



Your Website Just Lost 45% of It's Visitors — 2015 is The Year of the Mobile Website

By Matt Perosi

The Internet was brought to everyone's fingertips when the iPhone was introduced in 2007. The ability to affordably connect with the world without a desktop computer changed the way we all live, but the usefulness of that change didn't happen overnight.

Just like the dotcom craze 10 years prior, the mobile marketing craze that quickly ensued after 2007 was filled with get-rich-quick app development schemes and promises of mobile websites. Some industries recognized the B2C (business to consumer) value of mobile websites and invested heavily in their development, but many businesses waited to see how others would use a mobile website or a mobile app before taking action.

Mobile users have grown fatigued with the process of installing apps that only get used once. Sophisticated apps, like jewelry product catalogs, require more memory and frequent updates. Initially those updates weren't a problem, but now many cell phone carriers limit data usage. While it seemed inconceivable to use a full 16GB of memory on a smartphone, now most of us are struggling to fit our digital lives into 128GB. Given the choice between using smartphone memory for pics, videos, music, and other personal files, or loading infrequently used apps, we all delete the infrequently used apps in favor of personal files.

It only makes sense to build a smartphone app if you need to access those personal files, which an independent retail store does not. It's better for retail stores to build mobile websites and dovetail all mobile marketing through popular social media apps that direct users back to the mobile site.

Sadly, even though smartphones have been widely available for eight years now, most retail jewelers have not deployed mobile websites. It's no longer cost prohibitive to set up and maintain a mobile site. Some jewelers are using responsive website designs--websites that morph into different formats when viewed on desktop or mobile--to minimize their cost and satisfy the mobile users.

Google published a mobile website best practice guide a few years ago, and has updated it several times since. After much user analysis, Google is finally turning its guidelines into real ranking factors. As of April 21, 2015, Google lowered the ranking of websites that were not mobile friendly. This lower ranking only applies to search results seen by users of google.com on mobile devices, and it does not affect desktop search results. The impact of this is huge for most jewelers. My own measurements show that prior to April 21, 2015, on average, 45.3% of retail

jewelry store organic traffic came from mobile users. In the absence of e-commerce, you have to consider that all website traffic directly correlates to in-store foot traffic. Losing all that smartphone traffic could cause a 45% loss of foot traffic.

Most smartphone users will visit the home page and product catalog pages of a site. Many smartphone users also visit the contact us page. Although I can't prove it yet, I assume that mobile customers looking at the contact page are, in fact, looking for store hours and driving directions.

Google's dominance over search puts them in a position to force businesses to adopt a correct mobile strategy or suffer a harmful loss of sales. Although this might seem like a penalty to some; in the past, Google instituted penalties on those who tried to manipulate search results for financial gain. In this case, Google changed their algorithm to create a better mobile experience for everyone, and your non-mobile site doesn't provide a good experience. While a responsive website design might seem like the obvious mobile site solution, Google's guidelines strongly hint that default setups of responsive designs do not produce the best customer experience. Google has specific issues with small fonts, content that doesn't correctly fit a mobile screen, and site speed. Without meticulous attention, even a responsive design won't satisfy these Google guidelines. You can read Google's mobile guidelines at this address <http://bit.ly/jwagmobi>

After eight years of widespread mobile availability, Google is finally telling us all that 2015 is, indeed, the year of the mobile website. Those who choose to ignore Google's mobile guidelines won't be able to escape the loss of website visitor traffic, which then translates into a loss of sales as more and more people start using their smartphone as their primary method of search.

Look at your own website right now using your smartphone and try to imagine your customer's point of view. Even if you don't consider yourself a savvy internet user, any trouble you have navigating your site will reflect the troublesome experience your customers have. Set a goal to have a good mobile experience before the 2015 holiday season.



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Matthew Perosi reports the latest Internet trends and methods that are most relevant to the jewelry industry in his 5-day per week newsletter, available through jwag.biz. Tap into the more than 1,100 free newsletters to guide you towards better usage of websites, social, and mobile. Matthew invites your feedback and questions at matt@jwag.biz or 973.413.8211. Many questions from TRJ readers have turned into great newsletter topics.