Everything You *MUST Know* Before Using a Mobile Website

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Introduction

You have probably heard about mobile websites. Or maybe someone has suggested that you get a mobile website for your business. Maybe you even use mobile websites – you just don't know it. What are mobile websites? And why is it so important that you have one for your business?

A mobile website is a website that can be accessed through a mobile device such as a cell phone, a Smartphone, or a tablet that's connected to a wireless network. In the past, if someone wanted to hop online and browse the Internet they needed to find a fixed-line service and a large desktop computer in order to do so. But today websites and the Internet are being reached through these compact devices more and more. Today more people access the Internet through their mobile devices rather than using their home computers. This rise in portable Web browsing has become very popular these days as more and more people have Smartphones and tablets.

As technology advances there are going to be even more ways for consumers to access the Web from portable devices. This is why making sure that your business is equipped with a mobile website is so important.

Why You Need a Mobile Website?

The most obvious reason that you need a mobile website is so that your customers can browse your website even when they're using their mobile device. But as long as you have a website and the customer has Internet access on their phone or tablet they'll be able to view your website anyways, right? Whether it's an actual "mobile" site or not? Well, yes, they will be able to. But in today's age that's not enough. Here are the top 10 reasons you need to have a mobile site, even if you already have a "regular" website up and running.

#10) Billions of People Access the Internet through mobile Devices

With the advent of tablets and Smartphones the Internet has gone mobile. There are literally billions of people who use these devices to access the online world. If your business doesn't have a mobile website then a vast majority of these people aren't going to be able to read your information. This means you could be missing out on customers.

#9) One-fifth of the General Public Accesses the Mobile Web Every Day

Again, this number is only going to go up. When you consider that one out of every five people use mobile web services – that's a lot of people! And if you don't have a mobile website, that's a lot of people that you're missing – every single day.

#8) Mobile Advertising Spending will Exceed $6.5 billion in 2012

If so much money is being spent on this kind of advertising there can only be one reason why – because it works! No business is going to throw money away on advertising that doesn't do anything for them. And, the fact that this number increases year after year just shows that people put money back into it year after year because again, it works! This means your business should be advertising on the mobile web as well.

#7) 5% of the Top 500 Online Retailers Have a Mobile Website

This number is low – shockingly low, in fact. So if you're a business that's *not* one of the top 500 online retailers, you're already giving yourself a huge advantage over the competition just by having one!

#6) $1.6 billion People Bought a Product or Service from Their Mobile Devices in 2009

Purchasing products and services online is extremely popular and more people are discovering how to do so from their mobile devices. If you want to be at the same level as your customers your business should be providing them with mobile online shopping.

#5) Mobile Web Usage will Surpass the Desktop within 5 years

This is another big one. Mobile web usage has steadily been increasing. In the next five years it's going to overtake the usage of desktop and laptop computers. Add to that the fact that people are buying mobile devices much faster than they bought desktop computers and laptops, and you can easily see how in the future most of your visitors will be coming to your website through their mobile device. And if you don't have a website for it, they won't stick around for very long.

#4) Your Business's Regular Website is Just Not Enough

Even though customers can access your website through their mobile device, it's *how* they access it that matters. Is the screen optimized for their device? Or do they have to scroll up and down and from side to side? If it's the latter, they won't stay on your website for long. Mobile web sites and regular sites are very different in design and this directly translates into the experience the user has when visiting them. If you only have a regular website it's not going to translate as well to a mobile device as it does on a PC. This is one of the main reasons why you need to have a mobile web site.

#3) Google Indexes Mobile Sites and Regular Sites Differently

Page ranking is huge, whether you're a mobile site or a regular website. But Google Mobile is an index that focuses solely on mobile web sites. Not only does this mean that you could be missing out on some major page ranks, but the Google Mobile index is practically empty. That means that when you develop your mobile website it won't take much to get it to the top of the page rankings.

#2) Mobile Web Sites are Faster

Because mobile web sites are designed to be smaller and have fewer visuals and gimmicks they take a shorter amount of time to load on a mobile device when compared to a regular website. If your business's website takes too long to load a mobile device user will simply leave and find another website they can view faster.

