



Mobile websites and the dental practice

The internet has gone mobile, and it's critical that your dental practice website does also.

[curated by Dr. Lou Shuman with Cory Roletto, MBA, cofounder of WEO Media]

Each month, Dr. Lou Shuman consults with a dental digital marketing specialist to discuss the latest developments in social media trends, SEO strategies, website optimization, online reputation

management and more.

This month, Dr. Shuman consults with Cory Roletto, MBA, cofounder of WEO Media, about the importance of mobile websites.

Why are mobile websites important?

Most people realize mobile devices have become an integrated part of our lives in a very short period of time. According to ComScore

and Morgan Stanley Research, the number of mobile users surpassed desktop users around 2014. Although mobile devices and desktop computers connect to the same internet, the experiences are very different. Beyond the apparent screen size difference, when people are using mobile devices they tend to have shorter attention spans, and are looking for different information. Optimizing the mobile experience is essential to marketing conversion and increasingly important on even being found in search. On April 21, 2015, commonly referred to as Mobile Armageddon, Google started separating its search ranking algorithm into two distinct desktop and mobile algorithms. They also started marking websites as “mobile friendly” and included this criterion

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on mobile search rankings, setting the de-facto standard. In May 2016 Google rolled out an update to further boost the benefits of being mobile friendly.

Is there more than one type of mobile website?

Yes, most people know about two (dedicated and responsive) but there are actually five methods for rendering a mobile website.

1. Dedicated mobile websites (also called “mobile-optimized” sites): Dedicated mobile sites have design elements specifically designed for interaction and to the size of mobile devices. They are totally separate designs from the desktop website version and often have independent and less content. Because of this, dedicated mobile can be fine-tuned for user experience and conversion rates compared to responsive designs. On the downside, they require separate maintenance and updating.

2. Responsive websites: Responsive websites respond to the viewers’ screen size by rearranging and/or eliminating elements of the website as the screen size gets smaller. Responsive designs are more difficult to build, but once up and running updates and maintenance are done in one place.

3. Adaptive mobile websites: Adaptive mobile websites are sites that change the website design depending on screen size. With adaptive designs you can optimize for any size screen you want and can provide the ultimate user experience. But these types of websites are very hard to maintain. Depending on the number of “cut” point, screen sizes you are targeting, you may end of maintaining several different websites.

4. Applications (apps): An app is a program specifically designed to run on a particular mobile operating system, such as Apple’s iOS or Google’s Android. Apps can have added functionality well beyond a normal website, but can be expensive to build and maintain.

5. Accelerated Mobile Pages

(AMP): AMP is a new open source initiative spearheaded by Google and the primary driver is to decrease page load times and increase reliability on mobile websites. Similar to “mobile friendly”, AMP websites may get an additional rank boost and if your website is an AMP website you will see it marked as such in Google webmaster tools. This indicates a significant effort by Google to promote AMP. AMP websites are dedicated mobile sites (discussed above) using AMP HTML and the AMP JS library. This may limit site functionality, but enables faster rendering of pages.

Which type of mobile site is best for a dental office?

The proverbial answer is, it depends. Most dental offices do not want to spend a small fortune creating a mobile website and do not want to spend much time maintaining and updating it. These two parameters rule out Adaptive and Application. AMP is still very new on the block and not supported by CMS systems which means building the website from the ground up which significantly adds to cost and maintenance. Therefore, we recommend either a responsive or dedicated website(s). Dedicated sites have the advantage of optimizing design and content, responsive provides a full website and easier updates. So, it comes down to a matter of preference and the office’s goal.

I have heard responsive sites are better for SEO, is that true?

No. I cringe every time I hear a consultant say responsive design is better for search engine optimization (SEO). In fact, according to Google responsive design is neither better nor worse for SEO. This myth is further disproved as most mobile websites do not use an m. subdomain. Dedicated mobile sites built today use the same website address (URL) as the desktop version. They do this by

using device detection or media calls which determine on the fly which website (the mobile or desktop) to render on your device.

Is responsive design better for tablets such as iPads?

It can be. It depends on the robustness of the responsive implementation. We build both responsive and dedicated websites, depending on the dental offices goals and preferences. Through building over 1,000 websites of various types we have learned that using device detection to render the full desktop website on a tablet provides a similar user experience as responsive websites. ●

ABOUT CORY ROLETO

Cory Roletto is partner and cofounder of the dental marketing firm WEO Media where he leads the operations team. He holds an MBA and BS in Chemical Engineering from the University of Washington. He is the recipient of several awards in marketing and engineering, an investor in start-up companies and an executive board member of Northwest Kidney Kids, (www.nwkidneykids.org), a regional non-profit charity.

ABOUT DR. LOU SHUMAN

Dr. Lou Shuman is a long-time contributor to Dental Products Report and a member of the DPR editorial board. He is president and CEO of Cellerant Consultant Group. He is also the Chairman of the Technology Advisory Board at WEO Media, a Venturer-in-Residence at Harvard’s Innovation Lab, and founded a dental-education internet company.

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