

THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

# Winning on the Web

How confident are you in your company's website? If you had to rate your website on a scale from 1 (horrible) to 10 (industry best), how would it fare? How would that number change if you had to rate your company's mobile website? Do your mobile clients get the same level of satisfaction that your desktop or in-store clients do?

It may surprise you to learn that a number of tech companies (including Google and Statista) have announced that — as of 2018 — over 52 percent of the world's web traffic was served to mobile devices. In the U.S., that number is over 60 percent, with nearly a quarter of web users consuming websites exclusively on their mobile devices. This means that over 60 percent of your customers are viewing your mobile website on a regular basis, and 25 percent of your customers *only* view your mobile website.

Now how confident are you in your web presence?

## SHIFTING TO MOBILE

If you're like me, your heart skipped a beat at that last pair of statistics, and it's understandable why. We designed our websites to look good on desktop computers like the ones we use every day. Even those of us who made our websites "responsive" or "mobile friendly" conceived of a desktop site first and then "degraded" it for mobile use.

Why have we been so slow to catch on to the mobile trend? Well, according to Statista, just five years ago, these numbers were very different. Only about 17 percent of Americans consumed the web on a mobile device. That's a staggering 45 percent increase in just five years! Clearly, this mobile tsunami snuck up on our industry, and we need to rapidly adjust to a "mobile-first" design strategy.

Because this shift in consumer behavior has been so quick, it feels foreign to most of us. We have to work "backwards" in this new world — focusing first on a rich, interactive and efficient mobile design that grows into larger screens. And we have to do it as soon as possible because Google is already prioritizing "mobile-friendly" sites in those critical organic search results.

Luckily, you don't have to be a web designer to ride the mobile wave. Spend a little time with your web team and make sure they understand how your customer thinks so they can design a site that will surprise and delight your mobile users. Here are free tools that can help:

**Google Analytics.** I have said this before and I will say it again: Use Google Analytics. You can't evaluate your website

without good, unbiased data. Google offers it for free. Sign up and learn who is visiting you online, when they visit, which pages they like and how long they stick around.

**Google's Mobile-Friendly Test.** This tool can be a bit quirky, so you may have to run the scan a few times, but this test will tell you if your site is ranking lower on Google due to poor mobile design.

**Google Webmaster Tools Mobile Usability Report.** This report can help you determine what (if anything) is preventing your site from running smoothly on mobile devices. Work with your "code junkies" to fix any errors reported here.

**Your Thumbs.** Navigate your favorite mobile websites and see what you like most about their design. There is nothing wrong with incorporating best practices from others (as long as you don't violate any intellectual property laws).

According to the Ecommerce Foundation, 88 percent of our customers will visit our websites before ever setting foot in our stores. Even if we have to build completely new sites from scratch, we need to make sure our web visitors enjoy the same quality retail experience online that we offer in our stores.

If they love us online, they will trust us with their time and money. What could be more important? **MI**

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