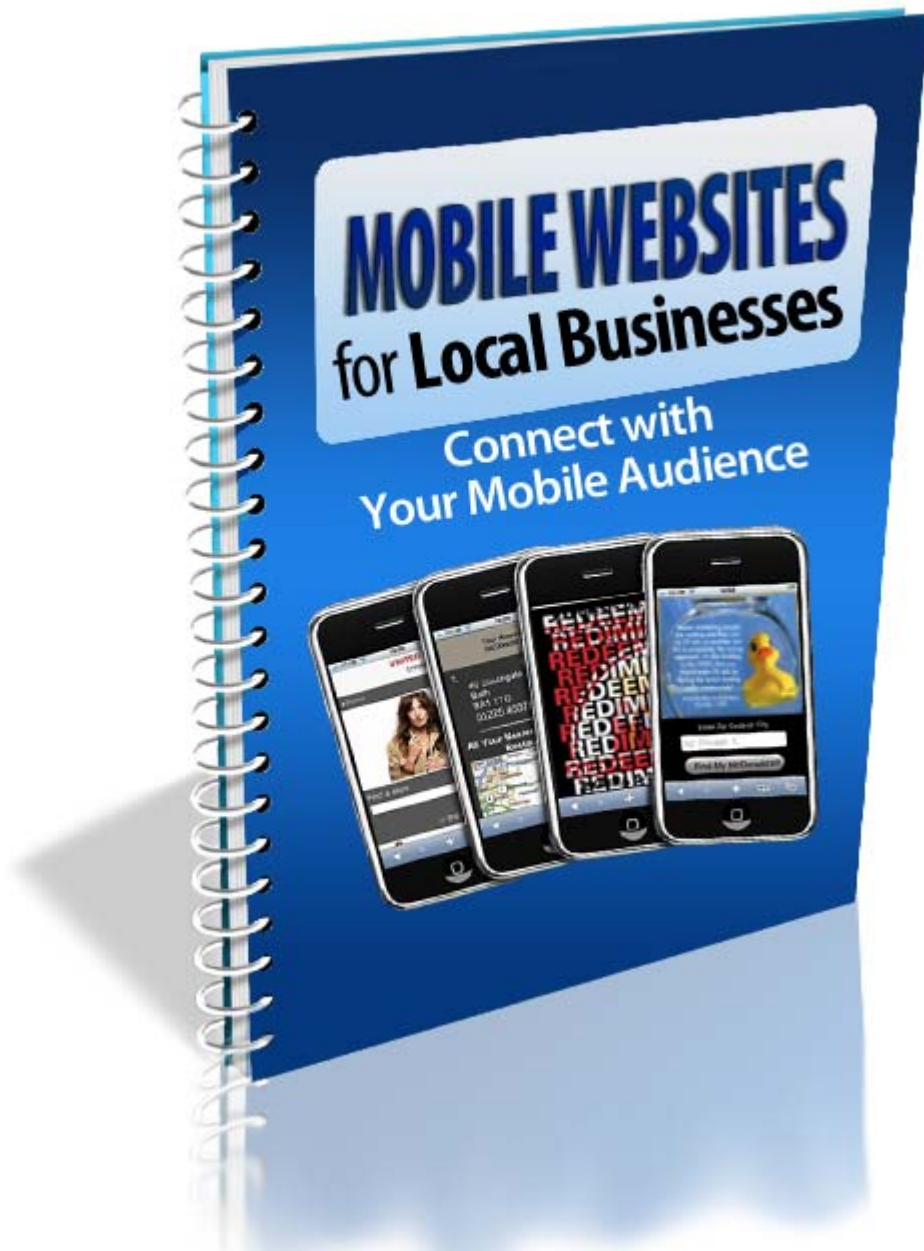




The Importance of Having a Mobile-Friendly Website

Most businesses these days are reliant, to some degree, on attracting sales via the internet. Social Media, Search Engine Optimization, Video Marketing, and many other online methods are helping small businesses connect with their local consumers.

However, many companies are missing out on one crucial piece of the puzzle when it comes to effectively marketing their businesses:

A mobile-friendly version of their website.

Just take a look around at your customers. Take a look around while walking down the street. Take a look around your own household. One thing that almost everyone has in common today is that we cannot function without our mobile devices.

The current sales boom in smart phones and tablets means that more and more people are accessing the internet via a mobile device every day.

