7 REASONS TO CONSIDER RESPONSIVE DESIGN for your company’s next generation website.
Author: Eric Boyer

Eric Boyer has been passionately designing and building websites since 1999. He is the Director of Interface Design at Bridgeline Digital where he has been recognized for his work in responsive web design. He is currently working with clients such as PODS, Budget Car, and Children’s Hospital Colorado to increase the return on investment of their web properties and guide each into the responsive era.

Co-Author: Ryan Hadfield

Ryan Hadfield has contributed to TIME, Boston.com (The Boston Globe) and has been featured on MetaCritic for his work. He is the Deputy Editor of The Digital Engagement blog, where he writes daily about trends in the digital world for Bridgeline Digital. He has his Masters degree in Journalism from Northeastern University.
OVERVIEW:

‘Mobilegeddon’, Customer Expectations & Your Organization’s Website

Smart Device adoption is (still) experiencing a peerless boom. The staggering statistics surrounding smartphone and tablet adoption as well as the devices’ use cases, which we’ll examine in this eBOok, has created a waterfall of sequences of events: Because people, by and large, use smart phones, customer expectations shifted, especially in how organizations adapt a web experience to their circumstances. Now, the idea of mobile-friendly websites for businesses is no longer a thrill, it’s a requirement.

You may read that last sentence as hyperbole, because, up to this point, whether or not your organization adapted its web presence to meet the Mobile Revolution impacted your business, mostly, in intangible ways (branding, customer frustrations, and more). Make no mistake about it, though: the deleterious effect was there. Smart digital marketing teams know this, but Google has since made it easier to convince organizations to adapt or die (at least in terms of visibility) to these consumer trends.

Why? At its core, Google operates to serve its users. The legendary algorithm that determines a query’s search engine results page (SERP) has created an entire industry of professionals (SEO specialists, PPC agencies, etc.). And in late 2014, Google began annotating whether or not sites were mobile-friendly in its search engine results page (SERP). This was the first step toward a new release in April of 2015, dubbed ‘Mobilegeddon,’ which will start penalizing websites that aren’t optimized across all devices. Google is serving its users, isn’t it time your organization does too?

So, ask yourself: What are my options?
DEFINING RESPONSIVE DESIGN

When you first start off trying to solve a problem, the first solutions you come up with are very complex, and most people stop there. But if you keep going, and live with the problem and peel more layers of the onion off, you can oftentimes arrive at some very elegant and simple solutions. Most people just don’t put in the time or energy to get there.

- Steve Jobs, co-founder, chairman, and CEO of Apple Inc.

Creating a web strategy to deal with the rise of mobile devices boils down to three primary options: Developing a Native App, designing a separate Mobile Site, or recalibrating your primary website with Responsive Design. There is no magic bullet; each option comes with advantages and disadvantages. Consolidating web properties to provide visitors a one-stop outlet that already exists only seems logical and prudent. Responsive Design fills that void.

So, let’s define **Responsive Design**:

**Responsive Web design** is the approach that suggests that design and development should respond to the user’s behavior and environment based on screen size, platform and orientation. As the user switches from their laptop to iPad, the website should automatically switch to accommodate for resolution, image size and scripting abilities. This would eliminate the need for a different design and development phase for each new gadget on the market.

- Kayla Knight, Smashing Magazine

Using in-depth research data and insights from leading industry experts, this eBook will explore **7 Reasons Why Marketers Should Consider Responsive Design for a Next Generation Website** to bolster their digital marketing strategy.
REASON #1:
LOCAL SEARCH AND THE POWER OF ACCESSIBILITY

From a business and engagement perspective, the perpetual adoption boom that smart devices have experienced over the last decade has created a wave of trickle down consumers trends. In short, our behavior is now dictated by technology, and, how accessible we are to connecting with brands.

This is perhaps best illustrated by a Morgan Stanley study which found that 91% of all smartphone users have their phones within an arm’s reach 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Think about that. An arm’s reach!

And, smart devices are constantly top of mind. Kleiner Perkins Caufield and Byers found the average user checks their phone nearer to 150 times per day.

What does this mean for marketers?

