

Module 4 – How To Make Your Website Mobile Friendly

You should make your mobile website user-friendly to avoid customers from:

- leaving your site
- never visiting your site again
- turning to your competitor's site

Now that it's clear to you how big the potential of mobile marketing for generating profits for your business is, the next step is to make your website mobile-optimized. If you already have an existing website, chances are people are already visiting your site on their mobile devices. The only question is whether your mobile visitors will stay long enough on your site or will simply move on to your competitor. And the only thing that can engage your visitors and keep them loyal to you is if your site is mobile-optimized.

Mobile optimization is another new phrase in the world of mobile marketing. This is a process of creating a mobile version of your site, which is easy to navigate on different models of cell phones and other mobile devices. A site that is fully mobile-optimized gives the audience immediate access to information, without the other frills that a regular website designed for desktops and laptops would have.

It is interesting to note that although the big brands recognize how important mobile marketing is, only a few have their sites mobile-optimized. Almost 80% of well known brands in the US still do not have sites that are mobile-friendly. Do you see the huge opportunity that these brands are missing?

Why Should You Make Your Site Mobile-Friendly?

Mobile users expect websites to load faster when they view them on their cell phones. If your site is not optimized for mobile use, you can't blame your consumers if they:

- leave your site
- are unlikely to visit your site again
- turn to your competitor's site

Smartphones such as iPhones, Blackberry and other PDAs are the best devices for mobile marketing. And although sales of these devices are phenomenal, you need to remember that you may have an audience that may still have devices that are not as advanced as these devices. This is why when you design your mobile site, you need to see how it looks on devices other than smartphones.

Go ahead and type your website URL on an iPhone browser. Then compare that with how your site looks on another smartphone, say a Blackberry. Next, try loading your site on a WAP-ready phone. Finally, compare those views with how your website looks like on your desktop or laptop.

You can see that your website actually appears in various ways on all these gadgets. One thing for sure - if your website can not be read on a mobile device because the fonts are too small or the images take forever to download, then it's totally useless for a mobile audience!

Tips To Make Your Website Mobile-friendly

- Consider your user's convenience at all times.
- Make sure your website is easy to navigate on different models of cell phones and other mobile devices.
- Make sure your website gives the audience immediate access to information.
- Be sure that your font size is readable.
- Use URL shorteners.

Speaking Of URLS...

Remember one thing when you are trying to keep your website mobile ready:

You need to consider your user's convenience AT ALL TIMES!

A mobile internet user will not spend time typing a very long URL to get to a website. It is not only tiresome, but can also be quite frustrating for those whose mobile gadgets do not have QWERTY keyboards. Keep in mind that although there are millions of people who now own smartphones, there are still others who are using mobile devices that do not have touch screen features and some don't even have advanced scrolling capability!

Most phones are now internet-ready, meaning they have WAP (wireless application protocol) capabilities. However, there are still some cell phone models that are not designed for fast internet mobile browsing. Some still have the alpha-numeric keypad which can be quite difficult to use for internet surfing.

Top domains such as Google, Facebook and Yahoo all have their mobile versions with the mobile prefixes (m, mobi, mobile) to make it easy for internet users to access these mobile sites.

- Google – m.google.com
- Facebook – m.facebook.com
- Yahoo – m.yahoo.com
- Twitter – mobile.twitter.com

In fact these big names and other popular domains now have applications which users can easily download on their mobiles. The app will create an icon that will then show up on the user's mobile browser. Clicking on an icon (like Facebook or Yahoo) will lead the user to these sites easily.

But if you don't have the luxury of creating your own app yet, you can try using URL shorteners to give mobile users easy access to your site. There are some URL shorteners that you can also use to make it easy to type your site URL on a mobile browser. Some of the most popular ones are bit.ly and tinyurl.com. You can visit these sites, type in your site URL and can immediately shorten your website address!

Mobiletinyurl.com is a free URL shortener service that can shorten any website URL to make it easy to enter on mobile phones, even those with the alpha-numerical keypads. You can save about half the time on typing a website address simply by using this service to shorten the website address.