#1) Mobile Websites Increase your Brand's Reach

This one is easy. The more your business can get its name out there, the more people you'll reach and the more people will know about your business. When you have both a regular website and a *mobile* website you will be able to reach a larger group of people with your brand message.

Differences Between Mobile Web Sites and Apps

Now that you know the benefits of having a mobile website you might be wondering what the difference is between a mobile website and an app? The two can be confused very easily, especially with websites like Facebook and Twitter having both. How do you tell the difference and which one is better?

A mobile website is like any other website in the way that it will offer a browser-based experience that includes HTML pages that are linked together. Like a regular website, a mobile website can be accessed through the Internet by a mobile device.

An application or App is something that has to be downloaded and installed on the phone, rather than just viewed in a browser. Apps must be purchased (sometimes they are available for free) from online stores such as the Apple App Store, Android Market, and BlackBerry App World, depending on the phone and the operating system. Apps can download content from a website, but many apps can be run without an Internet connection.

So which is better? Ideally your company will have both. After all, it's still a matter of trying to get your brand's name out there as much as possible. But a mobile website should always, always come first. Here are some reasons why:

The first reason is that a mobile website allows you to track and analyze its viewers and listen to what people are saying about it. The chances are good that your mobile website won't be what you envisioned it to be. It's sad, but true. Very often people think that their business's website is perfect. Then the site goes live and it's not what they thought it would be at all. Sometimes the site isn't user friendly enough and other times people will have a hard time finding it. There are bound to be a few kinks to work out with your mobile website.

That's fine with a mobile website. All it really requires is that you track down your website designer and ask them to fix the problems. The user won't even know about it until you tell them the problems have been fixed, or until the next time they visit your mobile site. However, when updates and changes are made to a mobile app, the user then needs to reinstall it and possibly even download it again. The difference is that with a mobile website the user doesn't need to do anything, whereas updates to apps need to be installed and downloaded. This might put the customer out – and they might not even bother updating their apps.

Another reason why mobile websites are better than mobile apps (at least when you're first starting out in the mobile communications world,) is because mobile websites are much easier to build, develop, expand, and create than apps are. Apps can involve lengthy and complicated code and an in-depth knowledge of how writing apps works. While there is some technical knowledge to know about building mobile websites, you will still be able to make changes to content and design fairly easily and with minimal hassle. Because of that, once you've developed your mobile website you will find it very easy to make changes and add updates. It's also easier to create a mobile app if you already have a mobile website. Your mobile website will already be all laid out and after that, it's just a matter of transferring that mobile website data into an app atmosphere. The idea is that you must start with a mobile website first and then you can move into the world of apps. It'll just be easier for you.

Things to Consider for Your Mobile Website

You won't need to sit at your desk and pound out endless lines of HTML code for your mobile website. As a business owner you're far too busy to worry about these things and many business owners aren't familiar enough with code or programming practices to be able to build their own website. There are many experienced marketing consultants with extensive web design knowledge that will be able to do the grunt work for you.

Before you hire a consultant there are a few things that you'll need to be able to explain in advance to them, such as what kind of layout you want, what kind of content you want, and how you want your mobile website to work. These are the things a consultant will ask you so that they can tailor your mobile website to exactly what you want it to be.

Here are the four most important things you should consider when speaking to a marketing consultant.

1. **Content**

The whole idea of building a mobile website is to give your customers a simpler, more concise way to view your website and gain information about your company. So you probably won't be able to include every piece of information that's on your regular website – and you shouldn't. This means that you will need to go through your website, page by page and line by line to decide what information you want to include on your mobile website and what you can leave out. As a business owner, it's important that <u>you</u> do this, and that you have an idea of what content you want on your mobile website before you begin building it. So take a few minutes to figure out what your mobile website really needs. Do you need a full contact form where the customer needs to fill out 15 different fields? Probably not. Should you briefly include your own contact information and store locators? Those would probably be a good idea.

2. Site Layout

Don't get too stressed out about this one. No, you don't need to know how to set up your margins perfectly, or how to make sure that all of your images are centered. Those are things that your marketing consultant can worry about. But you do need to have some kind of vision of what you want your site layout to look like. The major element of your design layout that you need to worry about is how many pages your mobile website will have. Look at all the tabs you have on your website and all of the links that lead to different pages. The chances are you don't actually need all those pages on your mobile website and truthfully, you *shouldn't* have them. These pages will slow your site down and this could send your viewers away. This is the exact *opposite* thing that you want to happen with your mobile website.

