

The impact of mobility and consumerization of technology on business

by Faisal Hoque

Mobility; intuitive, cloud-based tools; smartphones; tablets and social media have transformed global business ecosystems forever. No one is tethered to a desk or landline any longer. As the number of consumers toting smartphones continues to grow at a steady clip, businesses have to embrace the mobile revolution to connect with customers or end up empty-handed. Most businesses consider mobile marketing crucial to their growth in the next five years, but a majority of them haven't fully realized mobile marketing yet. Here are six ways to make sure you keep your head in the clouds and your business mobile for the future, including moving away from desktops, thinking locally and moving into the cloud.

Move away from desktop browsers

Traditional websites are so 1999. Any company that started out or built its business with a website for desktop browsers needs to go mobile if it hasn't already. And every new startup should make mobile presence a top priority.

More and more, consumers are using handheld devices to shop or search for services. Only businesses with a mobile-friendly or made-for-mobile site or app are going to attract these customers. Nobody's going to attempt to navigate tiny print that's not designed to fit the small screen.

A [Web.com survey](#) of small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) found that just 26% have a mobile-friendly site and that only 14% have a standalone mobile website.

Think global, sell local

Sure, mobile devices are one of the many ways to compete from anywhere in the world, but have you considered courting the local customers who might walk or drive by your business in favor of one with a mobile presence?

On any busy city block, you'll see people on their smartphones looking for someplace nearby to eat, shop or get something done. They're more fixated on the screen than they are on the signs outside.

In the Web.com survey, 36% of SMBs said their biggest reason to go mobile is to "attract more local customers," compared with the 38% who said their biggest reason is to "provide better service to existing customers" and the 34% who seek to "gain competitive advantage." How can you gain a competitive advantage if you don't pop up on a mobile device search?

Put your finger on new business

What's keeping you from taking your business mobile? Mobile marketing is fast, cheap, broad-reaching and highly targeted. You can't afford not to do it. A mobile marketing campaign also can be integrated easily with other marketing campaigns, such as TV, radio or a traditional website. A busy person is more likely to visit a mobile site than write down or remember information from the advertisement.

Consumers also are apt to share a mobile ad via text, email, Facebook or Twitter. When is the last time someone besides your Great Aunt Edna clipped and sent you a newspaper ad or called to tell you about a TV commercial? You're probably not interested in bulk kitty litter anyway.

Connecting with your three Cs

Your potential clients, consumers and competitors have handheld devices. It's obvious that you can reach new customers with a mobile presence, but have you thought about how essential it is to be available to clients at all times? Without an immediate response, many will go elsewhere. Nobody is waiting for a voicemail in the digital age.

Mobility can help you scope out the competition. Keep your customers close and your competitors closer. As with any enabling technology, mobile marketing or sales needs to be properly managed. Get a lead on clients and stay ahead of rivals by making your mobile presence stronger and more accessible than theirs.

Customer service and satisfaction

Nobody but Great Aunt Edna wants to call a toll-free number to get a problem resolved. More and more, people are using their smartphones to shop. It saves time. Those customers will never go back to your site if you don't make reaching customer service as easy as placing an order. Busy people like the convenience of paying bills, contacting a representative, making an appointment, or doing anything they can do on a laptop or a desktop from their handheld device; and the demand for such services is rapidly growing.

Look to the cloud

Going mobile means ditching that dinosaur hard drive and any other old-time technology that bogs you down. For starters, going mobile saves money on startup costs because there's no software or hardware to buy. Cloud solutions typically are subscription, pay-as-you-go services, so your immediate and ongoing costs are predictable and manageable. No more maintenance and support fees or expensive upgrades. Now upgrades come free and automatically in the cloud.

Not to mention that you'll be more productive. With your data in the cloud, you can access it anywhere you have a browser and an Internet connection. Web-based data also enables collaboration, with every team member able to access the same information from a handheld device. And as your business grows, you can add new users and collaborators quickly.

Choosing a cloud provider might be the trickiest part because the market is so new and there's no proven, long-term track record. Here are few things to consider:

- It's essential to understand both the capabilities and the limitations of each provider, and to make sure it's the best fit for your enterprise.
- Depending on your existing enabling technology platform(s), you might need more than one cloud provider to meet your growing needs.
- As with any strategic decision, examine the future potential of your provider and the likelihood of its staying afloat in a burgeoning market.
- Perhaps most importantly, investigate a provider's ability to recover from hardware, software and network problems by studying its performance history with a focus on outages.
- As with any legal document, examine the service-level agreement, or SLA, to be sure you're getting what you need to support your technology architecture over time.
- Finally, look into the person behind the platform and make sure that person is someone you want to do business with.

Get mobile now

No business owner or entrepreneur can wait to create a mobile presence and to offer the same services from a smartphone as from a desktop or laptop. Tech-savvy businesses are sprouting up every day in every industry and from every corner of the world, and they know how to court the new generation of customers. Existing businesses that haven't already made the leap need to act fast or they'll be swept up in history.

Whether you're reaching out to the world or your own neighborhood, you need mobility to connect with customers and clients.

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