

Getting Your Message Across on Small Screen Devices

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"A mobile phone web browser offering is about herding text around to get your message out as responsively as possible over a "wild west" bunch of non-conforming devices."

What is a small screen device?

A small screen device is an instrument that communicates a singular, focused message. The mobile cellphone is a recent example, but an older, time-tested example exists. It is the thermometer. When you read the thermometer, it gives you a simple and useful message, the current temperature. You act on the information accordingly, bundling up if it's cold outside, or maybe wearing shorts if it's hot. A street crossing signal is another small screen device. When it flashes a symbol for walk, you step out in faith and cross the street.

The mobile phone web browser, when offering a singular, focused message within screen boundaries, delivers a one-on-one, uninterrupted message to the reader. As surely as Abraham Lincoln poured over a telegraphed dispatch from the Civil War battlefield, a person viewing an image or text item in a mobile web browser is likewise attentive. The small screen pinpoints a reader's attention span like a ray of sunlight through a magnifying glass.

What good is a mobile cellphone web browser to my business?

It can be used to sell a product or service, and it can aid in branding. In fact, the mobile web browser may be more effective at creating and reinforcing a brand than any other medium. Viewing requires intense concentration to a very small visual area. It is the customer and you, alone in cyberspace for a brief moment in time, where ever the customer happens to be.

I tried an SMS texting campaign but it didn't work, why?

Coupon offerings lay dormant because of premium SMS charges to the mobile phone customer, some as high as \$10 above monthly cellphone service fee. If your customer is tricked by this, they will not forget it. Trust is wasted from your mobile phone offering.

How do I enforce a brand on such a small screen?

A brand is singular. A brand is consistent. This is what you get every time you come here. The customer trusts the brand to represent and deliver exactly what it promises. Branding on a small screen device like a mobile web browser begins in the upper left corner. The brand name or company name should start every small mobile screen followed by a contact telephone number.

Brand or Company Name

555-555-5555

An image logo can precede the first line, but it should always be followed by text name and telephone number. A customer may turn off images and read text only as a way of speeding

up mobile surfing.

What's with the telephone number? Am I expected to talk to my customer?

Oh, yes! Before the Internet and email, a customer called the business for more product information and placed a credit card order. A knowledgeable salesperson often increased order size. A relationship was formed between business and customer.

The sole purpose of having a mobile website is to encourage customers to communicate with you! It beckons a customer at every point to call now and place an order. This gives you the chance to sell-up and personally invite the customer to come into your physical store. A prompt and direct telephone response trumps all, even a walk-in. It's a convenience issue.

What products or services should I offer in the mobile phone web browser?

A successful business today should have a mobile web presence, a full-featured desktop website, and a brick and mortar physical location. Your mobile web is a dedicated offering separate from the main website. Three types of offerings adapt well to the small screen mobile web browser: a home page with or without a coupon, a product catalog, and a directory.

How do I create a home page for the mobile phone web browser?

One home page may be all you need to offer. It contains your brand or logo, company name, telephone number, and what you do in five lines or less. It urges the customer to make contact with you.

A coupon can be offered on the home page. The customer redeems it at checkout in your physical store by showing, or on the phone by mentioning, the coupon found in their mobile web browser. If you run an email list, or participate in social networking, let everyone know about the coupon and where they can find it.

A nifty tool for creating a home page is located online at **twiceamused.com** where it says "create home page for mobile phone web browser." Any business, small or large, can make good use of this tool to propel their mobile web offering. In just minutes you've got a mobile web browser home page. It's cheap enough, too. At \$39, use it monthly to freshen up your mobile web.

How do I create a product catalog for the mobile phone web browser?

First, think of that small screen device like the Blackberry, Android, iPhone, LG, or Samsung mobile phone web browser as an extended display into your product information. By following a concise navigation scheme, your customer can access simple to detailed information about a product or service. When the customer calls to place an order, you will have a prepared customer. This, by the way, is the primary use of online information, pre-purchase research.

Creating a product catalog for the mobile phone web browser is a complex task. Product

image and text need to be created directly for the mobile phone web browser. Down-sizing images from a desktop website usually doesn't work. Copy is direct, using more verbs, less adjectives, little marketing spin. Navigation is specialized for the mobile phone web browser. It will make or break your product catalog.

