

Why brands can't take mobile for granted

Having a mobile site is important, that much is obvious. But simply having one is insufficient because everyone else has one, too. You wouldn't expect a hotel to try to differentiate itself by having the words "We have cable" on their sign. That's table stakes. Consumers want more than that in the mobile sites they use, and brands need more than that from their mobile sites.

Today, consumers move easily and confidently among a number of devices; it's up to brands to ensure that their customers enjoy a seamless experience as they move from one device to another. Mobile is the gateway to omnichannel success, the holy grail of customer engagement. If you don't get mobile right, you won't have a prayer of getting consistent, seamless experiences across many digital touchpoints right.

Clearly, the time to get mobile right is now. The question for brands is how. That is the purpose of this white paper.



I. The Case for Mobile

At the outset, it is important that brands not underestimate the ubiquity of mobile devices and the extent to which consumers rely on them, all day and every day. In the U.S., more than 60% of adults own a smartphone and spend close to three hours interacting on their device each day. There is no doubt that mobile is overtaking the PC as the first-choice online computing option, and as such, consumer expectations are becoming more sophisticated. Consumer online behavior is not limited to smartphones. Recent research from Comscore finds that mobile users average 4+ devices when browsing and engaging with brands online.

Consumers have no problems engaging in a complex search, discovery and shopping experience across multiple devices – unless the brands they are interacting with place design and functionality obstacles in the way, More than 60% of adults own a smartphone and spend close to three hours interacting on their device each day.

creating an unsatisfying experience that causes consumers to abandon their cart and bring their business to a competitor's site. Offering a consistent experience regardless of device and context is essential – yet still, it all begins with mobile. Mobile is where most journeys begin, largely because it is the device consumers have with them almost all of the time, no matter where they go, day or night.

When designing mobile sites, brands must be careful not to have tunnel vision. In other words, don't view a mobile site as simply a functional conduit for the consumer to achieve their goals. Rather, make the mobile site an enabling force that delivers an intuitive, optimized, and streamlined experience that does your customers' bidding for them. Strategies for doing so follow.



II. Pre-design: Have a plan based on your customers' needs

The first step in designing an effective mobile site is not to design it at all – until, that is, you've first engaged in and completed a strategic process to truly and fully understand what kind of site you need. And that requires understanding what your customers need. Not all mobile sites should be created in the same way, but all mobile sites should be created thoughtfully and with clear intent. That begins by asking four questions:

- Who are your mobile users?
- What are your users' needs?
- What will your users seek to accomplish on your mobile site?
- How can users achieve their goals most efficiently?

It's important to realize that while you should want a mobile site that is visually compelling, its effectiveness is much less about the aesthetics of its design than about the quality of the user experience and its performance – both of which are critical in enabling users to achieve their goals in a satisfactory manner.

So lesson one is: first understand what the purpose of the mobile site is, and then design it accordingly. If it's an ecommerce site and the experience is to be very **transactional**, ensure there are no barriers in the path to purchase. On the other hand, if the site aims to engage users for discovery purposes – i.e., an **aggregation** site, catalog, or information resource – optimized search functionality and clear visuals and text display will be essential.

Xoom proves that UX improvements drive results.

Xoom is a leading digital money transfer company that allows consumers to send money to over 35 countries from the U.S. The company wanted to create a streamlined process of money transfer, but needed to do so in a way that reassured customers their accounts were safe and secure. Xoom partnered with Usablenet to help build a mobile experience that was streamlined and efficient, yet would also instill trust and confidence in customers.

Beyond that initial engagement, Usablenet has continued to be involved in making waves of UX improvements to the site that have had a positive impact on conversion, visit duration, bounce rate, and average transaction value. For example, Xoom's "Quick Send" feature has been improved more than five times to streamline the money transfer journey and make the process more efficient. Xoom performs monthly A/B testing to help identify and measure improvements. As a result of iterative UX improvements, the mobile site is responsible for over 50% of Xoom's online revenue.



III. UX essentials: How to ensure user satisfaction

What makes for a great user experience? What factors make a customer so satisfied with an experience that they'll want to come back? There are many things and they can vary in importance from brand to brand and from application to application, depending on the nature of the mobile site and the specific goals of the customer.

At the highest level, however, there are four features that customers most commonly demand and appreciate. Not surprisingly, they reflect customer preferences related to their needs. In almost any context, customers want to:

- Find what they're looking for quickly
 - Purchase their items efficiently
 - Own their experience
 - Share their experience

Let's unpack these goals and discuss how to design your mobile site so that you can give users the kind of experience they're looking for.

Consumers have become "always-addressable," meaning that they access the Internet multiple times per day, from multiple devices, in multiple locations.



