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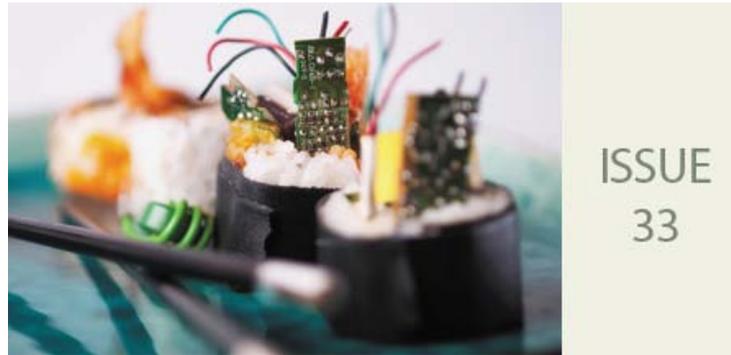
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Gone Mobile: Creating the Takeout Version of Your Website

By **Joe Walsh**

Posted on April 28, 2011 at 9:54 am

ISSUE 33

What You Will Learn:

1. What it means to be mobile (seriously)
2. What it takes to go mobile

Not to state the obvious, but the world is going mobile. And much faster than we imagined. By 2013, the Internet will be accessed more often by mobile devices than by desktop computers—brands on the run, indeed. So what is your next step? Should you run to the garage and create an app to add to the millions already out there?

We think not. Your next move is to create a mobile version of your site. Here's a high—level overview to help you choose a smart approach to smart phones and more.

What mobile means to marketers

Mobile means untethered.
We got our first experience of being untethered with phones, an experience that allowed us to walk, talk, chew gum and whatever else we wished with a phone in hand.

Mobile means handheld.
If we are going to move around with freedom, then we need a device that is lightweight and easy to handle. Today's phones could, in fact, be much

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smaller and still make calls. Ironically, the devices are getting larger. Why?

Mobile means connected.
We quickly asked to be connected to more—more people, more devices, more servers and more information. In a spiraling feedback loop, customers ask for more and manufacturers deliver. With high speed, we can serve up change as fast as software can be developed to feed our demand. We can use our handhelds to navigate. Not only are we connected, we are positioned/oriented in space.

Mobile means browsing.
Communication now includes impersonal communication—person-to-company, buyer-to-seller and seller-to-buyer. But the buying experience is clumsy via mobile. We can gather information and execute a limited series of tasks on a mobile phone.

Mobile will come to mean creating.
We can manage our email, but even that is a pain if a lengthy response is required. We can read some attachments, but we usually cannot edit or modify them easily. So, we are still tethered to our laptops for real work. Is the iPad the device we were missing? The bigger-than-Blackberry (or even iPhone) workstation that is lighter and smaller than the laptop? Not yet.

Mobile means you have real responsibilities now!
Your website will soon be viewed from a mobile device more often than it will from a desktop. Ask yourself, What is the experience of my website on a handheld device? Remember, a mobile site is not a mobile app! Also note, your e-alerts, newsletters and marketing promotions will also be viewed via mobile.

How to go mobile.

1. size up your priorities
Not all small screens are alike and not every display will look perfect with your mobile site. For example, smaller Blackberry screens will always be compromised. But perfection is the enemy of the good. With a good designer and developer's help, you can improve the user experience dramatically across most smartphones. The newest Blackberries will look just fine.

2. optimize on-the-go features and functions
Some features and functions from your site must be adapted to work on the smaller smartphone format. Most *forms*, for example, require adaptation. Navigation must be redesigned to be available all the time for the visitor. But your wireframe structure will be, for all practical purposes, identical.

3. adapt your design
Understand that the development of a mobile site does not require a redesign of your existing site but it does require design; i.e., existing pages must be designed to display more comfortably on the smaller screen devices. Your designer should use all of the existing elements they can, but some may change to accommodate the new format.

4. smooth transition to a new display
Your backend functionality (CMS) should remain the same. However, the mobile site will require substantial coding. The "interface" you see on your smartphone will mimic the desktop version but will use new CSS page designs to display. When a smart phone calls up your site, an auto-detect will alert the site to display the mobile version.

5. Budget smartly
To determine the final cost to build your mobile website, you need to go over your wireframes with your design and development team to define the scope of the assignment. You also need to determine how animation elements on your site can be translated to mobile for optimum efficiency. If you do this work wisely and well, your mobile site will require a modest investment compared to your full site, but that's the price of going mobile.

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