RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN
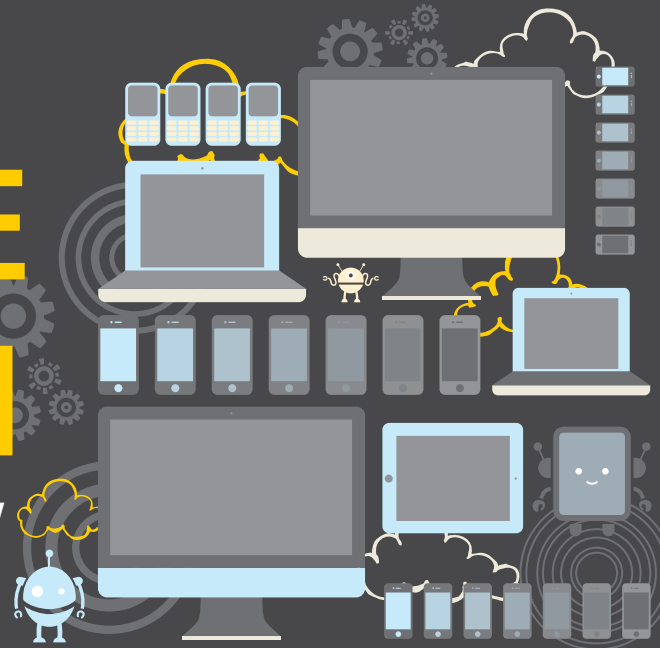
WHAT EVERY MARKETER NEEDS TO KNOW

WHAT IS RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN?

Why is this practice becoming an industry standard? Should marketers use responsive web design or multiple URLs to reflect their Internet presence?

Responsive web design (RWD) is a way of creating websites so they are able to adapt for optimal viewing across a variety of devices. This method allows website displays to automatically scale up or down in size, depending on the dimensions of the screen being used by the reader. Responsive web design creates the ultimate user experience – conforming seamlessly to every device which includes smartphones, iPads, tablets, laptops and desktops.

The alternative to a responsive web design uses a combination of HTML5 and CSS3, known as the "traditional" method used by many companies today. Multiple URLs are used for desktop and mobile applications, with automatic redirects to the mobile users. A major disadvantage to splitting your company's online profiles across multiple URLs can affect search results. In many cases, maintenance and costs for each platform can become time consuming for marketers (when updating content) and potentially confusing for customers as some content would be available to desktop users but not to mobile users.

Experts argue its' better to place all content under a single URL - enter responsive web design. The changing landscape of web browsers meant that users expectations changed; people are now expecting to browse the web on their phones just as easily as they browse the web on a desktop computer. In response to this, the web design community started creating mobile versions of their websites.

Providing a subpar user experience on any platform translates into lost opportunity and brand sacrifice. Today, visitors typically don't have a lot of time accessing content on their mobile devices. If your website is difficult or impossible to use on their chosen device, imagine how it could affect their decision to do business with you. Once a mobile browser visits a website and has a poor experience, they are unlikely to return to that website again. So how then do marketers find efficient methods of delivering device-agnostic content that has an increased amount of value and delivers a rewarding experience?

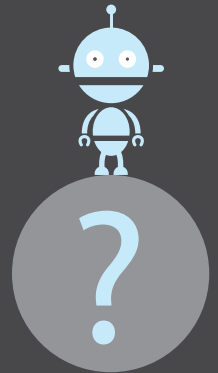### HOW TO CHECK FOR RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN?
Open your desktop browser and open a few websites. You can check if they're responsive by clicking and dragging the bottom right corner of your window to see how they resize.
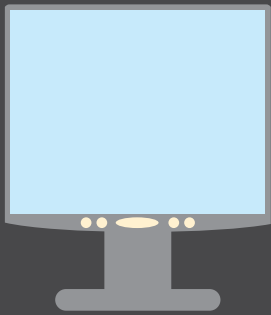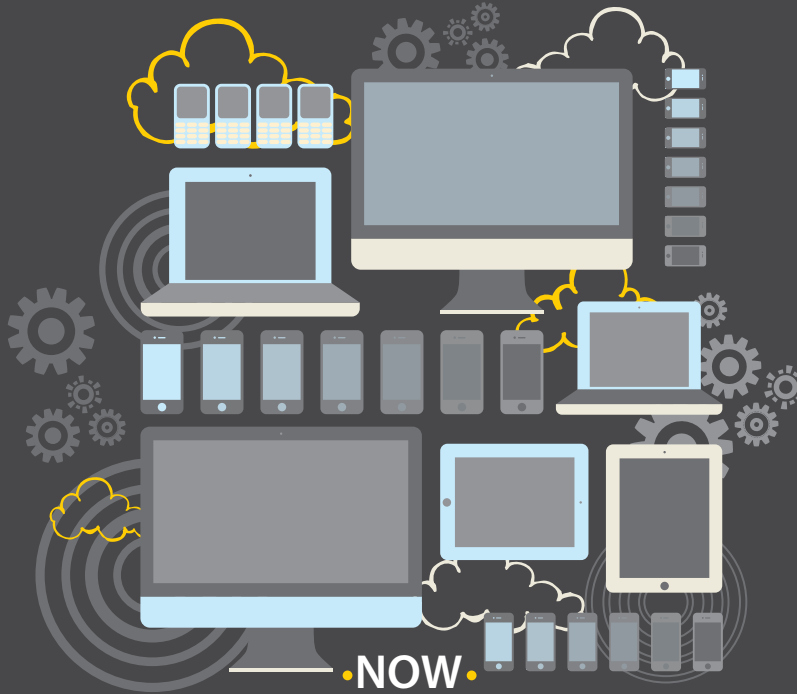
•PAST• •NOW• •FUTURE•

RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVES THE USER EXPERIENCE

Responsive web design has helped produce a consolidated content strategy that addresses the problem when a variety of devices are used to browse the web. According to Bryson Meuiner, director of content solutions at Resolution Media, "Responsive web design consolidates all link equity in one URL, and that helps Seach Engine Optimization (SEO). Another upside is there's not a lot of maintenance because it's only one URL to develop and maintain, so there are less resources and money spend." Instead of having multiple sites for mobile and desktop, or between different mobile devices, responsive web design enables the same content to be optimized for use on multiple mediums.

On mobile devices, responsive web design shifts its presentation to meet the demands of each individual device. Tablet devices, which typically range in screen size from six to nine inches, are treated as smaller desktops. This screen size includes a smaller sidebar that is still useable and visible, but defers more to the main column of content. On mobile devices with screens typically between three and five inches, with responsive web design, the side bar is eliminated. Instead, a traditional single-column design is used and filled on the site's main content. The sidebar is ignored in favour of small-screen usability.

A responsive website recognizes the resolution constraints associated with the device that is accessing it and makes adjustments to presentation layers to best fit that device. Beyond increasing a web site's visibility by making it accessible across all platforms, responsive web design helps future-proof an organization's mobile strategy.

Practicing responsive web design can help marketers connect with their audience, stay within budget and act as a social driver. We've outlined some top reasons why marketers should consider using responsive web design in order to have a sound presentation of content on multiple platforms.
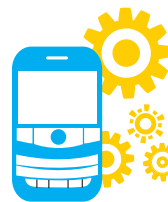
In a recent survey of mobile web users by Compuware Corporation, 71% of respondents stated they expect websites to load as quickly, almost as quickly or faster on their mobile phone compared to the computer they use at home.

10 REASONS WHY MARKETERS SHOULD USE RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

1. MAXIMIZE YOUR RETURN-ON-INVESTMENT

As more devices are introduced into the market, minimal costs are associated with onboarding new devices into a channel lineup because you already have a responsive web design in place. This efficient process allows you to manage your brand, optimize your content from a single place and avoid lost opportunities. Responsive web design eliminates the need for other mobile sites which require a separate URL, separate SEP and added costs.

2. DELIVER A BETTER USER EXPERIENCE

Utilizing responsive web design, your website can adjust to any screen size, making it a good long-term solution to the user experience considering the current plethora of devices (mobile, tablet or hybrids). Offer a consistent user experience across all devices for your potential buyers. A responsive site enables you to reward the click with a great experience that could propel the visitor on his or her buying journey. Put your brand in the pockets of the broadest number of consumers and provide the most engaging, interactive experience possible.

3. INCREASING YOUR BRAND AWARENESS

Build relationships with targeted consumers through content and communities. Responsive web design will help increase interactivity needed to create direct relationships with consumers, providing a maximum reach across all wireless networks and encourage high frequency of use. Building brand equity into your brand will deliver **the right experience for the right screen size at the right time**. Remember, web browsers can bring anyone and everyone to a website, which is critical when acquiring new customers.

4. GET INSIGHTS AND BETTER ANALYTICS

Incorporating responsive web design into your marketing mix will provide you with a complete view for all traffic to your website. To get insights on mobile visitors, create a "mobile-only" segment. By default Google Analytics puts all tablets under "Mobile" segment.

5. INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND DEVELOPMENT

Responsive web design involves no re-directs to take care of and no user-agent targeting. If your website needs to respond to new screen sizes on-the-fly, responsive web design can be used rather than creating a separate site for smartphone and tablet device users.

6. INCREASE YOUR SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Increase your website's rankings on major search engines like Google. A mobile version of your website is typically located in a subfolder or subdomain. Links on this page must be routed accordingly. There is no such requirement when implementing responsive web design. Instead of being placed in a subdirectory, a single responsive design is created within the site's same CSS sheets for users of all devices. Google is able to better index the site and track its traffic, as it does not have to constantly monitor both the site's top-level domain and any mobile targeted sub-domains. With Google's official recommendation of responsive web design as the best solution for mobile SEO, traffic increases can be attributed to more weight and higher ranking in Google Search, Google News and other search engines.

