

Great Jakes Thought Leadership

Law Firm Websites for the iPad Generation.



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A prediction: The next website your firm launches will be built for the iPad generation – and incorporate something called “responsive design.”

Why? Because all websites – *including law firm sites* – are seeing a sharp increase in mobile traffic (i.e., visitors on iPads, iPhones and Android devices). These mobile users have unique usability needs – which websites need to accommodate. And “responsive design” is quickly emerging as the standard for the next generation of mobile-ready websites.



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What is responsive design?

Responsive design is a technology that dynamically adapts your website to fit on any screen size – from iPhones, to iPads, to desktop computers. Responsive design, which is very new, addresses many of the limitations of traditional mobile websites.

A big shift towards mobile

I recently examined the traffic to the law firm websites that my firm (Great Jakes) manages – and found that the number of “mobile” visitors *increased 101% over the past year*. Currently, more than 1 in 10 visitors to a law firm website come via a mobile device. And all signs point to continued growth of mobile device usage (for example, iPad sales are expected to soon surpass laptop sales). So, we expect mobile

traffic to law firm sites to double again next year – and probably the following year. It won't be long before mobile devices account for 30% to 40% of your website's traffic.

Mobile users are frustrated

The rapid adoption of mobile devices poses challenges to legal marketers: The current generation of law firm websites has been designed for desktop computers and therefore isn't serving mobile users well.

Several studies show that if your website is not optimized for mobile, *mobile visitors probably loath visiting it*. For example, a 2012 survey of mobile users (by Sterling Research and SmithGeiger) found that nearly half of all mobile visitors say that they feel "frustrated and annoyed" when they visit sites that are poorly optimized for mobile. And 36% say they feel like "they've wasted their time" when they visit those sites.

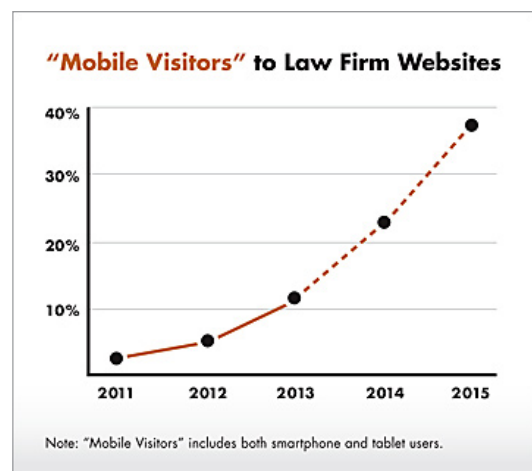
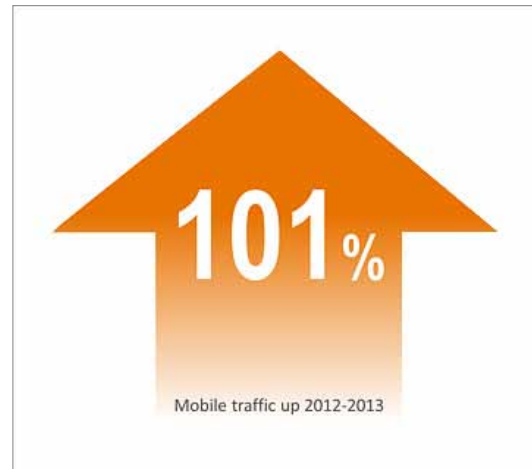
Responsive design – the new mobile solution

In June of 2012, Google ushered in a new standard for mobile websites when it endorsed Responsive Design.

Responsive design coding techniques make every page of your website mobile-friendly. The technology automatically adjusts each website page to fit on any screen size. Therefore, it doesn't matter if your website visitor is on an iPhone, iPad, laptop, Kindle or desktop with a 27-inch cinema display – the positioning of text and images adapts to fit the screen size.

But the benefits of employing responsive design techniques expand beyond the user's experience.

1. **Single web address:** Traditional mobile websites have a different address from the firm's main site (example: mobile.LawFirm.com). This causes confusion for users, as well as for Google. Responsive design solves this problem.