As the 4G network continues to expand across the globe, mobile internet usage is expected to expand right along with it. As the next wave of mobile devices becomes cheaper in price, they will also become more advanced with the ability to handle even more complex tasks.

Due to this, internet access via mobile devices is set to exceed desktop access in the very near future.

In order for small local businesses to be able to compete with the big online businesses, they need to have a good mobile web presence that clearly directs people to their products, services and location.

A strong, profitable website structure is vital if you want to convert your website visitors into revenue. However, if your website does not have a

mobile-friendly version, you are missing out on a large percentage of actual visitors to your website.

Because of the way that smart phones and tablets display web pages, a website that looks great on a desktop may be hard to navigate and difficult to read on a mobile device.

Today's search engines are designed to be more device-specific in their results pages. This means a website that is not mobile-optimized may not even appear on the results pages for mobile internet users.

However, many business owners fail to see the impact this could have on their ability to profit in these tough economic times. Overlooking this powerful form of marketing is a huge mistake.

Designing a website for your business that is geared towards mobile users is a simple process. Mobile-friendly pages are often just a simpler version of a standard page, so they do not require as much content as a normal website.

In fact, your mobile website can easily be created with the content on your current website. But the "layout of the content" and the "amount of content" must be appropriate in order to have a flawless mobile website that your customers will love.

The Current Growth in Mobile Internet Usage

As the mobile networks continue to expand and improve, using the internet on the go is fast-becoming a standard practice for most people today.

This trend is not expected to slow down any time soon. Mobile internet usage is expected to grow at a rate of 16.6% per annum as the use of PCs and land line internet connections continue to decline.

Furthermore, recent statistics that show 85% of internet users also shop online. In fact, the number of new internet users who spent money online in 2011 almost doubled those who spend money online in 1993.

This massive growth of “mobile” usage coupled with the massive growth of “internet” usage is a strong indication that a large portion of any company’s website traffic will probably come from a mobile device.

Businesses of all types and sizes have to compete with online shopping and services; including local businesses that need to have customers continuously coming to their physical location in order to stay afloat.

Advertising online has become an essential part of every business’ marketing strategy and targeting mobile customers is just the next evolution in online technology.

Tailoring your web presence to account for the latest developments in communication technology is an intelligent way to gain the advantage over your competitors.

Using mobile technology also makes your business more customer-friendly, which is more likely to turn into revenue that could have otherwise been easily missed.

A Comparison of Standard Websites and Their Mobile-Friendly Versions

There are a number of simple reasons why a standard website will not display well on a mobile device. The most common one is the size.

Web pages are generally designed to be viewed at a screen resolution of 1024x768, but most mobile devices like smart phones have screens that are around 320x480 pixels.

This makes viewing a standard website on a mobile device extremely difficult in most cases. While some mobile devices are finding ways to work around this problem, most traditional websites still do not function well on mobile devices.

In fact, navigating a standard webpage can be a real problem because mobile devices do not have mouse style pointers, which makes it difficult to click on tabs and links.

The smaller memory size of mobile devices means that active elements of a page, such as java script, will not display well, if at all, on a mobile device.

Again, the manufacturers of these devices are working on improving their performance in these areas. But in the meantime, the pages take a very long time to load and create bad user-experiences for your mobile viewers.

In order to create a pleasant viewing experience for mobile users, it is vital to take these factors into account when planning out the design and content for your mobile website.

Make sure that your mobile site prominently displays your important information and that the pages still look professionally attractive to your visitors.

The general formatting on your mobile pages should be vertical so that it is easy to just scroll down to the necessary information. The navigation bar is best placed at the bottom of the page to make it easy to operate on older style phones.

The speed at which a mobile site loads is really important to its success. Therefore, it is best to remove many of the larger active elements from the mobile version of your website.

This will keep the downloadable file size to a minimum and ensure that your mobile pages load quickly. This way, you won't lose the visitor while he or she is waiting for the page to fully display.

Another important strategy for attracting mobile traffic to your website is to make sure your site is indexed in the mobile search engines. The major search engines are now determining which results to display based upon the source device of the query.

This means that search engines like Google Mobile and Jumtap will find and list pages that will display well on a mobile device at the top of the search engine results. Obviously, those pages will receive a greater percentage of the mobile traffic.

