

Why Have A Mobile Responsive Website

Responsive design optimizes your online website for visitors based on the size and type of device they are using to view your site. For many small to medium business websites this is a good thing. You can manage one site, verses a desktop and mobile version of your site where you have to update each separately.

In 2012 PC sales are expected to decrease verses 2011, the first time this has happened since 2001. At the same time Tablet sales are increasing and smartphones continue to capture market share. The world is becoming more mobile in how it accesses the internet.

Benefits of Responsive Web Design

Familiarity

One of the things that I dislike most about mobile sites is they often display information differently from the desktop version I am used to. Often the mobile site is trying to present information relevant to a person on the go, so site content gets streamlined.

If we were only dealing with smartphones this might make sense. With the increase in tablet devices, though, people are often utilizing these devices in place of their desktop but still want access to the same content available a the desktop. With responsive design all of your content is equally available across devices, though it is simply slimmed down to some degree.

Simplicity

Large businesses have IT staffs; small businesses have only the owner, a single person, a small marketing department to manage their online presence, or an outsourced web developer. With responsive design they only have to manage one site verses changing content on multiple sites designed for different mobile devices. This saves time and money which in todays economy is critical.

Usability

If your visitors are familiar with your site they will be immediately comfortable with your site on mobile devices. The links and content they are familiar with on their desktop are the same. This makes for a good user experience. One blog that I like to read has less than half of its content immediately available on their mobile version of their site which I find frustrating.

Google Recommends It

In June Google identified responsive design as their recommended configuration for websites that target smartphones. Here is specifically what they said, *“Google recommends webmasters follow the industry best practice of using responsive web design, namely serving the same HTML for all devices and using only CSS media queries to decide the rendering on each device.”*

From an SEO and link perspective, having one site makes sharing, tracking and indexing links much simpler.

Why Responsive Design Might Not Be A Good Solution

As much as we love responsive design we do recognize that it isn't the right choice for every site. Sites that rely on heavy web development technologies may find that performance on mobile responsive designs is slow and sub-par.

Using a responsive design also means that all of the content on your site will be served up, where with a separate mobile site you could only serve information relative to mobile use. People often look for a different experience on mobile devices than on desktops. But, as tablets become more common they are replacing desktop usage in the home and office.

Wrap Up

In the end you have to determine what is the best option for you. There are costs involved in changing your site to a responsive design, since your site will have to be rebuilt from the ground up. If you are launching a new site or planning a redesign, then it makes sense to consider making the change. If you use WordPress there are a number of new themes that are available as responsive themes making it simple to change during a site redesign.