3. Branding Elements

Your marketing consultant is just that – an expert at marketing and promoting your business's brand. As such, they'll probably know to include things such as your logo, your trademark, and your slogan on your mobile website. What you need to decide is if you want them smaller, and if you want to include all of them. It is important that you include the part of your brand that customers are most familiar with. So if you have a slogan for one of your marketing campaigns, but it's just one of many, you probably don't want to include it on your mobile website. If however, you have a main slogan that your company uses for everything you will want to include this. Not only does it promote your brand and get your name out there, but it also makes customers feel as though they're coming to a familiar place.

4. Include Links to the Full Site

You know what content you want to include on your mobile website and which you can leave out. You are probably not entirely happy with leaving out content, even though it's necessary. But you wouldn't have all that content on your regular website if you didn't want your customers to have access to it. So how can you still give them all that info, yet pare down your mobile site enough that it doesn't take too long to load? It's easy – include a link to your full website on every page of your

mobile site (and remember, there shouldn't be too many of them.) This way, you're still giving your customers access to the info, but only if they want it and are willing to wait for it.

Types of Mobile Website Services

So far we have talked at length about how you don't actually have to worry about the nitty-gritty's of your mobile website such as programming and HTML code because your marketing consultant will do all of that for you. But what if you don't have a marketing consultant? Well, it's time to hire one and there's no better time than when you're getting ready to create and develop your mobile website. Before we delve into how to hire a marketing consultant to design your mobile site you first must understand what type of services different marketing consultants will offer you.

Mobilizing your existing site

You might think this is exactly what you want, but it's the exact opposite. This is the difference between being a *mobile* website and a *mobile-friendly* website. A mobile-friendly website is one that can be found and viewed on a mobile phone. In essence, if you have a website, it's already mobile-friendly from any cell phone because your customers can access it through their browser. However, that doesn't mean that they'll have a good experience or that they will keep reading. A mobile website on the other hand is optimized for cell phones and mobile devices – meaning it's a site that's meant to be viewed only on mobile devices. This latter is the type that you need. After all, you don't need to hire anyone to make your site mobile-friendly.

DIY Templates

Marketing consultants will often tell you that you can make your own mobile site with the templates they'll give you. With these templates you'll be able to fill in the pages that you want to include, as well as the content. While this may sound like a cost-effective strategy, it's actually going to cost you more in the long run. That's because DIY templates look like just that – templates that can be found on hundreds of sites. This makes your site look just like all the others. Is that what you really want in your mobile site? Of course not! You need your business to stand out in every way and that includes your mobile website. Save your business time and money now by building a decent mobile website.

Custom Mobile Sites

You should only consider hiring a marketing consultant who will customize your entire mobile site for you. This means creating an entirely different site from your own, one with less content and fewer images and video (if any at all.) A consultant who can do this for you will be able to create custom features and make your site as functional as you need it to be. Even if you don't need a huge, jazzy site, you should still only consider hiring a consultant that can customize your mobile site for you; because even the smallest sites can stand out from the crowd.

Now that you know the different types of services that marketing consultants can offer you, let's go over some brief, but key, elements that you should look for.

How to Hire a Marketing Consultant for Mobile Websites

Now that you know how important it is to hire a marketing consultant to create your mobile website for you how exactly are you supposed to go about hiring one? Here are a few key things you should look for.

The One Right for the Job

Not all marketing consultants will deal with mobile websites. Some will be better suited to help you design a mobile website than other may be. In short, different consultants do different things; and asking whether or not they can create a mobile website for you should be your first question. If they can't, you obviously need to find one that can.

Know What You Want

This goes along with deciding what content will be on your mobile website, what pages you want to include and what links you want to be on there. A marketing consultant won't be able to help you very much if you don't know what you're looking for. So before you even start talking to marketing consultants have a vision of what you want your mobile website to look like and the kind of experience you want users to have while they're on it.

