

Mobile Marketing

Introduction

Mobile marketing is one of the fastest growing segments of online marketing. Over the last two to three years, the number of people who access the internet on mobile devices has skyrocketed. This is due to the popularity of smartphones like the iPhone and Blackberry, as well as tablets like the iPad.

This not only changes how many people are using the internet, it also changes how you need to market your business online. People who are accessing the internet through these devices are doing some fairly specific things, and they're doing them through devices with much smaller screens and keyboards than the typical computer.

This means you need to change your strategy for marketing to those people, or risk losing them to your competition.

In this guide, we're going to look at five specific strategies that you should be implementing in your online marketing efforts:

- Mobile-friendly website design
- SMS (text message) marketing
- Social Media
- Apps
- QR Codes

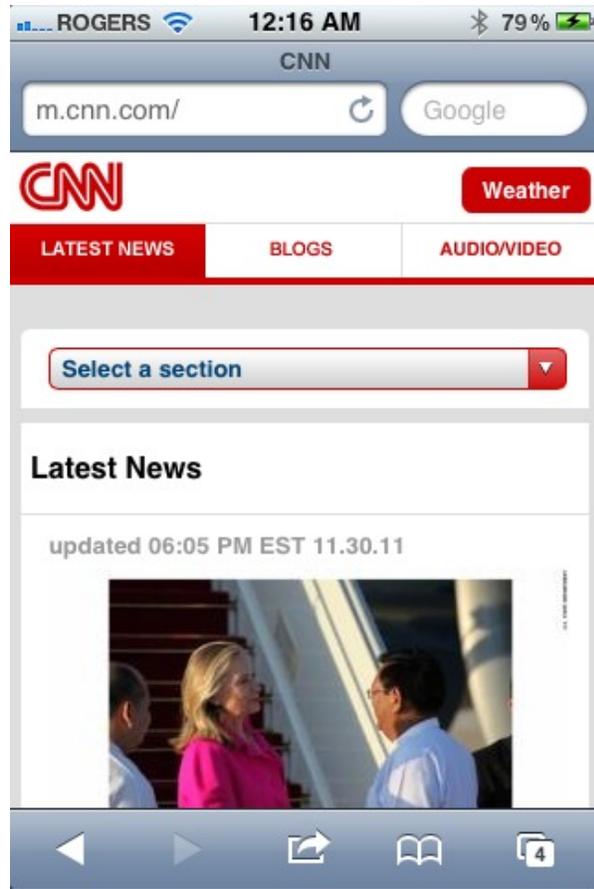
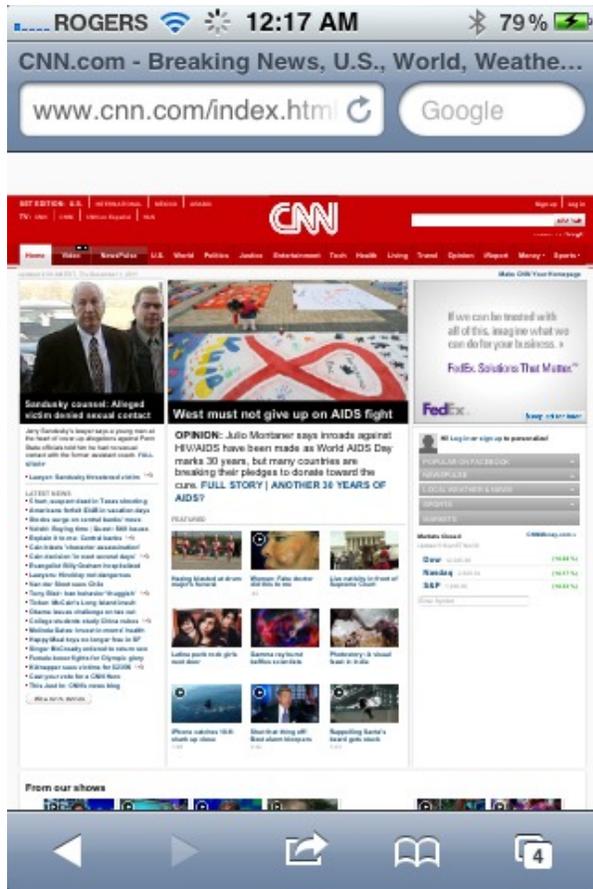
The first, a mobile-friendly website, is one of the most critical so let's get started.

Mobile Websites

As we've already mentioned, one of the biggest differences for people surfing on a mobile device is the size of the screen and what it can display. The latest devices, like the iPhone for example, have very capable browsers that can display pretty much everything you would see on a desktop computer screen.

But just because they can display it doesn't mean it's going to be effective for your website visitors. The text will often be so small it's completely unreadable and links are also too small for people to click (or tap, really).

A mobile website layout is designed to be more readable as well as more usable on these smaller displays. Take a look at these two screenshots to see an example:



The image on the left is a standard website displayed on an iPhone. As you can see, the content of the page is extremely hard to read and the menus and other links are too small to be selected easily.

The right-hand image, on the other hand, is a site that has been optimized for mobile devices. The text is much more readable and the links are easy to click.