Source: Forrester Report, "The Always Addressable Consumer," 2012



A. Optimize your search and discovery capabilities

Finding one's way and finding what one is looking for are matters of both addition and subtraction. What you should add is an optimized search capability that offers more than just a literal, unprioritized response to a given search term. The ability to save previous searches makes future searches faster and also more accurate. Visual cues throughout the site help users understand where they are in their process and how to get back to other parts of the site, such as the homepage. What you should take away are barriers that cause delays, such as distracting links, forms with unnecessary fields, and search buttons users need to search for.



LK Bennett's mobile site makes it easy for luxury shoppers to find products and accomplish more tasks in less time. L.K. Bennett is an accessible luxury brand and shoe specialist, the U.K.'s ultimate destination for luxury footwear. The brand understood its customers were increasingly becoming mobile, but it lacked a mobile experience that would drive purchases. Unable to convert traffic into revenue, the company was losing customers to competitor websites. Usablenet's best in-class UX best practices and user-centered approach helped to turn the tide.

- Automated predictive search capabilities maximize ease of use and minimize errors. The technology helps guide users to the right product mix based on their search, and does it quickly and easily. The sooner a customer finds what they're looking for, the sooner they can buy it, whereas delays and unsatisfying search results can lead to abandonment.
- The customer journey is rich in context, designed for intuitive navigation and discovery. Adaptive filtering options – by which users can only select options that are available based on preselected filter preferences – guide the user to the product mix they are looking for.
- There is a clear starting point on each page and there's a convenient and obvious way to move between related pages and sections (and to return to the homepage). With minimal scrolling and clicking needed, users can quickly and easily navigate through the buyer journey.



B. Streamline checkout processes

Nobody likes long lines. Long waits for online checkout are even worse. While one may feel guilty about abandoning a grocery cart filled with perishables and walking out the door empty-handed, consumers have no such compunction about abandoning their online carts. Within seconds, they can be at a competitor's site and fill a new cart. It is essential that brands reduce any and all

stumbling blocks at this critical stage of the user journey.

There are numerous ways to do this:

- Allow a guest checkout option, so users don't have to take the time to register.
- Provide shoppers with reassurance and a sense of security so they feel comfortable making that final click.
- Reducing shipping-related friction by clearly displaying costs and information.
- Incorporate a progress indicator, allowing users to maintain a sense of control during purchasing process.



Usablenet helped Uline deliver a fast, scalable experience to support their complex product offering.

Uline is North America's leading distributor of shipping, industrial, and packaging materials to businesses. The B2B company strives to exceed customer expectations by delivering every order with speed and operational excellence. In 2011, Uline partnered with Usablenet to tap into the potential of mobile. While the B2B sector overall has been slow to adopt mobile, Uline saw an opportunity to create a highly efficient multichannel experience for its customers. Central to achieving that goal was delivering a high-performing mobile site that could support Uline's massive line of products and product variations.

- The Uline mobile site is built on Usablenet's U-Experience platform, capable of delivering a consistent and contextually relevant experience regardless of channel.
- Streamlined navigation, fast performance, and consumer-centric design facilitate the purchasing process through such critical features and best practices as:
 - Prominent calls to action
 - Clickable breadcrumbs
 - Price transparency
 - Menus that expand and collapse



C. Personalize the experience

What does it mean to "personalize" a mobile experience? It means that the customer has the sense that their needs and preferences have been considered in the experience. The site knows their shopping history - it even knows where they are (location) and what they likely want to do next (predictive). By providing a contextually relevant, personalized experience, brands can go beyond mass "You might also like" prompts to provide more targeted suggestions based on browsing behavior and past shopping purchases. Brands can unlock additional functionality for members who log-in on mobile, and leverage saved information, shopping history, and preferences to send personalized offers and push relevant notifications.



Usablenet enabled Hilton to give its guests personalized attention – without the person. Customer service is a priority at **Hilton**, and all staff are carefully trained to ensure that they can provide guests with the best possible service at all times. But increasingly, travelers want to do things for themselves. And with today's mobile devices, they can. Since 2007, Usablenet has been a strategic partner to Hilton, providing value across multiple channels. Today, we support Hilton.com, seven of the company's branded mobile sites, the HHonors Android app, and QA services.