This mobile tiny URL service can easily convert your URL to a mobile optimized one, because the resulting shortened URL only uses the first letters of each keypad number. That makes it easy for the mobile user to type your URL even if the mobile device still uses an alpha-numeric keypad.

There are also some URL shortener services that offer analytics – a tracking method that can tell you how many people have actually visited the link.

Most URL shorteners provide the service for free. However, you have to be aware that in case the website providing the service suddenly goes out of business, all the links you have shortened will no longer work. Consumers should also take caution when clicking shortened URLs. Because you can't really see the original name of the website hidden by the shorter URL, you may suddenly access a virus website or one that sends out spams. So it is always best to exercise caution when using URL shortening services or when clicking shortened URLs.

Once you have decided on your mobile website address, it is time to consider other steps to make your site optimized for any mobile device.

Basic Mobile Optimization

1. Keep your site layout simple

- Mobile phones are limited by memory space, operating systems, broadband capacity and screen size
- Do not put in too much information
- Do not use flash
- Use drop down menus
- Use minimum javascript in html pages
- Design easy navigation

Making your website mobile friendly is an important step if you want to target the expanding network of consumers who use their mobile devices.

Here's a checklist that can guide you on what you need to do:

1. Keep your site layout simple.
2. Choose your content wisely.
3. Test your site on different platforms - iPhone, android, etc.

a. Simple Site Layout

Designing your website for mobile use is different from creating one for a PC browser. Mobile phones are limited by memory space, operating systems, broadband capacity and most of all, screen size. When designing your mobile site, consider the following tips:

1. You don't need to put too much information on your mobile website.
Remember that screens on mobile gadgets are usually sized about 10%

of a regular computer screen, so you can't put too much text on your site that users will find difficult to read.

2. If possible, do not use flash as this is still not supported by many phone browsers.
3. Use drop down menus so the user does not have to scroll the page for a long time.
4. Try to use minimum javascript in html pages. Remember, not all mobile phones recognize this language.
5. Design your pages so that it can be easily navigated. Touch screen phones allow for both vertical and horizontal scrolling. However, most phones still use the up and down arrow keys to navigate the screen. Keep these differences in mind so that you can make your mobile site easy to use for all forms of mobile devices.

2. Choose your content wisely

- Users have short attention span
- Offer simple and brief yet compelling content
- Put yourself in customer's shoes – what would they want/need?
- Avoid putting too many images
- Have a link of access to your original site

b. Compelling Content

Mobile users have short attention spans! They are always looking for accessibility and simplicity. To give mobile users the best surfing experience, your site should have compelling content that they can read and understand in just a few minutes. Remember:

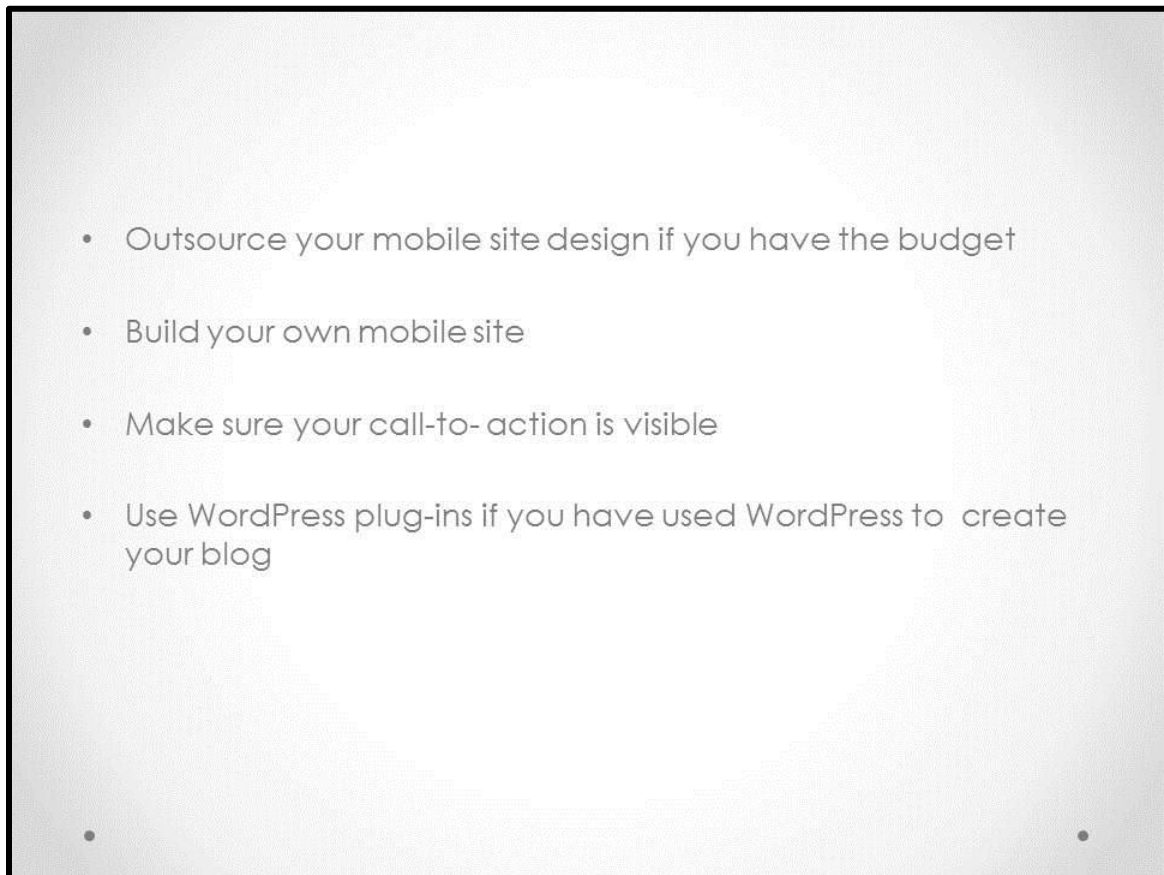
Simple and Brief Yet Compelling Content = Audience's Desire!

Here are some ways you can create an optimized mobile experience for your site visitors:

1. Create content with your mobile user in mind. Ask yourself – why would a consumer access your site on a mobile device? The most common reason will be information –on-the-go. Give your audience what they need at the shortest time possible.

“Successful mobile websites and applications will do fewer things, but do them better,” quote from Daniel R. Odio, CEO of PointAbout.
“On mobile especially, it’s important that things just work.”

2. Avoid putting too many images on your mobile site, as this can slow down site loading. Images should be in .jpeg or .gif format, as these are the ones often recognized by mobile devices. Always put descriptive alt tags for images, in case they don't load fast enough due to compatibility issues with the mobile browser or slow internet connection or because a user's connection is too slow.
3. Sometimes mobile users would still want to access your normal website. Remember to always have a link to your original site.



4. Consider outsourcing your mobile site design if you have the budget for it. There are many freelance web developers who offer mobile site design services. However, you should make sure that the developer you hire understands .mobi standards, which is the top domain used for mobile websites. You can easily find freelance developers at
 - rent-a-coder.com
 - elance.com
 - odesk.com

If you do decide to outsource, you would still have to choose which information you need to appear on your site.