The tradeoff, of course, is that there is less information being displayed but what's the value in displaying a bunch of content that your visitors can't read anyway?

These two different layouts are displayed automatically, based on what type of device is browsing the page. The web server can identify the device and resolution, and send the appropriate layout.

Which happens behind the scenes, and can be easily set up by your web designer, but the key point is that you don't need to have two completely separate websites to handle both layouts. Your main site can do both.

Another difference between mobile internet users and people who are using standard computers to access the web is the type of information they're looking for.

Mobile users are typically looking for a few specific types of information from your website:

- Your company's phone number
- Your business address
- Hours of operation and other business information
- etc.

They rarely use these devices to research your products or services or look for any significant amount of information. If they're in that "research" mode, they're much more likely to use a full-size browser on their computer. Which means that your mobile website can focus on providing the most important information first, with the bulk of the content from your "regular" website tucked away.

The best mobile websites have all the company's contact information, location and other critical information right on the home page. At most, it should be a single tap away from the home page.

Consider your mobile website from the point of view of someone stopped at a traffic light, who is on their way to your business and wants to look up your address or phone number to find out exactly where you're located. They should be able to get that information with one hand, and do it before the light changes and they start moving again.

SMS Marketing

SMS, or text messaging has been around for nearly 20 years, but its use has really taken off over the last few years. This is mainly due to the widespread use of smartphones that have built-in keyboards. In the past you had to use the number pad on your cell phone to tap out text messages, and it wasn't very easy to do.

This increase in acceptance of text messaging has a big benefit for business owners and marketers - text messages can be used to stay in touch with your customers and promote your business.

It's similar to email in many ways. People can subscribe to your text message service, and you can send them a text message whenever you want. They can unsubscribe any time, just like they can with email, but as long as you're providing value a large percentage of your "list" will stay subscribed.

Many of your customers will find text messages less intrusive than email, for the moment at least. There is much less "noise" in most people's text message inbox than their email inbox, so they're more likely to actually read what you send them.

And text messages also have a much faster open rate in most cases. Most people will read a text message immediately when they receive it, where an email might sit in their inbox for days before they actually get around to reading it.

This gives you the ability to send much more time-sensitive promotions via text message, since most of the people who receive it will read it right away.

The way these services work is your customer sends a text message with a certain word in it to a specific number. If you've ever seen an ad that says something like "Text the word 'XYZ' to 54321 to enter our contest" you've seen an example of this.

The number 54321 - known as a short code - is the number that is attached to your customer list and the word "XYZ" tells the text message service how to respond and what list to add that number to.

There are many different short codes available from any given text messaging service, and you will pay a different amount depending on how memorable it is. You can even get "vanity" short codes that will be particular memorable. For example, you might have "90210" as your vanity short code. Of course, these types of short codes will cost you a big premium over something more generic.

How could you use text messaging in your online marketing strategy? Let's look at tire store as an example.

Let's say you own a tire store and it's the beginning of winter. It hasn't snowed yet, and you've got a good supply of snow tires on hand (because never plan ahead!) The weather forecast is calling for snow in the next two days, however,

and you know you're going to be overwhelmed when everyone comes in on the day it snows to buy new tires.

If you've been building a customer list through a text messaging service, you could send out a text that same day letting all your customers know that you have a limited supply of tires on hand, and they should come in ASAP if they want to be prepared for the snow.

This would give you an extra day or two to schedule those installations before the snow hits, letting you spread the work out more evenly.

Any business where time-sensitive promotions would be effective can really benefit from SMS marketing.

Social Media

Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are also popular with mobile internet users. Take Facebook, for example. They currently have over 800 million active users, 350 million of whom access the site through a mobile device of some sort. That's almost half of their active users who connect through mobile.

Twitter doesn't publish their numbers the way Facebook does, but according to other sources they had a 182% increase in mobile users in 2010. They went from an estimated 14.28 million mobile users in January to an estimated 26 million in December.

These numbers mean that these two websites, and others like them, are an important part of any mobile marketing plan. Many of your customers are using them and by having a presence of your own on them you'll have another way to engage your customers.

A big part of this is brand management. The nature of "social" websites is that information gets shared around quickly, as people share it with their friends, who share it with theirs and so on. And search engines like Google and Bing track a lot of this information as well, and record it in their indexes permanently.

If someone says something about your company - good or bad - it will be seen by other people immediately, and it can be found by anyone searching for feedback about your business in the future. You need to be part of these conversations to

ensure that people aren't spreading bad experiences (or worse, misinformation) without giving you a chance to respond.

The thing that many people don't understand is that it isn't necessarily about getting rid of the bad reviews or complaints. In reality, that's difficult - if not impossible - to do.

What you want to do is respond to these situations and do your best to make them right. If people find a bad review when they're researching your business, and they see that you've gone out of your way to correct the error, that can be even more effective than not finding any bad reviews at all.

By maintaining a presence on these social media sites - a Facebook Page, a Twitter profile, etc. - you can take part in the conversation going on around these things and interact with your customers directly.