The short answer: Everything. There is no such thing as a wasted moment anymore. Your website is a 24/7, 365-day promotional vehicle.

REASON #1: CONTINUES...
REASON #1: CONTINUED

The accessibility of our devices enables us to use micro-moments in the day to get things done, such as search, shop, communicate and keep entertained. We found that people often turn to nearby devices to complete spur-of-the-moment activity. In fact, 80% of the searches that happen on smartphones are spur-of-the-moment, and 44% of these spontaneous searches are goal-oriented.

- Dai Pham, Google Marketing

With Local Search, Users Don’t Have An APP-etite

How do we, as marketers, capitalize on this unprecedented, consistent connection to our customers? Even if you’re the CMO of a massive brand, relying on a native app to drive mobile success is risky, if not presumptuous. This requires a user to enter their smartphone’s marketplace, search for your organization, and download your app. This is hardly an act of spontaneity. It’s an incredibly active process; thus, with an app, your brand is counting on a consumer to be a brand advocate, rather than just a customer.

Consequently, with an app, you’re diminishing the value proposition of compulsive, local search. And just how valuable is the trend of local search? A Google study, entitled “The Mobile Movement: Understanding Smartphone Users,” found 9 out of 10 smartphone searches result in an action (purchasing, visiting a business, etc.). Moreover, Google later reported that 50% of consumers who conduct a local search on their smartphone visit a store within a day, and 18% of those searches lead to a purchase within a day. Omni-channel marketing demands an omni-channel web experience.
REASON #2: BRANDING
 RESPONSIVE DESIGN HELPS BUILD YOUR BRAND, NOT HURT IT

Having a great mobile site is no longer just about making a few more sales. It’s become a critical component of building strong brands, nurturing lasting customer relationships, and making mobile work for you.

– Masha Fisch, Google Senior Product Marketing Manager

CMOs everywhere put tremendous onus on fostering a quality brand. Appearance and appeal can help a business grow. On the other end of the spectrum, negligence to proper branding can devastate a business.

As recently as a few years ago, visitors may have given a business a pass if their website appeared fragmented on an alternative platform to a PC. Contemporary websites, however, are held to a different standard. Visitors don’t care if a website looks great on a desktop, but appears disjointed on a smart device – they expect a company’s website to look good on any device. No matter what device a visitor is working off of, a bad website experience speaks volumes about a company. And once damaged, a company’s image is difficult to repair.

REASON #2: CONTINUES...
Your premium brand had better be delivering something special, or it’s not going to get the business.

- Warren Buffett, Investor and Philanthropist

In the study entitled, “What Users Want Most From Mobile Sites Today,” Google found 72% of consumers expect brands to have a Mobile-Friendly website. In 2013, a company not equipped to match their personal technology is, for lack of a better phrase, behind the times. A poor mobile experience leaves a negative mental footprint. Google reported that 55% of respondents said a frustrating mobile experience hurts their opinion of a brand.

You have to make sure that you offer all the functionality of your main site on your mobile site. As you add more features, that may become difficult to maintain. That’s where the beauty of responsive design comes in - you have one site but present it differently to different classes of devices.

- Terence Eden, Mobile Industry Consultant
REASON #3: COST

AVOID UNFORESEEABLE OVERHEAD COSTS & GAIN OPPORTUNITY COSTS

From the point of view of the site owner, a site that uses responsive design only needs to be built once - you don’t need to build a web version, a mobile version and a tablet version separately - so this usually saves time and money.

- Maani Safa, Innovation Director SOMO

There is no way – absolutely none – to pigeonhole the cost of overhauling a website to take a Responsive Design approach. The truth is that Responsive Design is more expensive, but just how much more is not dependent on any specific driver. Like any web redesign, there are a multiple factors to consider.

Breaking Down The Alternatives

Designing and building a separate Mobile Site is, in many ways, redundant; especially if a business can invest in creating a website that functions across any platform. You’re team is stuck managing two websites. Furthermore, the mobile and parent sites compete with one another in terms of search, meaning you’re splitting SEO equity. Meanwhile, developing a Native App is not a one-shot proposition. Businesses need to develop separate apps for the iPhone, Android, Windows 8 phone, Kindle and other major mobile platforms. Naturally, this requires more capital.

