

Kickstart Your Mobile Marketing

Is your site ready for shoppers using mobile devices?

By Marshall Marcovitz

Mobile marketing is only going to grow in its importance to retailers. The combination of smart phones, tablets and watches is driving sales. How do you inspire yourself to meet the business challenges that this technology creates?

Some notable mobile marketing trends emerged during the 2014 holiday shopping season that impact how business is being done. Here are a few of the numbers:

- Smartphone usage worldwide grew 25 percent.
- The number of people who own and use smartphones hit 1.76 billion.
- Mobile sales accounted for 22 percent of online sales (on Cyber Monday), an increase of more than 27 percent compared to 2013.

A mobile friendly website is important. Google is starting to give search engine preference to firms that have it; if you want to get to the top of their search engine, you need a mobile marketing presence. Is your site mobile friendly? If not, are you considering making it so? The numbers are staring you in the face. In 2014, 145.9 million mobile users shopped, browsed or researched products via their mobile device.

Look closely at your web logs (which likely have web traffic broken out separately by device type). This is the way retailers can identify where their sales are coming from and they can allocate their marketing budgets accordingly.

How do you make your mobile site stand out? Ask yourself these questions: Is your home page fresh and appealing? Does it need a facelift? Does your site load quickly and is it easy to navigate? Is it text heavy or spiced up with video and photography?

Is your site content presented in a text friendly typeface? If you have a lot of white type on a black background, junk it. It's too difficult to read. Generally, a white background

with black type is the cleanest. Leave color for your photography and video.

The shift to mobile intensifies.

Facebook is now so thoroughly a mobile service that its original website may soon become a footnote in the company's financial statement. In April the world's largest social network reported that most of its 1.44 billion users in Q1 came from cellphones and other mobile devices. Facebook is beginning to transition from text to video; its users already watch 4 billion videos a day. Facebook right now is the single biggest beneficiary of the shift to video and mobile.

Mobile technology was also the key to the recent Verizon/AOL merger. Why did Verizon want a company that has been called an Internet dinosaur? Because they wanted to acquire AOL's powerful but little-known mobile video and advertising technology, which could make Verizon's own phone and Internet

offerings more appealing to consumers and advertisers. We're living in a world in which we all carry smartphones and can get accurate information at any time. Consumers have more leeway to shop at any time, at any place as long as they have their trusty smartphone, tablet or watch available.



Online Strategies



Shop by text.

I recently read about a new service being tested by Nordstrom that lets customers shop by text message. It's called TextStyle. The news story stated, "TextStyle is a seamless, secure way for customers to make curated purchases from their salesperson or personal stylist using text messaging." How does the customer benefit? They can view and

buy with the convenience of a text message, wherever and whenever they like. Convenience!

Something very interesting is happening.

I believe we're at the start of a major shift regarding the impact of technology on our lives. How many of you now use Uber when you need a taxi? How many of you are on Facebook and use it regularly? How many of you have logged on to the Alibaba retail site to do some shopping? How many of you have rented a room through Airbnb when you went on vacation? Something very interesting is happening: Uber owns no vehicles. Facebook creates no content. Alibaba has no inventory. Airbnb owns no real estate.

What is your relationship with your customers?

The race is on to be the consumers' gateway to the digital world. It's not only about page views, advertising revenue or the number of seconds it takes to load your site's content. The goal is to become the only place your customers need to go to get what they want. Check out the Google site. Why did a search engine start a social network? Check out the Facebook site. Why did a social network start a search engine? Check out the Amazon site. Why did a shopping site make a phone? Check out the Apple site. Why did a phone maker get into shopping?

Here are my tips for redesigning your mobile sites (or developing one) and websites.

1. Carefully think about your current relationship with your customers.

What aspects of mobile marketing have you tried? How much effort have you put into becoming your customers' gateway to the digital world?

2. Determine what a good mobile site is.

After you look at Facebook, Apple and Amazon,

look at some of your competitors' mobile sites. Then ask around. Who did they use to build their mobile platform? What was their budget (and who can you talk to about this issue)? Break out the costs for text, photography and video. Google "mobile marketing consultants."

3. Create your own mobile site. The big growth in consumer traffic is going to robust mobile sites. If I had a dollar to spend, I'd spend it on developing and testing a mobile platform. I would not deplete my technology budget by redesigning my current website. The move to mobile will signal to your customers that you are interested in making shopping more convenient for them. This shift in the relationship between you and your customers could and should increase your bottom line.

That being said, start small; change always raises some questions. How much merchandise do you show in the early stages of a mobile site test? What's the correct mix of text, photographs and video for a mobile site test? The trend is to more video. How long should the video be? How many videos? In the past most Internet traffic came from search engines; now social media is outpacing search engines. What will generate traffic on mobile sites? More selection? More off-price specials? More new item introductions? Test, test, test! Go slowly.

4. Maintain diligent security precautions.

For 2015 and beyond, retailers of all sizes need to keep an eye on mobile security. Hackers are roaming cyberspace, looking for their next target. Is your mobile site secure, stable and useful?

Your relationship with your customers is your most important asset. You need to integrate your customer relationship in your shopping venues: brick-and-mortar, website and now mobile. As the move to mobile intensifies, your original website may become a dinosaur. Where does text messaging fit into the sales picture? Change always raises more questions than answers. The bottom line is who/what controls the retailer's relationship with consumers. **TGA**



Marshall Marcovitz is the founder and former CEO of the Chef's Catalog, a leading Internet shopping site. Currently, he is a lecturer, university professor and marketing consultant. In each issue of *The Gourmet Retailer*, Marcovitz offers opinions and lessons in all things Web-related, from social networking to marketing.