Know Your Budget

This will help both you and your marketing consultant. It's easy to get carried away when you see all the options that are available for your mobile website and you'll most likely want them all. But you might not be able to afford them all. Go into the project knowing what your budget is so that you

can keep to your spending limits and give your consultant a better idea of what might be appropriate for you.

Know Their Experience

As we all know, the world of technology is forever changing. And your marketing consultant needs to be able to keep up with it. An experienced marketing consultant will already have all the tools at their fingertips in order to do just that, and they'll make sure that your mobile website is always up to current technology standards. In addition to that, an experienced consultant already knows the common pitfalls and problems experienced with mobile websites and will be able to fix them quickly.

Combining Simplicity with Quality

Your mobile website *has* to be simple – that's the whole point of having a mobile site. And your marketing consultant needs to know how to trim down your full site in order to make it mobile-optimized. However, you should never sacrifice quality and a good marketing consultant will know how to give you the best of both worlds.

How They Value Your Site

It's your site, so of course it's going to be important to you. But how important is it to your marketing consultant? Your consultant needs to put just as much value into your mobile website as you do. Will they get it done as quickly as you need? Are they passionate and enthusiastic about the project when they talk to you about it? If any of the answers are no, trust that there's a marketing consultant out there that's excited about developing your site, and won't stop working on it until you're 110% happy with it.

Their Portfolio

A good, experienced marketing consultant will have a long portfolio of different mobile websites that they have worked on and created. Be sure that you can look these sites over (at your

leisure, don't rush this,) so that you can see whether or not their work is what you're looking for, and if the sites they have created are professional in appearance and design. If you don't see good examples in their portfolio or if they don't have any samples to show you at all, it's time to find a marketing consultant that does have a portfolio.

Their Referrals

You ***must*** get referrals for any marketing consultant before you choose to hire them. Any consultant can show you a great mobile website, tell you they designed it, and convince you to hire them. But that's just not enough. You don't know how long it took to get that mobile site up and running and you don't know whether the consultant was a pleasure or a chore to deal with. These are things that you can only find out by speaking to someone who has worked with the consultant before. This means you should always ask for and check up on references.

Questions about Mobile Websites

1. Why should I have a mobile optimized website?

There's really no choice in today's business world. Your regular website simply is not enough when it's viewed on a mobile device. Or rather, it's too much when viewed on a mobile device. More users than ever before are accessing the Internet through their mobile phone or tablet and the numbers are only going to rise. Make sure that customers can view your business's website on their phone just as well as they can on their computer. It's essential that you have a mobile website.

2. When should I start thinking about getting a mobile website?

That one's easy – today. Right now.

3. Do I need to get a different domain address for my mobile website?

You may want to, or you may not. But generally you don't need to have an entirely separate address. Your consultant can convert it over so you don't have to worry about finding and paying for more domain names.

4. How many pages should I have on my mobile website?

When you're thinking about what to trim from your full site and where, you'll definitely need to lessen the amount of pages you have. Generally you're allowed a maximum of six pages, but you might not even want to use that many.

5. How long should it take to get my mobile website up and running?

It will depend on the consultant you choose and the requirements you have for your website. But getting a mobile site up and running isn't complicated for an experienced professional. It should not be more than a few weeks.

Conclusion

There's a lot to know about mobile websites. Take relief in knowing that when it comes to the programming, coding, and actually getting your mobile website up and running – those are things you can hand off to a professional and still end up with the vision you had in mind. What's most important to know as a business owner is that a mobile website isn't just an advantage in today's technological world – it's a must. So start mapping out what your mobile site looks like to you and what you want it to tell your customers. Then call a professional marketing consultant who can see it through from start to finish. It won't take long to see all of the benefits mobile websites bring and how your business will grow because of it!

Next Steps

Thank you again for downloading this free report. We hope that you found it useful and it has given you the information you need to help you better understand the importance of having your own mobile website and the strategies to employ to help you do just that.

If you would like additional assistance please contact us at:

Your contact information goes here

Recommended Resources

We know that creating a mobile website can be very stressful. While we hope this guide has provided you with everything you need to give you the confidence to get started we understand you may need further information and assistance. You can always contact us directly. In addition, we recommend these helpful resources as well.

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