List higher value products in a catalog for the mobile phone web browser. These can be products you may not warehouse in your physical store and have to order for the customer. Many hardware and lumber companies, for example, keep less than 40 percent of all products they sell in stock. Envision all those big book catalogs lining the counter as being accessible to the customer via the cellphone web browser.

How do I create a directory for the mobile phone web browser?

Creating a directory requires organization of the data and strong navigation. Directories work very well in a mobile phone web browser. View the "Virginia Grape Farm" directory at **twiceamused.com** to see how it works. You can view it in nearly any mobile phone web browser regardless whether the mobile phone is a smart phone or a dumb phone. It just has to be a browser equipped cellphone with an Internet connection.

Shouldn't I build an app?

Keep in mind that the mobile web browser is a preloaded, already on-board application available the minute a user removes the cellphone from the box. It is available in varying forms on almost every Internet-connected cellphone immediately. Smart phones like Blackberry, Android, and iPhone make up an estimated 20 percent of the market. All other dumb phones with mobile web browsers comprise the rest. That's 80 percent market share!

You should consider an app for smart phone when you need the computing resources of the device. A game runs better as an app on the device than it does in a mobile web browser. Consider an app when you want to place an icon on your customer's phone. Unfortunately, your customer may have pages and pages of icons to flip before finding your app. A bookmark in the mobile web browser under "Favorites" can possibly help your customer reach your company's information faster.

In either a smart phone or a dumb phone, the user takes steps to fire up the mobile web browser or flip thru icons to open an app. Reaching satisfying information is the reward.

Building an app is just the beginning. Once built, you have to market it for download. Often, this costs much more than the development cost of the app. Here is the dismal result: percentage of app downloads are about equal to double the response rate of direct mail or 3 to 6 percent.

Finally, workplaces are prohibiting app downloads for security reasons. Upgrades to apps can lag behind and be inconsistent.

Who should I hire to create my mobile phone web assets?

You can create a home page for mobile phone web browser all by yourself. Use the tool provided at **twiceamused.com** for **\$39**.

To build a product catalog or a directory, you need a person who specializes in information organization or data architecture and can re-purpose it for display on a small screen device. This requires good understanding of copy, art work, navigation, usability, databases, and networking.

Generally, traditional web design firms will not be suited to the task of creating mobile phone web assets. They think in terms of graphic design. Building a successful offering for the mobile phone web browser is not about design, it is about herding text around to get your message out as responsively as possible over a "wild west" bunch of non-conforming devices.

You will need to seek an artist to create images for your logo and products directed at small screen devices. The artist should specialize in small space image creation. He or she should be able to draw mascot images like those seen on college sport websites.

One other thing, you should strive to cross connect brand name, logo, slogan, web address, mobile web address, and telephone number in all media including mobile web browser, desktop computer, print communications, email, social networking, and physical store (display, window, POS), even when assets are created by differing companies. A good public relations person can help with this task.

How do I write text for the mobile phone web browser?

Copy reigns. There, I answered in two words. Author Stephen King declared it's all about verbs, verbs, verbs. Leave out all words except verbs. Well, not really, but you get the point. Verbs are action words.

Engage emotion. Make your customer feel special. Speak directly. One of the best catalogs to read for informal instruction on writing copy is L.L.Bean. His folksy voice still carries consistently throughout entries in the famous catalog.

Your customer begins scanning text on a small screen device starting in the upper left corner. It's like sipping through a soda straw, letter by letter. Consequently, no reading takes place at all. Your customer's eyes look for bigger chunks that convey the message.

Titles and subtitles should stand on their own in meaning. The 80-20 rule applies to titles or headlines. Eighty percent of your customers will read a title or headline. Twenty percent will read the paragraph or article.

The customer should not have to read a solid paragraph about your product. Break paragraphs into bullet lists, sentence fragments.

Be specific with procedures and instructions. Use how-to, question, command, and brief testimonial quotes in your copy. Employ the services of a technical writer.

There is a reason to demand specificity in text descriptions, titles, and subtitles. The reason is latency. Mobile computing platforms suffer from latency, a lag in receiving requested info. And your customer will leave in a huff never to return if he or she does not get the information

requested on the first try. Latency is the number one reason you need to build a dedicated mobile phone web browser offering.

Titles should be 12 to 20 characters across. On the smallest screen display, you will get in three lines before the customer has to scroll for more information. This is known as the fold. Place compelling information in text, list, subtitle, or top of an image, seducing the customer to scroll over the fold. This tactic will work on almost any other mobile phone web browser display because you planned the information structure to the least common possibility.