REASON #3: CONTINUES...
REASON #3: CONTINUED

The Cost of Losing Business Due to Poor Mobile Experience.
A Google study found the following:

• 61% of respondents take their business elsewhere if they encounter a poor mobile experience.
• 67% of consumers said they’re more likely to make a purchase if a website is mobile-friendly.

It doesn’t stop there. A robust mobile experience can lead to stronger conversion rates in the future. A study by ForeSee Results, a leading customer experience research agency, said 54% of respondents that are “highly satisfied with their mobile experience are more likely to consider the company next time they want to make a similar purchase, and twice as likely to buy from the retailer’s mobile channel again.”
REASON #4: FUTURE PROOF YOUR WEBSITE
PROTECT YOUR WEB PROPERTIES

If the smart device ascent has taught us anything, it’s that versatility, more than anything else, is coveted by consumers. The convenience of accessing information, downloading the latest pop song, making reservations for dinner, or ordering a new pair of designer sunglasses, is now the standard … the expectation. Your website needs to become your best customer service representative, through an inherent ability to react to the channel -- or device -- a visitor is using to engage with your company.

Too many sites do nothing, serving mobile visitors full-size web pages meant for desktop browsers. Treating mobile users as second-class web citizens is an insult, not to mention shortsighted and foolish, considering the explosive growth in mobile browsing.

- Michael Calore, Editor, Wired Magazine

“...
REASON #4: CONTINUED

Looking Towards The Future...

What’s scary is that somewhere – who knows, probably in a college dorm room or a cubicle in Silicon Valley – the next great invention is being created. We don’t know about its aesthetics, its capabilities, its (gulp!) cost, but we do know it’s coming. And as smartphones have proven, its impact can be a Game-Changer. Not knowing what’s next is yet another reason why Responsive Design provides your company with the best solution to deal with the Mobile Revolution.

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

- Alan Kay, Programming Pioneer"

Responsive Design protects companies against the infiltration of new technology into the marketplace (to a degree, anyway). Think of all the sites that had to be redesigned when 800x600 desktop monitors became outdated; a responsive website will be able to adapt to the iPad mini or a (fictional) supersized version.
REASON #5: INCREASED VISIBILITY
EMPOWER YOUR CONTENT

Let’s go back to ‘Mobilegeddon.’ Getting the most out of web properties hinges on the ability to be found. We know that Google is the new billboard. But what’s the new ‘word of mouth’? Content! And producing engaging web content can induce readers to share your website amongst friends and associates through social media and email, which, ultimately, puts eyeballs on your virtual home.

In terms of mobile, one of the problems with Native Apps is that the content is not shareable. Web content on apps is exclusive to users who have downloaded the app, precluding its virality. Meanwhile, mobile websites provide links that fail to translate to desktop users without appearing fragmented, hindering web content from being seamlessly shared and spread.

Every time I click a link on Twitter to be taken to a mobile version of a website it’s incredibly frustrating. The page will either resize to fill my browser (but with none of the graphics or design of the live site) or remain fixed in a thin column. Neither of these experiences make me want to explore the site, or to read more.

- Mike Essex, eConsultancy

Responsive Design uses one website and one URL shareable, in an optimal way, across all technologies, thus eliminating this cross-technology, User Experience (UX) issues.
REASON #5: CONTINUED

Another critical component in web visibility involves the use of cutting edge Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tactics. Google’s Mobilegeddon update is vital here, as Responsive Design not only remedies the ‘sharing’ issues created by apps and separate mobile sites by utilizing one URL which works across all platforms, but the approach also concurrently improves a website’s search rank.

In fact, Google recommends websites leveraging Responsive Design. Below are two reasons explained from their recently released Developer’s Guide:

- Using a single URL for a piece of content makes it easier for your users to interact with, share, and link to your content, and a single URL for the content helps Google’s algorithms assign the indexing properties for the content.

- No redirection is needed for users to get to the device-optimized view, which reduces loading time. Also, user agent-based redirection is error-prone and can degrade your site’s user experience.