 The goal of the HHonors Android app is to give guests unprecedented choice and control over their entire hotel stay. Within the app, either from their mobile device or tablet, guests are able to:

⊘ Check in

Choose their exact room from digital floor plans

Customize their stay by purchasing upgrades and making special requests for items to be delivered to their room

Check out



D. Let customers get social

Humans are social animals, and with today's technology, people are sharing more things with more people than ever before. Brands are realizing that their best customers can also be their best marketers, spreading information about the brand to networks far beyond their reach. It is critical that marketing organizations make it a priority to integrate social media platforms into their mix of outreach strategies. At the same time, brands should encourage and provide incentives to customers to share their experiences with their friends and followers. Social media is a great - and very inexpensive - way to get people talking about and interacting with their favorite brands.



Usablenet enabled PSEG to engage its utility customers effectively.

PSEG is New Jersey's largest provider of electric and gas service, serving over four million electric and gas customers. The utility needed to create a mobile experience to meet their customers' needs and make it easier for them to connect with PSEG anytime they choose. The company's initial focus was on self-service options for mobile, such as bill payment, outage reporting, and account management. In order to further increase customer satisfaction, Usablenet built out a Mobile Storm Center on the PSEG mobile site to help customers stay connected.

Quick access to important information, such
as account status, bill payment, and outage
updates from within the main menu.

Social integration with Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube enhances customer engagement

Users can sign up for alerts about billing issues and power outages via text and email



IV. Content: Getting it right improves engagement

Sharp design and exceptional functionality are essential, but they can be nullified by stale, dense, and unhelpful content. You don't want something so sparse that it leaves users at a loss for what to do, and you don't want it so text-heavy that users are unlikely to bother engaging with it. You also don't want to control the conversation too much; as we have seen, users are interested in sharing their own experiences and in so doing are supplying their own content. In this section, we discuss some basic tips about ensuring that your content is both compelling and useful.



a. Promote user-generated content. For obvious reasons, usergenerated content is more memorable and more trusted than content generated by a brand itself. You get information from an actual customer who is not being paid, so it carries more credibility than marketing copy. Whether through written testimony or pictures, user-generated content resonates with other consumers on a more personal level. Brands would be wise to provide opportunities for their customers to share their experiences, both on their desktop and mobile sites, and on the company's Instagram, Pinterest, and other social media pages.



b. Provide content that matters. Your customers have lives that extend well beyond those moments that they interact with your brand. Even if they are goal-oriented and are on your site to purchase a specific item, while you have them on your site you have an opportunity to engage them more deeply. Do it with content that adds value to their lives, rather than simply urges them to shop more. A blog is a good place to provide content that speaks to the user's interests, values, and aspirations.



c. Moving pictures are worth 10,000 words. Increasingly, users are attracted to watching (short) videos on sites. Higher-performing devices make video more practical, and videos are becoming more entertaining. In addition to breaking up text with something visual, videos are able to provide two concurrent streams of information – words and pictures – that inform customers in a compelling and memorable way.



d. Be location-aware. Relevant, highly contextual content increases customer engagement, builds brand loyalty, and drives sales on mobile. Consumers consider geolocation-enabled features like store finders or "available near me" functionality to be very useful when researching or purchasing products. In addition, mobile experiences that are customized based on location (including location within a store), context, and device prompt shoppers to take action on a moment's notice no matter where they are. Mobile coupons and mobile-only experiences that are location-triggered add to the sense of personalization that consumers appreciate.



e. Keep content fresh. Content does not age well. Sometimes a brand wants more control over content for specific promotions or to test messages. In general, more sophisticated experiences require more frequent updates and improvements to both content and code. Usablenet's U-Control and U-Campaign tools enable clients to update content themselves.

5 Basic (Yet Unbeatable) Design Tips

To ensure your mobile site scores high in usability, performance, and experience, you can't go wrong with these design basics:

- Maximize button visibility and clickability by adjusting their size, color, and placement.
- Minimize unnecessary page loads to streamline task completion.
- Optimize the product landing page (PLP) with persuasive, compelling design
- Ensure that search features are robust, intuitive, and easy to find.
- Make it easy for users to understand where they are in their journey and what comes next.

U-Control makes it easy take charge of digital campaigns.

Usablenet's U-Control is a proprietary content publishing tool that makes it easy to add or refresh content on mobile sites. Without needing developer support, business and marketing teams can easily change the content on their mobile site.

- Uline's site content is managed with U-Control, which allows them to quickly refresh their mobile content without needing developers.
- **PSEG's Mobile Storm Center is managed with U-Control,** enabling the client to make timely changes to the banner to reflect fast-breaking updates and content.

U-Control also helps brands build and execute pages and sites for mobile. While mobile is often the first point of engagement with customers, marketers need the ability to easily create mobile pages or pull together a mobile microsite to support a promotion or campaign. U-Control provides non-technical users with the ability to launch and manage mobile sites and landing pages to support customer engagement strategies and shorten the journey from browse to purchase.