Waiting for content lacks tolerance. This is a really big issue for the user of a mobile phone. Limit descriptions to 140 characters or less. For folks who tweet, it is about Twitter length. Try to keep total page size to 5K or less. If you add images and page size nears 20K, the content better be "d_ good."

How do I create images for the mobile phone web browser?

Use images to convey what words can't. The old saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" is sage advice. An image for the mobile phone web browser should tell the story. Two or more images on the same subject should show change in the storyline. An example is "Ozone Hole in Your Hand" hosted on the **twiceamused.com** website. Three images clearly show advancing ozone damage over the North Pole. You don't have to read the story.

Comparative images are very useful. "ID a Fish" on the **twiceamused.com** website under "Black Bass" compares upper jaw length distinguishing between a largemouth or smallmouth bass. You will notice the comparison is reached quickly within two or less link clicks. A fisherman can whip out his mobile phone, access the hosted page, and hold the cellphone right next to the fish in question to make the correct identification.

Clear images grip and hold viewer attention on the cellphone more than other devices. The eyes are focused into a tight area compared to a wide area like on a computer screen or newspaper page. Viewing on the cellphone is like taking an eye test. You don't focus your eyes anywhere else and you ignore distractions.

The cellphone is also personal, so what you are viewing intrudes into your personal space. We need to realize the power of up close, singular pictures viewed in a focused space. An image of steaming hot pizza will make you instantly hungry. An image of a battered fighter's face will upset you more on the cellphone than in other media.

An image that fills the screen or scrolls once from top to bottom in the course of a news article or technical review is extremely effective. In contrast, an advertisement image should be driven by a text link making viewing optional.

An image should not be scaled down or re-sized. It must be drawn or photographed to fit a small screen device. The service of a professional photographer who knows what do with web photos, or an artist who can draw mascot logos is indispensable. Grouping things together makes the image difficult to discern.

The average mobile web browser screen size is 240x160 pixels. The average picture size used is 100x76 pixels or less. The most common cellphone wallpaper size is 128x128 pixels.

Is usability in mobile phone web browsers the same as the desktop?

Far from it! The iPhone reduces the desktop website version to fit its screen, but then links become too close together for your fingers to select. If your desktop website is positioned by tables, it will render useless in many mobile phone web browsers. Worse yet, Google may do its own version of your website for displaying searched results in a mobile phone web browser that is to date poor.

Generally, mobile phone web browsers support a very limited set of HTML elements, nearly extinct CSS, and inconsistent Javascript, if at all. Text boxes do alright. Drop down menus are more difficult to use. Radio and check boxes are nearly impossible. You can, however, conduct a survey from a mobile phone web page. Pop-ups do not exist. Few mobile phones open PDFs, documents, or spreadsheets, but they can connect to a database.

Shopping carts are restricted by payment method. Paypal currently supports Blackberry, iPhone, and Android operating systems when accepting mobile payments.

Hyperlinks, the bread and butter of the World Wide Web, work with excellence. Concise writing, clear images, well-organized information, and consistent navigation work together to produce useful mobile phone web browser sites.

What can I expect my customer to do on a mobile phone website?

Three years of informally observing what a user does on his or her mobile phone distills into 10 things. Your customer will:

- like an informative, first page impression (counts for everything)
- will send to a friend
- will not wait long for information to download
- will call with interest a phone number (enable click to call where available)
- will read titles and subtitles (will not read any length so text must get message across in a few, high impact words)
- will look at gallery pictures (usually up to 10)
- will answer questions or register to get something free (brochure, catalog, sample)
- likes to link to communities (Facebook)
- likes to download ringtones
- likes to download wallpaper

Before you rush out to establish a Facebook site for your business, my observations and questions indicated Facebook sites on the mobile phone are largely those of friends, celebrities, and family.

In order to get onto your customer's cellphone itself, try offering a ringtone. Every business needs a catchy jingle, and some businesses become known solely for their jingle! Wallpaper can get you there too, but many folks, again, use photos of family, friends, or pets.

Do you have anymore suggestions?

Visit and bookmark the **twiceamused.com** website for future updates and software. You can request a quote to build product catalogs and directories there, too, or email **webtv@operamail.com** or telephone **Brenda J. Flinn** at **740-818-3851**.

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