mobile-friendly site is far more flexible and can just as easily be seen on an iPhone as it can on an Android device.

An app can certainly add value, but it should not serve as your standalone mobile presence.

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