

Mobile Phones and Websites

Mobile phones have come along way. Mobile Smartphones are both popular and capable and being increasing used to search the web. According to Cisco (see their website) there will be 788 million mobile-only internet users by 2015. They also forecast that mobile data traffic will increase by 26 times.... between 2011 and 2015.

Ok – so what we are saying is that you can expect many more people to access your website using a mobile or smartphone as time goes on. Where do you stand with respect to sites delivered by us and their suitability for use by mobile users?



Whilst design of the sites we supply is generally dictated by client site structure, branding etc; we are very successful at creating sites that render well across many devices. The issue with phones includes; the small size of screen; more limited bandwidth and different input e.g. a finger tap rather than a mouse. In practical terms this means mobile users will get a considerably better web experience on their phone if they are able to access a mobile-dedicated and designed site.

Thus if you are really looking to capture visits from people using mobiles we think that clients should consider seriously adding for their career sites a specialist mobile site. We have done a lot of work on this recently to respond to the trends and we can supply an accompanying mobile site to your main site that will be automatically invoked when a phone (or similar) accesses it. For those who are technically minded we have moved from JavaScript to full PHP use for this as it provides a more reliable and responsive service.

To help with bandwidth and compatibility we will provide a cut down version of your sites content eliminating big graphics, video etc which often causes issues on phones. We will also reconfigure navigation options to favour finger use, the ability to switch between portrait and landscape by swiveling the handset and one touch dialing of any included phone numbers (after all they are phones...). Another useful aid we can add is a webclip for iphone use which makes it easier to bookmarking your site on the handset by placing your icon on the screen. One tap and they are at your careers site and getting update to date information. It looks cool and candidates who use it love it.

Issues

There are a couple of limitations you need to be aware of inherent to mobile phones.

Screen size is obvious but you need to be aware that rendering registration and application forms with only a small screen is not easy. If you use complicated forms we may suggest you amend them or accept reduced input form mobile users to make it easier for the phone to render your form in the small space provided.

Compatibility between different phones. Many handsets have an average marketing life of less than a year and new ones are being launched continually. The operating systems of these handsets also get upgraded very frequently so this means that there is a wide range of handsets out there with different facilities and capabilities. Some handsets – especially older ones - are also not really designed or marketed for web browsing and whilst they may come with a web browser they may simply struggle to render properly even quite basic websites. We are thus unable to guarantee our mobile designed sites will render perfectly on every handset that can access the internet. As a general position we seek to design primarily to support the current range of Android and iPhones – being the most popular ranges we see. Similarly in our experience the modern Blackberries and Windows phones can also render our mobile designed sites without much difficulty. As a general design principal we will build a link that allows Mobile users to access your full site at any time should they so wish so they can view your full site as per a desktop computer.

Uploading files. This is actually not possible on either iPhone or iPads at the moment. Basically because they don't provide within the included Safari browser any file upload facility. Indeed the iOS operating system does not come with a file manager like on a computer or indeed on either Android or Blackberry phones. Our solution to this for career sites is to setup the mobile site to capture the basic registration data and inform the user that if a file upload is required e.g. a CV for applications that they should do this at a later date when they have access to a desktop computer. This seems to work well, mobile users seem to understand that registering an interest is something you would do on the move but doing an actual full application needs a computer. iPhone users of course just can't upload using their web browser so it is not something peculiar to our sites or capability. Indeed for the avoidance of doubt we can handle file uploads on our mobile sites IF the phone can upload.