

COLUMNS

Challenging a skeptical view of the mobile-first approach

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By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

By [Kyle Pribilski](#)

"Mobile first well, kind of" published June 20, 2013 in this publication really had very little to do with the concept of mobile first or the fundamentals of deploying a mobile strategy across your brand.

Hotels.com's Matt Goynes, the author of [the column](#), made the statement that "Mobile first is the idea that every business decision you make as a company needs to give strong consideration to mobile opportunities or implications first, and ahead of other sales and distribution channels." Although quite literal and seemingly logical, that is not what mobile first is.

First things first

Mobile first is about user experience (UX) and the direct interactions that clients and prospects have with a brand. It is about addressing the expectations that mobile users have when engaging with a brand while on their mobile device, based upon screen type.

Mobile first has nothing to do with sales or distribution channels mobile is a mass media.

Mobile first is about building a mobile experience from the ground up. It is about developing mobile commerce sites, mobile-optimized HTML5 Web sites, native applications or integrated marketing campaigns for mobile, because it is easier, less expensive and requires fewer FTE's to scale up to platform than down to mobile due to limited real estate.

Mobile is becoming the main screen your customer views, and your company's mobile presence is what a majority of your clients are interacting with. It is the leading point of engagement between your brand and your customer, and it is live and real time.

If a customer has a poor experience, she takes to Twitter or Facebook on her mobile device almost immediately. Are you on Twitter for ROI or to listen?

Mobile first is front office, CMO facing, all about user experience because UX is the nucleus of your brand. It is also back office, CIO facing, all about a smarter, simpler user interface (UI) that improves client conversion rates by leveraging the unique features of different mobile devices.

Logically speaking

Mobile is about understanding behavior, because mobile is all about behavior.

In fact, mobile users only share one thing in common - they all have a mobile device. The rest is wide open to many factors

...and

As for market opportunity, today and in the future, the data speaks for itself: \$5.9 billion is the amount that consumers spent while shopping on a mobile device in first-quarter 2013. Additionally:

By 2015 it is estimated that 80 percent of G20 Internet access worldwide will be on a mobile device

By 2015 the G20 Internet economy will be approximately \$3.3 trillion

Although it may still be a bit more challenging to attribute sales to mobile like you would a channel, mobile is making an undeniable impression with the users who are engaging with your brand every minute of every day.

Companies that build out a mobile experience will create a following and loyalty that will translate to revenue.

I would caution against making an argument like "only 20 percent of our sales are through a mobile channel, therefore, we should not give it more attention."

There are two inherent problems with this logic.

First, it may be because people are trying to shop you on a mobile device but you are not optimized and they cannot do business with you via mobile.

Second, maybe you have an app or are optimized, but the UX is still frustrating your potential customers and they are aborting and using your platform or going to your competition. I see and consult on both of these examples daily.

Gilty pleasures

Mobile devices are on 24/7 and they are always within reach. In fact, 80 percent of mobile users check their mobile device within 15 minutes of waking up.

Because mobile is about behavior, mobile users are always looking for a topnotch user experience, not a freebie or a handout.

Mobile users want their device to be utilitarian, allowing them to easily manage a flight or access a boarding pass, their bank account, pay a bill, purchase Starbucks, access their Gilt voucher, make a reservation on Open Table, perform an internet query, price shop, find directions, purchase a pair of shoes or even make a hotel reservation.

Mobile users have different needs and vastly different expectations of what should be delivered.

Mobile has virtually no physical constraints. Users move fluidly across devices, and device functionality can differ dramatically.

MOBILE FIRST is the way an organization focuses on UI/UX to engage customers in a real-time mobile setting. It is also how they leverage unique mobile device features to better target and drive customers to take action, increasing sales conversion rates because customers can more easily interact with your brand. And it will lower the number of calls that flow into your call center or help desk.

Mobile is a daunting challenge. Acting upon it is not easy.

Mobile first has the power to either set you apart from your competition or your competition apart from you. Which will you choose?

*Kyle Pribilski is founder/CEO of **Formation HD**, Chicago. Reach him at kyle@formationhd.com.*

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