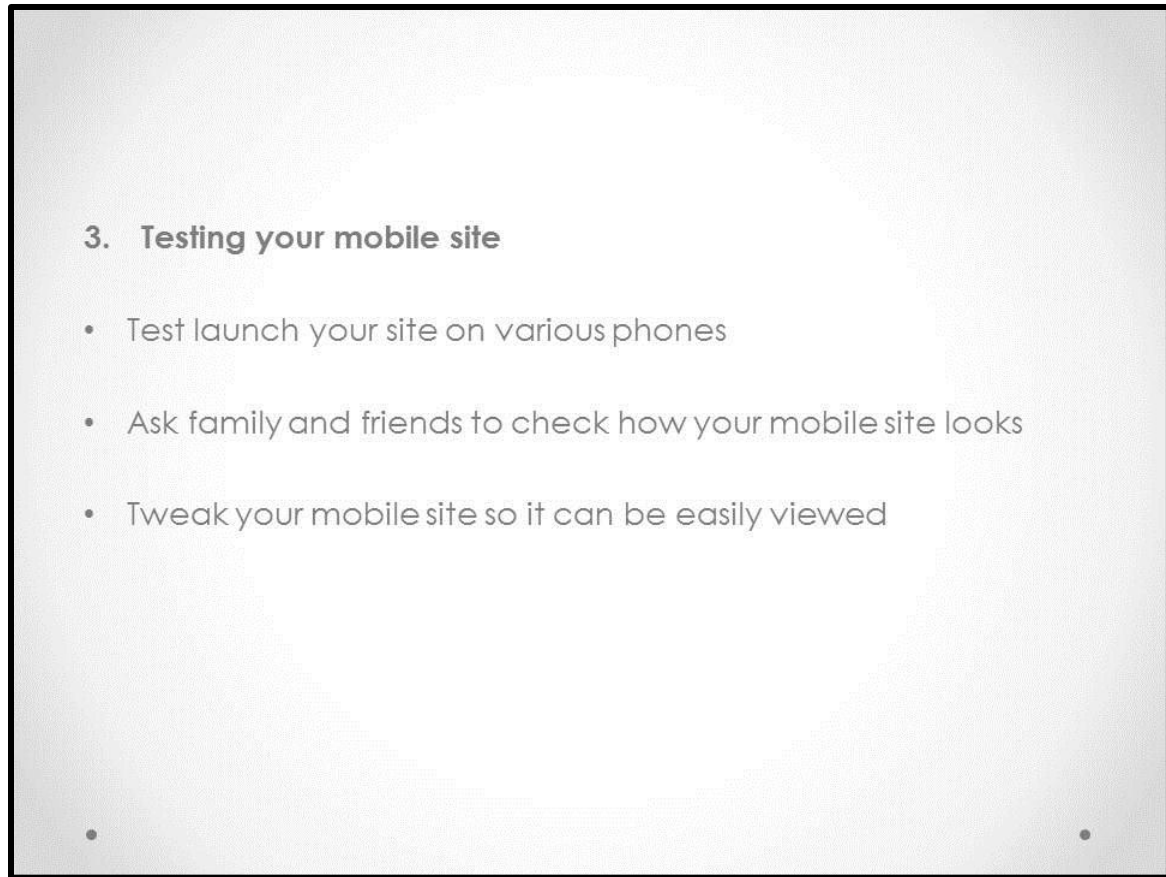
5. You can build your own mobile website even without coding knowledge using sites that offer free software. Here are some sites you could check:

- mofuse.com
- mobisitegalore.com
- mobilestorm.com
- winksite.com
- mobify.me

These sites allow you to build your own mobile site even if you don't have any coding experience. You can try the software for free, although you may have to sign up for a plan later if you are trying to build more than one mobile site.

6. Make sure your call-to-action is visible if you want your site to convert easily. You can put the call-to-action button at the top of the page where it can easily catch your user's attention.
7. If you used WordPress to create your blog and you want to have a mobile version of it, you can use WordPress plug-ins such as WP-mobilepress. This plug-in is easy to install and there are different custom mobile themes that are compatible with different mobile phones.

WPTouch is another WordPress plug-in that can automatically transform your WordPress blog into a mobile-ready website. You can view how your site would look like when accessed from an iPhone, Android or Blackberry



c. Testing Your Mobile Site

1. Test launch your site on various phones, such as iPhone, android and popular brands such as Nokia, Sony Ericsson and Samsung by using a mobile emulator, which will quickly show you how your site appears on different mobile devices. Try typing your mobile site URL on <http://ready.mobi> to see how your site will look like before you launch it.
2. Ask family and friends to check how your mobile site looks like on their phones.
3. Tweak your site so that it can be easily viewed on different mobile devices.

There are other design tips for mobile sites that you can access on the Internet, but here's the bottomline:

Design your mobile site in such a way that it is simple, easy to navigate and fast to load.

If you are big on internet marketing, you will definitely be left behind by your competitors if your website is not accessible on mobile phones. Again,

remember this... Your potential clients may already be accessing your site on their cell phones and if they can't read it or if they can't easily navigate through it, then you don't really stand a good chance for their business!