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Putting the *Design* in Responsive Design

Best Practices Guide



OHO
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Putting the *Design* in Responsive Design Best Practices

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Introduction

Mobile devices are rapidly becoming the predominant consumer choice, with adoption increasing daily as PC sales diminish in response.

Designing your digital site for desktop or laptop, as well as tablets and smartphones within a single codebase, is called responsive design.

The promise of responsive design? A single, digital site optimized for devices with various screen sizes. With so much information and so many content types, communicating key messages effectively is a challenge. This ebook provides best practices to consider while thinking through your redesign.

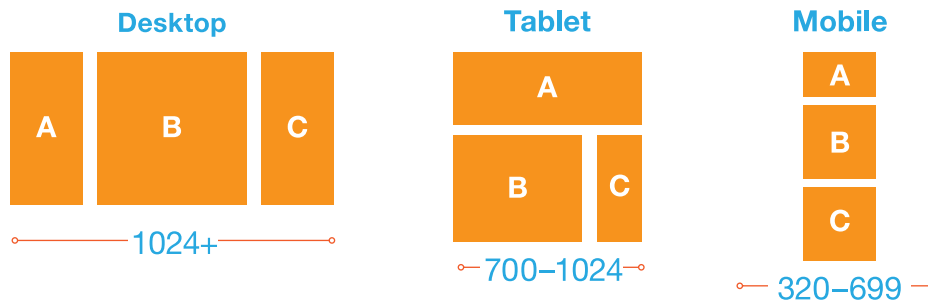
*The promise of responsive design?
A single, digital site optimized for devices with various screen sizes.*



Understanding Responsive Website Design

A site can be made to respond in a basic fashion quite easily. The first step is to define content regions and how each region will respond to different screen sizes. In the following example, content regions A, B, and C move from sitting next to each other on a desktop screen to stacking vertically on top of one another on a mobile screen. The hard work of responsive is planning for the various layouts of these content regions for each screen size.

The first step is to define content regions and how each region will respond to different screen sizes.



Each of the three regions (A, B, and C) of the basic desktop/laptop layout can be shifted to a new position to accommodate the different screen ratios of a tablet or a smartphone.

User Research: Understand How Website Usage Varies Among Your Users

Optimizing a responsive design requires more than a cookie-cutter solution.

Recognizing how a desktop or tablet user may interact with your site differently than a mobile user will help inform your site design and highlight an information architecture that will accommodate all your visitors.

How to prioritize and optimize the user experience:

- Use your analytics program to filter your content by device—see which pages get the most traffic from mobile devices.
- Create a card sort activity. On an index card, write one task that users might complete on your website. Then, ask users to sort the cards into 2 piles: “Activities I would likely complete on my phone” and “Activities I would complete on a desktop.”
- Analyze the user testing data to create a findings and recommendations report that will guide your website architecture.

Guidelines to keep in mind:

- Desktop views tend to be longer and more transactional in nature.
- Mobile prioritizes getting answers from websites.
- Keep forms short and remember iOS devices can't attach files.

Usability/User Experience Design and Content

Optimizing the user experience with a responsive design requires more than a cookie-cutter solution that gives limited control. You'll want to think about how your site is presented across devices and consider:

- Are you varying your navigation by device? You'll want to make sure you're not using a hover state for touch devices and that your touch regions are big enough for easy "clicking."
- Do your calls-to-action stand out on your site's various sizes?
- Do your copy, photography, and video effectively tell your audience who you are? Ensure that your images are optimized for large and small screens.
- Are you incorporating interactive experiences that keep your audience engaged on your site on any device? For rich interactive pieces, keep in mind that overlays and video playback vary widely across devices.

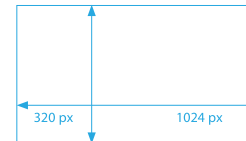
Clearly communicating your value is important on all screen sizes.

Brand

Ultimately, your website is a reflection of your brand. Clearly communicating your value is important on all screen sizes. Having a well-defined messaging platform and visual strategy before starting a responsive design project will help you make decisions about how your site layout shifts and which information should feature most prominently as screen real estate decreases.

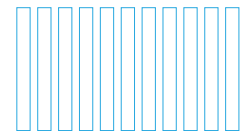
Media Query

A conditional component of the CSS language that allows the presentation of content to be tailored to a type of device without changing the content itself. Media queries can be based on screen width or height of the device.



Grid

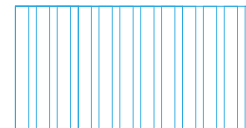
A column-based page layout system, typically with 12 to 16 columns, that allows designers to position content based on a template. Sometimes referred to as responsive, fluid, or flexible grids in responsive design. As the design responds, the column gutters shrink first.



Breakpoint

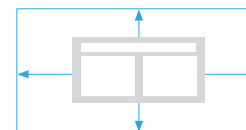
The point at which a website responds to provide the optimal layout for content in a specific view. Breakpoints vary depending on the screen size of the device as well as the display resolution, but a general guide is

- Widescreen Desktop: 1280px
- Tablet Portrait: Between 768px and 959px
- All Mobile Sizes: Less than 767px
- Mobile Landscape: Between 480px and 767px
- Mobile Portrait: Less than 479px



Fixed Versus Fluid

A website using a fixed layout has a set width and will not adjust when the browser is resized or the site is viewed on a different screen size. A website using a fluid layout will adjust to the width of the browser or various screen size.