Plus, you can use these resources to engage your existing customers and even find new ones as well. When you connect with your existing customers, by getting them to "Like" your business Page on Facebook for example, all of their friends will see that interaction. Some of those people may be looking for the products or services you offer, and that "Like" is like an implied recommendation.

If you have a large following this can "go viral" and take on a life of its own, generating new customers on an ongoing basis with little or no input on your part.

Mobile Apps

Another side effect of the rapid growth in mobile internet devices is the growth of the mobile "App" market. Apple's App Store for the iPhone and iPad is the largest of these marketplaces, but a number of other companies offer them as well.

Many large companies are creating their own apps that can connect them even more tightly with their customers. These apps don't have to cost a lot to create, and there are plenty of companies that will do it for you - you don't have to know a thing about how to program them yourself.

For example, Amazon has their own app on the iPhone that lets you browse their entire catalog, read reviews, get product information and even buy right from the app. It even has a barcode scanner built in so you can scan a product in a local retailer and compare the price on Amazon.

It basically gives you almost all the same features as going to Amazon's website, but it's all handled through a dedicated app.

Apple has one of their own as well that lets you buy their products and pick them up at your local Apple Store. You can even make appointments with their Genius Bar (their service department) and the app will identify you when you arrive at the store and let them "page" you directly when your appointment time comes.

It will show you a picture of who you should see and what their name is, making it extremely easy to get service.

If you're thinking of creating an app for your own business, the most effective strategy is to somehow take what you do and offer it through the app.

For example, if you own a restaurant you could create an app (or have it created for you) that would give your customers a live update of how much seating is available or how long a wait you currently have. They could check it before leaving home to see how long they would have to wait, saving them a trip if it's really busy.

Something like this would make your customers happy because it's helping save them time but it could also benefit you by driving some additional business in the slower times, when people see that there's no wait at all.

If you're thinking of creating an app, the platform with the largest number of app users is still the iPhone. But the Android and Windows Phone platforms are also popular so you could create an app for one and then have it converted to work on each of them. The more people you can reach this way, the better, especially if you're giving the app away for free.

QR Codes

QR Codes are the final mobile marketing strategy we're going to cover in this guide. You've probably seen these codes popping up all over the place recently. They look like the image on the right.

These codes have been around for well over a decade, but up until recently they were mainly used in factories and other



industrial applications for tracking inventory.

The growth of the smartphone market changes that, however, because so many of these smartphones have built-in cameras. This means that people can scan these codes themselves, and take whatever action has been programmed into them.

And there are lots of things they can do:

- Redirect to a website
- Automatically create a text message
- Look up an address on Google Maps
- Download a vCard to your phone's address book

Redirecting to a website is the most common use for QR codes. You often see them in advertisements, on signs, on billboards and other places where people can easily scan them. When you scan it with your phone, it will open the website in your phone's browser automatically.

You can try it using the example image above. If you scan that with your phone it will take to you Google.com.

But keep in mind that you can redirect people to any page on your website. So you could have a sign by your cash register inviting people to sign up for your email list, for example. Offer them special discounts and other benefits when they subscribe to your list.

Then put a QR code on the sign that takes them to the sign up form on your website. All they need to do is enter their name and email address to subscribe to your emails. This is much more effective than having a book where they write down their name and email address to get added to your email list, which is how a lot of small businesses still approach building a customer email list.

Another example of a business where QR codes could be used very effectively is real estate. Realtors could put a QR code on their for sale sign that directs people to a web page with all the detail about the house they're selling, including a video tour of the inside.

People just driving by could easily scan that code and check out all the details themselves, with no need for printed flyers or anything else they have to physically pick up.

This example brings up one of the drawbacks of QR codes - once they're generated, they can't be changed. They will always point to the same website when someone scans them.

The simple solution to this problem is to use some kind of redirect service that will let you change the ultimate destination of the code. The QR code would point to the redirect link, and that link can be updated any time. So in this example, when a house sells, the realtor would simply change the redirect to point to another listing when they move the sign.

There are lots of different applications for these codes:

- Tradeshow or conference name tags - each attendee's name tag has a QR code with all their contact data so other people could simply scan it and it gets loaded into their address book
- Product signage - the sign could have a summary of the product's specifications, with a QR code pointing to a more detailed listing on a web page
- Google Maps links - you could include a QR code on your website and in your ads that shows people how to find your business on a map
- Text messages - the QR code can automatically create a new text message, so you could make it easy to opt into your SMS marketing service by scanning the code

There's really no end to how these codes can be used, you just need to think creatively. Anything that normally requires people to type a lot of data on their smartphone could potentially be simplified with a QR code.

Conclusion

Mobile internet usage continues to grow incredibly fast, and is probably going to accelerate even faster over the next few years. Now is the time to start changing your online marketing strategy to meet the needs of those people. You'll have an edge over many of your competitors who aren't as quick to adopt new strategies, and as the market evolved you'll be in a position to stay on the leading edge.

The five strategies we've discussed in this report will put you on a path to success, and before you know it your mobile reach might even eclipse your traditional marketing efforts.

Don't put it off any longer - start implementing these strategies and you'll be reaping the benefits before you know it.