![Higher Search Rank](image)
REASON #6: OPTIMIZE MOBILE MARKETING
RESPONSIVE WEBSITES AND EMAIL PLAY NICE TOGETHER

We’ve already gleaned enough figures to understand mCommerce’s current (and future) impact in the marketplace. According to Bank of America, retail revenue in European and U.S. markets from mCommerce reached nearly $26 billion in 2012 and is projected to skyrocket to $67.1 billion in 2015.

Consider this, according to research from Knotice, a digital marketing firm, 48% of all email opens in late 2013 were opened from a mobile device.

Research Courtesy of Knotice

REASON #6: CONTINUES...
The trick is, how do we keep making those content-driven email relationships better and more profitable for all involved, marketers and customers alike?

- Hunter Boyle on HubSpot

What does this tell us?

While it’s certainly not a novel tactic, email marketing is still very effective. A company should use HTML and marketing solutions to produce mobile friendly (responsive) emails to support its mCommerce strategy, and to adequately take advantage of email marketing, it’s prudent to offer a common experience across both channels.

In other words, customers who access your website through a well-designed mobile email could be turned off if they come across a disappointing mobile website that lacks sufficient user-friendly functionality.

66% of emails are opened on a mobile device & 26.7% email marketing generated 26.7% of sales on mobile devices
REASON #7: MOBILE DEVICES, NOT PCs ...

ARE BECOMING THE PRIMARY SURFING TOOL

The benefits and safeguards that responsive design offers organizations during this digital transformation are clear: Your brand is enhanced, not undermined; search visibility protected, not hindered by the consequences of ‘Mobilegeddon.’

But this reason isn’t about preservation; rather, the ways in which we think about mobile should spawn areas for opportunities. Believe that if you act now, you will grow now. As we’ll outline on the next page, mobile use isn’t a trend, it’s just the way things are. Consumers are always connected; heck, per Internet Retailer, 75% of shoppers use their smartphone in-store, as they’re accomplishing goals.

It is time for small retailers to adjust their mindset when it comes to online shopping and embrace the opportunities. It shouldn’t matter through which channel people buy from you, only that they do.

- Dan Cohen, The Guardian

REASON #7: CONTINUES...
REASON #7: CONTINUED

Will the world embrace smart devices to the point that PCs become obsolete?

We’re not ready to make that leap of faith. On the contrary, it is a fair question to ask; especially while coupling these statistics with the fact that 2012 marked the first time since 2001 that fewer PCs were sold than the prior year.

It’s legitimate, then, to presume that the market for smart devices is trending one way, while PCs is trending the opposite. Hitching your wagon to desktops COULD mean tying your virtual strategy to a device that doesn’t take full advantage of your web properties.
Responsive Design does not heal a poor web strategy – it pushes a well-conceived plan over the top.

Plenty of well established businesses use Native Apps or Mobile Websites with success. But as we move toward a world predicated on convenience, a homogeneous web presence that doesn’t discriminate toward any specific platforms could be the difference between a good web experience strategy and a grossly successful web experience that creates desired results and maximizes your Return On Digital Investment (RODI).

You cannot predict the future. The only thing you can really do is show up for the present. Tablets are out there, smartphones are out there – we need to be present there. One of the ways to really engage what’s going on now is to develop on the new platforms and push the envelope.

- Chris Marstall, Creative Technologist The Boston Globe

For examples of a Responsive Design website produced by Bridgeline Digital, please visit Wellbridge Website, The UPS Store and Triumph Motorcycle Merchandise Website. To take a look at other Responsive Design web properties, please check out The Next Web Magazine’s slide show, entitled “29 New Inspiring Responsive Designs on the Web,”
ABOUT BRIDGELINE DIGITAL
THE DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT COMPANY™

Interested in implementing Responsive Design?

Bridgeline’s iAPPS® platform deeply integrates Web Content Management, eCommerce, eMarketing, Social Media Management, and Web Analytics to help marketers deliver online experiences that attract, engage and convert their customers across all digital channels. Bridgeline provides end-to-end Digital Engagement solutions and boasts an award-winning team of interactive

Award Winning iAPPS Platform

To learn more about Bridgeline Digital’s integrated iAPPS Platform, please visit us at:

BridgelineDigital.com | 1-800-603-9936