Responsive Design for Search Marketing and Emails

A responsive design is a priority for your website relaunch because your visitors are using various devices to access your content, so why not make your other digital properties responsive?

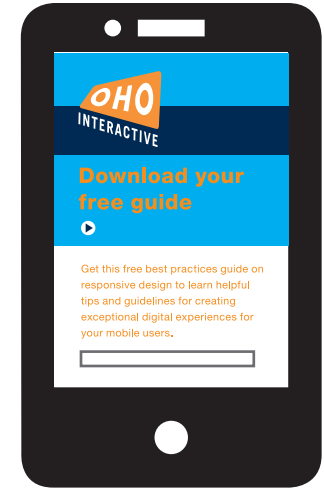
Landing Pages

Your mobile visitors may be arriving to your site by clicking through from an external link, perhaps via organic search or pay-per-click ads. Their first interaction with your website is likely with a landing page, so making sure you've optimized your content for mobile is important. Clearly communicating your value proposition while also offering a great user experience is a critical step toward making a positive first impression and driving visitors to engage and convert.

Creating landing pages with a responsive design employs the same techniques that are used for launching a responsive website. You'll want to create multiple landing page templates so that you can easily test which responsive design works best.

Ask yourself:

- Is my most compelling content prominent?
- Is my call-to-action front and center?
- Am I telling my story effectively?



A responsive landing page where the content has been optimized for the screen size.

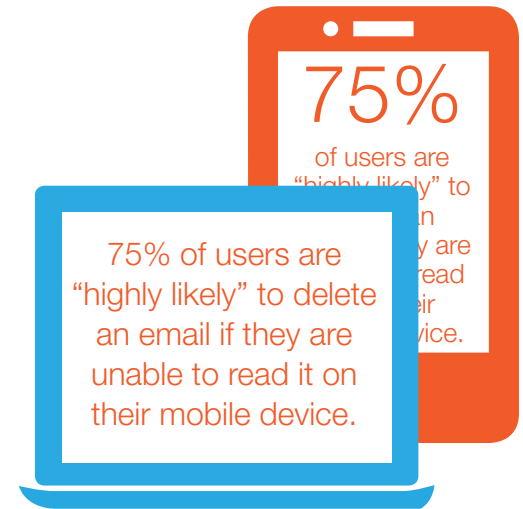
Email Templates

If your email campaigns are not viewable on devices with smaller screens, you could be in big trouble. According to a recent survey, 75 percent of smartphone owners say they are “highly likely” to delete an email if they are unable to read it on their mobile device. This means a decrease in:

- Click-throughs
- Conversions
- Site traffic

To make sure your emails avoid the trash can, create responsive email templates that make it easy to read messages on various screen sizes.

As with any new design, make sure you test your responsive landing pages and email templates. Be sure to analyze your test results to determine what works well and make changes to the things that don't. Take advantage of the data to create more sophisticated content that will engage your audience and help you meet your business goals.



Which CMS Is Best?

The fact is, any content management system that allows you to fully configure HTML/CSS will be able to display a basic, responsive website design. This is because the media query—the code that enables a website display to change its appearance based on device—lives within the HTML/CSS and is therefore independent from the CMS that holds the content and provides the administration functionality. But marketers require more than just a basic, responsive design. They need a responsive design that optimizes content for various devices. Having the ability to hide some content, such as large photography, tables, and sidebars, or to change the position of calls to action is important for communicating a strong message that drives action. This is where picking the best CMS matters.

For an optimized, responsive website design, the open source CMS platform, Drupal, works best. It allows for fine-tuning and control of the content presentation in all devices and gives content managers the ability to choose which content elements appear on specific devices. With the power to show different content, not just different layouts, content managers can deliver exceptional user experiences optimized for mobile, desktop, and tablet displays.

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Key Takeaways for Creating Your Responsive Website

Responsive design is fast becoming the standard website implementation in response to mobile. For a successful responsive website launch, you'll want to

- Use analytics and user research to inform your site design and architecture
- Select a CMS that allows for fine-tuning and control of the content presentation on all devices
- Design responsive landing pages and email templates to optimize for SEM and increase conversions

Conclusion



About OHO Interactive

OHO Interactive creates exceptional digital experiences that engage and inspire users, drive key performance metrics, and help clients win. Our in-house team uses market-tested user experiences to create award-winning websites that leverage our research, visual design, development, and content management systems expertise. OHO has helped clients across industries, including higher education, publishing, healthcare, consumer goods, and technology. For more information visit www.oho.com or email us at sales@oho.com.

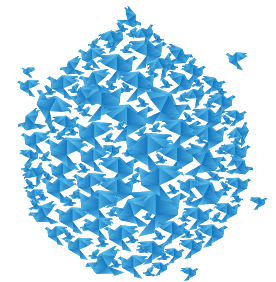
Call us and let's talk about how we can get your first site up and running—today!

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