



Why Your Company Must Have a Responsive Website

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By Deborah Daily, Co-Owner, Buckaroo Marketing/New Media



Think about how much money your company has invested in your website and how important that online presence is to your business. Would you be shocked to learn your site is frustrating four of every five users?

Today, most adults in the U.S. access web content through mobile devices such as phones and tablets. How big a majority? Statista says it was 80.3 percent of users in 2018 and will grow to almost 85 percent in the next three years.

So what does that have to do with frustrating your users? If you haven't taken steps to ensure you have what's known as a responsive website, you're making it difficult for customers and prospects to use it. When we call a website "responsive," we're not referring to whether visitors respond to the content. The term describes a site that automatically adjusts what it displays based upon the type of a device someone is using.

When smartphones gained popularity, mobile users quickly discovered that navigating websites over their phones could be a frustrating exercise. A site that looked beautiful and was easy to navigate on a desktop computer could be amazingly unwieldy on a phone screen. Menus shrunk to unrecognizable sizes, and users were constantly adjusting their magnification. Even then, buttons and other elements of the site often didn't work well on phones or tablets.

That's when web designers and marketing agencies began to use responsive design. If your website is responsive, as soon as a visitor reaches it, the site determines what type of device they're using and instantly changes its characteristics to match that device. For example, a site viewed through a desktop browser might have a drop-down menu that's easy to manipulate with a mouse, while the same site viewed on a phone screen might use large buttons that are perfectly sized for a visitor's fingertips.

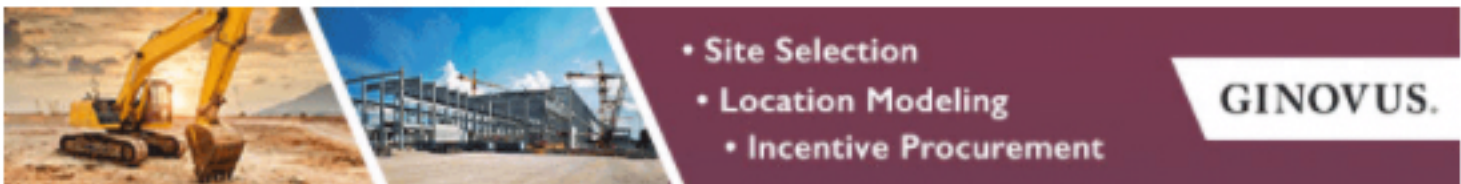
Our company works with many industries, including manufacturing. When I look at manufacturers' online presence, I'm amazed at how few of them have responsive websites. That means over 80 percent of the people who are visiting their sites -- whether they're customers or prospects -- are being frustrated by the way the sites are set up. Will they push on and work around the roadblocks to see what the manufacturers have to offer, or will they just throw up their hands and move on to a competitor's site? In a marketplace in which consumers expect instant gratification, what do you think will happen? What would you do?

If all that doesn't convince you that it's important to ensure your site is responsive, consider that search engines may be penalizing your non-responsive site. Let's say your company manufactures water pumps. When a prospective customer enters "water pumps" in a search engine like Google, that search engine instantly finds all the sites it can and lists them in what it sees as the best order. Most search engines give low ratings to non-responsive sites, because they know mobile device users will find them difficult. So you may make the best water pump on the market, but the search engines might put you at #25 in the list of sites they show. In other words, not only are you frustrating your customers with your non-responsive site, but you're also shooting yourself in the foot.

Some business owners may react to my comments by saying that they're too busy to constantly update their websites, and that's something I fully understand. But the issue with responsive and non-responsive sites has been going on since the middle of the decade. If I see that you have a non-responsive site, I'm going to assume you launched it back in 2014 and haven't seen a reason to update it since then. That tells me I don't want to do business with you, because if you can't keep something like that up to date, I'm going to assume that your processes and products are also obsolete. You may think that's crazy, but if you knew how many prospective customers think like that, you'd be terrified.

If you haven't updated your website in years -- or if you're just not sure your site is responsive -- it's time to look at it with fresh eyes. If you're still working with the company that developed your site, ask them about its responsiveness and have them demonstrate how their design works on multiple types of devices. On the other hand, if you stopped working with your web vendor some time back (such as after the site was launched), find yourself a marketing partner who can provide an objective evaluation of your current site's responsiveness, along with recommendations for updating it to today's standards. After all, why would you maintain a website that four out of five people can't use?

Deborah Daily is co-owner of Buckaroo Marketing | New Media, a Fishers-based advertising agency established in 1999.



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