The search engines will examine the size of the page, the length of the keywords, the location of the user, and any other mobile-specific content to determine which mobile websites will best fit the users' needs.

Clearly, if you are a local business, you want your site to be high in the mobile search engine results so you can get more actual foot traffic coming through your doors.

Because many businesses will not make the extra effort to design a web page specifically for their mobile customers, they stand to miss out on a lot of potential revenue.

Their online content will be difficult to view on mobile devices and the poor mobile viewer experiences will cost them the very customers that they should be targeting.

Many will try cheaper tricks like compressing their pages, which may work on some devices, but not all. Furthermore, this is only a stopgap solution at best.

The perceived cost of redesigning their entire site will stop many businesses from catering to their mobile customers when it is really a simple, affordable, and profitable task.

Tips for Creating a Mobile-Friendly Version of Your Website

1. The first thing to consider when designing a mobile version of your website is the screen size. Simply having your online content formatted to display well on handheld devices can improve the mobile traffic to your website. Don't overstuff your mobile website with unnecessary information, bells and whistles.
2. Due to the fact that local businesses heavily rely on foot traffic from their local area, be sure to make your phone number and location clearly visible on your mobile website's home page. Mobile internet users are "on the go" and are usually looking to call you up or come by – that's it. So make it super easy for them to call or come by.
3. As great as all of the graphics on your standard site may be, they are just going to decrease the speed at which pages display on small mobile devices. It is best to keep them to a minimum or to dispose of them altogether when building your mobile-optimized site. This includes page elements like headers, which won't display on mobile devices as they were intended.

4. Mobile devices tend to break up long pages of content into smaller, broken down pages of content. So it is best to circumvent this by editing your content to display in smaller, screen-sized blocks.
5. Take control over how your pages display entirely. Put yourself in your mobile customers' shoes and take a look at each of your mobile web pages. Is it easy for you to access the information your mobile users will need while on the go?
6. When you have trimmed your mobile website down to a reasonable presentation, it is a good idea to take a look at it on a number of different mobile devices to see if the website has any problems.
7. Once you have configured your web page to display well on mobile devices, the next step is to make sure that it gets indexed in the mobile search engines so that your customers can easily find it.
8. Most searches from mobile devices are fifteen letters or less, so it is necessary for your mobile-configured pages to use shorter keywords. This is because you have to keep your mobile content to a workable size. So the more accurate the keywords are, the more likely your mobile customers will find what they are looking for; which could result in even more sales your business.
9. To make sure that your page is visible to the crawlers, submit your mobile site map to the search engines to give the spiderbots a head start on the job of indexing your content.

All of your key content should be at the top of the site as it is difficult to navigate more than a couple of pages deep into a website on a mobile device.

All of the usual SEO rules for having a good number of inbound and outbound links, preferably with other mobile websites, still apply.

However, as the available space on a mobile screen is limited, it is best not to use up a lot of space with links, which will lead traffic away from your page.

Excessive links on your mobile website will also impact your site's loading process, which could be counter-productive.

Nonetheless, it is still important to have some quality links to let the search engines know that your mobile site contains the content that they are looking for.

Running a mobile website in tandem to your established, standard website essentially doubles your web presence. Being able to do this by using the same amount of content, or less, can be extremely profitable for your business.

Keeping your mobile content simple will not only make it easy and fast to download, but will ensure that your mobile customers find the information they need without all the hassle.

Most importantly, it will show them how convenient it is to do business with you. By making it easier for your customers to connect with your business while on the go, you are providing the foundation for not only more sales, but for more long-term, loyal customer relationships.

When consumers run into websites that are difficult to view on their mobile devices, they quickly exit them and move on to one of their competitors' sites.

However, when they find dependable, easy-loading websites that they can access while conducting business via their mobile devices, they are likely to come back time and time again.

Based on the recent statistics about the massive increases in mobile internet usage, your mobile site could eventually be even more successful than your standard site.

Mobile Websites for Local Businesses: Connect with Your Mobile Audience

The continued growth of mobile devices means that it is going to be crucial for you to market your business directly to these mobile consumers.

The businesses who realize this and take action on this new-age form of digital technology will be the first to reap the great rewards that mobile websites offer.

It's time for your business to develop a solid plan that will help you connect with your mobile audience and capitalize on the enormous growth of mobile technology.

To Your Success!

Alex Major

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