

Mobile-first indexing in 2018: 3 things SEO professionals should do right now

As an SEO expert or agency, you've spent years attempting to navigate the murky waters of helping your clients find customers online using algorithms, link building hacks, on-page and off-page technique.

And when you thought you were finally making good progress, BOOM! Paradigm shift and the game changes.

The mobile revolution happens.

Google announces its interest in improving user experience and making search results more useful by making its index mobile-first.

According to the **Google Webmasters Blog**:

To make our results more useful, we've begun experiments to make our index mobile-first. Although our search index will continue to be a single index of websites and apps, our algorithms will eventually primarily use the mobile version of a site's content to rank pages from that site, to understand structured data, and to show snippets from those pages in our results. Of course, while our index will be built from mobile documents, we're going to continue to build a great search experience for all users, whether they come from mobile or desktop devices.

What this big paragraph means is pretty simple:

Henceforth, Google will use the mobile version of your site to

rank it on Google (for both mobile and desktop search).

That means if you have a site optimized for mobile, you'll rank well on both mobile and desktop. But, if your site doesn't perform well on mobile, it will tank your rankings on both mobile and desktop.

While a definite timeline for the roll-out of the mobile-first index has not been fixed, a lot has been said about its implementation happening early this year. At SMX Advanced last June, Google's Gary Illyes pinpointed 2018 as the likely deployment year for the mobile-first index.

And seeing as 2018 is now upon us, there is a need to prepare for the upcoming update (if you have yet to do so). Here are three things you need to do immediately to prepare for a mobile-first index and help your site, or your clients' sites, weather the storm.

1. Responsive design

This is one of the most important things you would need to do to rank well on the mobile-first index. Responsive websites that change based on the needs of the users and the device that they're viewing it on are mandatory.

Responsive sites not only offer an optimized browsing experience, they are also offering a two-for-one value. They rank well on both mobile and desktop because the design changes to fit the size of the user's screen.

Before I talk about some of the steps involved in turning a static website into a responsive one, let's go over the basics of a responsive design which includes:

- Fluid site grid with proportionate instead of fixed measures
- Flexible texts and images
- Implementing design changes to ensure usability for non-

desktop devices

- Using CSS media queries to define breakpoints for design changes

I'll give some standard tips on how to turn a static website into a responsive masterpiece, but please note that while the principles stay the same, your theme might be built differently, so consider these only as broad strokes. You might have to do some custom work for your own site.

- Define default zoom
- Set fluid element widths and heights
- Resize website images to make sure our images are automatically scaled according to screen size
- Implement breakpoints that are more design (than device) specific
- Create a mobile menu
- Adapt font sizes and style

Now because responsive design is not about making things fit on a screen, it's also about keeping your site usable. As a last step, it's a good idea to test your site in terms of usability on different devices and also test in multiple browsers to make sure your content renders properly.

2: Invest in a mobile-optimized website builder

Think of it as investing in accessibility for your customers. Unless you live under a rock, it is common knowledge that digital screens are getting smaller and more mobile.

Isn't it then wise to ensure your full website is enjoyed irrespective of the gadget being used? Ensuring your clients' customers get the best experience is all you're here for as an SEO practitioner.

A mobile optimized website builder makes your website

responsive to mobile gadgets: i.e., it detects what your visitor is using (a smartphone or a tablet) and automatically adjusts the layout of your website to fit the size of the gadget being used.

Unsure of where to begin your search for a website builder? Consider using a Google Preferred website builder – website builders which adhere to Google's best practices for creating lightning-fast web experiences. Specifically, I want to highlight one noteworthy option if you want to prioritize speed: Duda, which bills itself as the only Google Preferred builder fully optimized for PageSpeed.

Having a well-designed and responsive website isn't the only goal of mobile optimization. Speed is also crucial – even on mobile, visitors expect pixel-perfect images coupled with split-second rendering time.

A fast website encourages more sessions online, more customer conversions, lower bounce rate, and higher engagement. Usefully, Duda's widget builder also allows web developers to add elements that are not native to its platform.

Don't be caught waiting till the algorithm updates to start making big moves. If your website isn't optimized for mobile, take that step today.

3: Mobile-optimized content

Mobile devices follow you everywhere, which has made them a first-class cure for boredom. But it takes more than a responsive design to make your website mobile-ready.

To ensure your content is as responsive and mobile-friendly as the rest of your optimized website, you have to understand user behavior and preferences as well as available solutions.

Although most mobile users have a short attention span, if you

serve valuable content, no matter the length, your visitors will consume it voraciously as long as your content is engaging.

Articles, movies, TV shows will be read and watched on mobile. Follow the following tips to ensure your content is optimized for mobile:

- Take advantage of mobile applications to encourage engagement beyond your website. An interesting article or an amazing deal on an item will probably go far if your visitors share it on Facebook or Twitter. Use it!
- Develop high-quality content that tells stories. As long as your content is great, mobile users are willing to spend long sessions on your website. How many times have you opened a link and spent longer time than you intended to on a website? Great content will do that to you.
- There are various forms of contents; GIF, infographics, Meme's, articles, high-quality images, videos, use them all. Your business/website caters to visitors of various interests, to avoid ostracizing any of them, ensure that you cover every angle.
- Shorter headlines get users reading faster. Yes, a strong headline is important but you must also remember that you have only about 5 seconds to convince your visitor to keep reading. Do you really want to waste it on an overly long headline? Keep it strong and short.

Lastly, regardless of the amount of work you have put into your content, feedback is key. You need to know which of your content your visitors engage with the most. Stay on top of it all.

<https://searchenginewatch.com/2018/01/09/mobile-first-indexing-in-2018-3-things-seo-professionals-should-do-right-now/>