- 2. Optimized for all devices:** The old mobile site paradigm was focused on two device types: mobile phones and desktop computers. In contrast, responsive design anticipates the unique needs of other devices like iPads, iPad minis, Kindles, Nooks, small laptops and large desktop monitors, and all the future mobile devices that will surely be introduced.
- 3. Full site:** Traditional mobile sites often omitted significant amounts of the website's content. This is becoming less acceptable as people increasingly use phones and tablets as their primary devices. Therefore, every page on a responsive site is mobile-ready and accessible.
- 4. No separate mobile website:** Responsive design eliminates the need to build and maintain a separate mobile website codebase. This means greater simplicity – which often translates into fewer headaches, lower costs for legal marketers, and a better user-experience for your website's visitors.

Why should I care now?

In the near future, mobile devices will account for nearly half of your website's visitors. However, you're probably asking: *Is there a reason to consider responsive design now? Today?*

The answer is: yes. And that reason is: *content marketing*.

Content marketing is arguably the single most effective form of attorney marketing. Content marketing is about attorneys creating and sharing reputation-enhancing content like articles, videos, e-alerts, newsletters and presentations. If your content is compelling, you can expect it to be shared, consumed and re-shared extensively.

And how do people share content? Via email and social media – *two of the main applications used on mobile devices*.

It's no longer safe to assume that your audiences are reading attorney-generated content in their offices, on a traditional computer. Rather, your readers are using their iPads and Android devices from all sorts of locations, like airports, restaurants and their homes. (A recent study by 11mark, a digital marketing agency, found that a whopping 53% of iPhone users access social networks using their phone while sitting on the toilet. A strange fact, but one that clearly illustrates the trend.)

Is responsive design right for you?

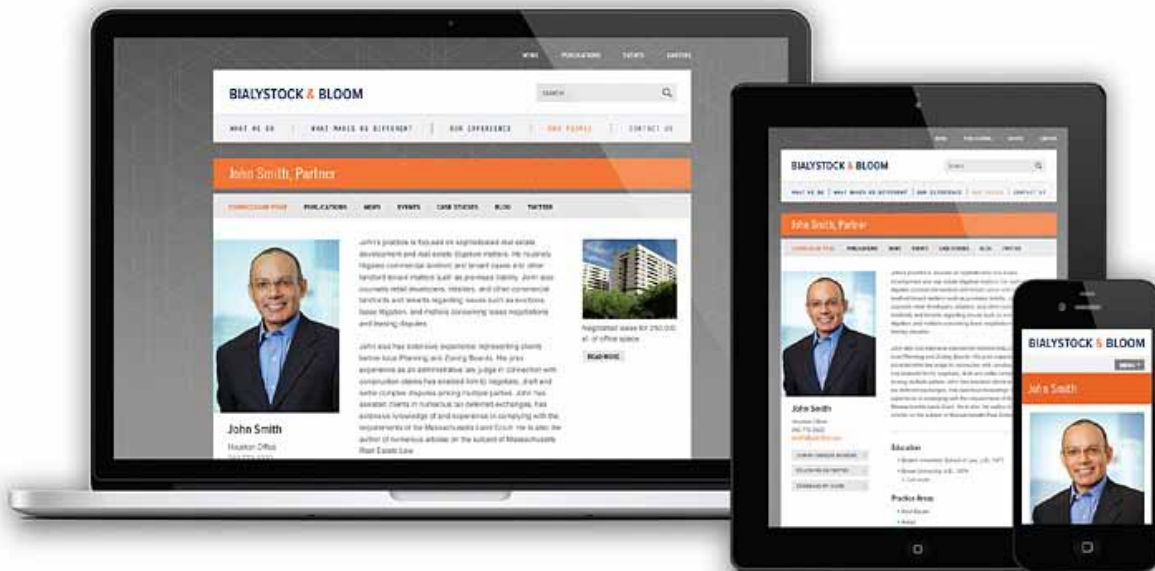
Do you remember that moment, back around 2003, when it became apparent to virtually every legal

marketer that having a good website was imperative? It happened the moment we realized that serious, prospective clients preferred to get information online.

We're now at a similar moment with mobile. Our clients are increasingly looking for – and sharing – information via mobile devices. So, just as law firms became serious about websites in 2003, it's only natural that in 2013, we get serious about technologies like responsive design. After all, it's where our clients are.

How “Responsive Design” Works

A “responsive” website reflows and adjusts the layout of the site based on the size of the visitor’s screen. This provides the optimal user experience to all users whether they are coming on an iPhone, iPad or desktop computer.



For example, in the smartphone layout above (at left), the navigation has been condensed down to a single “menu” button – and all the text content has been shifted to appear below his photo. While viewing the same page on an iPad or laptop, the content adjusts accordingly.