- Benefits include:
 - Speed to market
 - Publish Anywhere (even into existing RWD site)
 - Multi-screen consistency
- PSEG launched a campaign with Sesame Street to provide families (especially those with preschool-aged children) with access to resources that would help them to develop emergency preparedness strategies. U-Control allowed PSEG to promote their support of Sesame Street on mobile and maintain that presence without needing additional IT resources.



V. Conclusion

Mobile can make a difference in your company's revenues and be the key to better customer engagement – but only if it's done right. A mobile site that delivers an unsatisfying user experience will drive customers away. They don't have the time or the patience to learn to use a confusing site or clear numerous obstacles in order to complete the checkout process. What they do have is choices in terms of other brands' mobile sites, and they will exercise those choices to the detriment of your bottom line.

Getting your mobile site right is essential. Usablenet has laid out a clear path to follow.

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 Be planful and strategic. Your mobile site is for your customers, so be sure you have their needs and preferences in mind. Every decision about the design and structure the site must pass this test: Will it make the user experience better?



2. Follow the UX essentials outlined in this white paper. Consider them the minimum requirements. Anything you add will be supported by these essentials.



3. **Keep content fresh, targeted, and relevant.** More than any other single element, content can either keep your customers engaged or chase them away. Choose your content wisely and keep it varied.



4. Like with content, design should be helpful to users. Don't let it detract from the overall user experience. Less is often more. If users can't find what they're looking for or don't know where they are in the site or in their process, they will leave.



5. Understand that there is always room for improvement. Test often and make adjustments as necessary.



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And remember, if you lose your way or want assistance in your journey to mobile success, we are always here to help. Simply email us at <u>contact@usablenet.com</u>.

The Mobile Playbook - Cheat Sheet

How to know what to focus on when thinking of optimizing your mobile site? Follow these guidelines to prioritize the testing and refinement on your site. Important to keep in mind that the overall experience should meet the needs of your customer personas, and the desired experience at each stage of the overall customer journey. User mapping is essential to design key journeys that will meet users' needs. Remember to define key measurements and KPI's for the experience upfront, and implement cross-device analytics to inform testing and ongoing UX performance improvements.

Phase 1: Adhere to Usability Fundamentals

- □ Home page design that helps users find what they are looking for quickly and easily, with clear starting points
- Updated layout to optimize for device interface (choice of font, size of images)
- Design to encourage an efficient purchase path (no distracting links and unnecessary forms and fields)
- Navigation that is intuitive, yet gives user complete control (back buttons and unwanted features can be skipped) and require minimal scrolling and clicking
- Navigation to make full content of site easily accessible with clear hierarchy of choices
- Easy to find search functionality
- \Box Easy navigation between pages and sections, making the site feel fast
- □ Maximize button visibility and clickability (prominent CTAs)
- Minimize unnecessary page loads for quicker task completion
- Relevant content (type and amount of information) to streamline the purchase journey
- Remove barriers like forced registration (No unnecessary fields; guest checkout)

Phase 2: Optimizing for Commerce

- Optimize search and discovery capability (saved search; predictive search)
- □ Implement product search accelerating features for return customers
- Ensure filter functionality on product list pages to aid navigation
- Persuasive Design on product pages (quick-buy buttons, product recommendation; user reviews and ratings)

- Include scrolling banners, look-books or image/video carousel with engaging content to shorten the path to purchase
- □ Include user-generated content on product pages
- Reassurance to communicate the security/ privacy of the site and build trust
- Streamline checkout process to remove barriers like sign-up and add guest check-out
- Offer saved information and purchase history on account log-in
- Display shipping costs clearly and early in the check-out process
- Display progress indicator to communicate where the user is, and what comes next
- Eliminate unnecessary steps in the checkout process
- □ A/B test page content and user flows across the entire purchase journey, and optimize for the best result
- Implement automated features that prevent user errors (clear error messaging and selection methods as alternative to typing)

Phase 3: Design for Engagement

- □ Integrate social channels and offer rewards to users for sharing content socially
- Offer multi-session (cookie), perpetual or bio-metric log-in
- □ Include location-aware / geolocation-enabled features (eg. Events near me)
- □ Include voice-enabled features (e.g. voice-based search)
- Offer targeted suggestions based on user's browsing behavior (multi-session)
- □ Offer personalized suggestions based on past purchases
- Offer additional functionality and features after log-in
- Relevant notifications delivered based on user behavior or user data
- Add video content on product and engagement pages
- □ Location-specific offers and promotions
- □ Offer Mobile coupons
- Content is frequently updated to be fresh, targeted and relevant