Note – responsive web design alone is not mobile SEO. A dynamic serving of HTML on a single URL site is needed in order to target differentiated mobile search behavior keywords.

Google **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.**

7. STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Prepare your online presence for the future. Many organizations have not yet optimized their website for mobile search. US businesses are neglecting the needs of consumers accessing websites from mobile devices, according to research released by 1&1 Internet Inc., www.1and1.com, a global leader amongst web hosts. From a study of 818 small- to medium-sized (SMB) companies, **50 per cent have never checked the appearance or functionality of their website for Smartphone users.** From companies that have, **43 per cent admit their website has a reduced appearance as well as reduced functionality. 57 per cent of businesses have not optimized their websites for mobile usage and have no plans to do so.** Despite widespread adoption of mobile browsing by Americans, the data reveals less than 1 in 3 SMBs recognize that their sales or brand could be enhanced with a more mobile-friendly website. Many companies could be alienating mobile online consumers, risking their growth and giving you a competitive edge.

8. LOWER COMPLEXITY AND MAINTENANCE

Once your website is responsive there is little maintenance involved, as opposed to up-keeping a separate mobile site. No special technology is required to sniff browsers and redirect.

9. INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

Mobile mimics the full desktop site's information architecture, reducing the learning curve to get accustomed to using the mobile version.

10. THE FUTURE OF MOBILE DEVICE WIDTHS

Responsive web design is the only method that takes into account future device widths and resolutions that marketers may not even be using presently such as wall sized displays, billboard displays or gaming consoles.

BUILD A BETTER USER EXPERIENCE

In certain situations, responsive web design can be used to recalibrate existing websites with media queries that enable them to become responsive too. Quarry considers this approach as "responsive retrofit." Rather than completely rebuilding a website, marketers can retrofit their websites, simplifying content management and their website maintenance process while creating a better brand experience.

It's important for marketers to note that responsive web design is not a one-size-fits-all approach. According to Bryson Meunier, "It's right for some companies and not right for others." Certain form responses experience lower conversion rates on mobile platforms, according to Derek Edmond, managing partner of KoMarketing Associates, so it wouldn't make sense to force them onto a small screen with responsive design. "Marketers must first consider a range of business objectives when adopting B2B mobile marketing strategies. Complexity of existing site architecture, current business performance metrics, and status of current SEO programs all should be taken into account."

A good way to tell if your company is right for responsive web design is to look at search metrics. Look at search queries, to see which are sufficient at helping you understand the intent of the search. If your search queries are not much different for mobile users and desktop users, you might be a good candidate for responsive design.

A simple way to check your web analytics is to use Google Analytics, which provides data on whether your visitors are coming in from a desktop or mobile device. Tracking mobile visits versus desktop visits can give you insights into how your prospects are finding information about your products and services.

Responsive web design goes beyond how a website looks or flows according to screen size. It gives marketers the ability to respond to the likely context of use, whether on the go or in the office. Consider reviewing a few responsive sites that mimic typical responsive breakpoints such as reonsive.is, Responsive Layouts or Responsively Wireframed.

Screen sizes will continue to diversify as more of a website's readers' turn to mobile. Early adoption of responsive web design translates into better rankings and more intuitive user experiences. Assess the responsive readiness of your current website. Understand whether or not your website is a good candidate for responsive web design or responsive retrofit. Future proofing your website with responsive web design can help deliver your content to the widest audience possible and provide a meaningful connection with them across all platforms.

Want to learn more about responsive web design? Download these free resources

The Savvy Marketer's Guide to Responsive Web Design – Quarry - http://responsivewebdesign.quarry.com/?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=Social_Referring_Link&utm_content=Alan_Quarry&utm_campaign=Responsive_Web_Design_2012
Responsive Web Design, Most Complete Guide - http://www.webdesignshock.com/responsive-web-design/
Responsive Web Design – A Dummies Guide – Digital Inspiration - http://www.labnol.org/internet/responsive-web-design-faq/21361/
Developing SEO Friendly Websites with Responsive Web Design – Web SEO Analytics - http://www.webseoanalytics.com/blog/developing-seo-friendly-websites-with-responsive-web-design/
Five Steps to getting flexy with Responsive Web design – Dave Rupert - .net - http://www.netmagazine.com/features/five-steps-gettin-flexy-responsive-web-design
Beginner's Guide to Responsive Web Design – treehouse blog - http://blog.teamtreehouse.com/beginners-guide-to-responsive-web-design
Is Responsive Design Right For Your Content Marketing Strategy – Content Marketing Institute - http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/2012/08/is-responsive-design-right-for-your-content-marketing-strategy/
BtoB – Responsive web design: Yes or No to B2B marketers? – Jon VanZile http://www.btobonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20120806/WEB02/308039999/0/SEARCH

couch & associates inc.