

**27% OF EMAILS
ARE OPENED BY
MOBILE DEVICES**



Email optimisation for mobile

How to improve click rates without increasing your workload.



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The need for mobile emailing

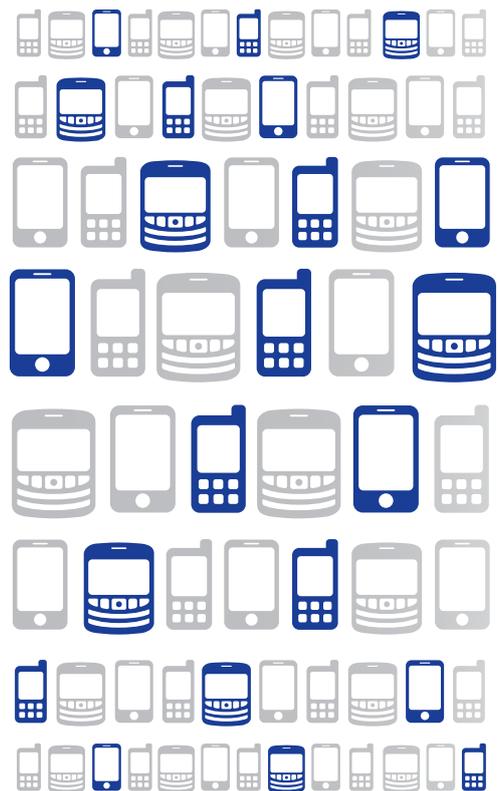
Mobile devices are everywhere with some 500+ new smartphones and 200+ tablets launched last year. We are becoming a truly web enabled society. Tablets are replacing laptops as cloud based storage enables information to be available whenever and wherever it is needed.

The shift towards mobile computing is also having a dramatic effect on some of the traditional PC manufacturers. In a recent news article, Hewlett-Packard blamed the reduction of thousands of staff members on their lack of a tablet product in a market that is shifting towards its fast adoption.

So if mobile is so prominent, does that mean that more email will be consumed as the traditional office barriers are removed and people can access their email from anywhere? Surely this will mean that open and click rates will see great improvements? Unfortunately that will not be the case, as the mobile emails will be open for a shorter time and with smaller screen sizes many more will be left unread and discarded unless the email is rendered and optimised properly for mobile. This means that email designed specifically for mobile is essential if you wish to maintain your responses rates.

Here are just some of the trends that are taking place:

- Mobile email usage is exploding. Today (study from 2nd half of 2011) 27% of emails are opened by mobile devices (phones or tablets), rising from 20% in the first half 2011.¹
- Click rates of emails opened on mobile devices are only half of that of desktops - meaning the majority of emails are not mobile friendly.¹
- In contrast to common belief, 96% of emails opened by mobile will not be opened again on the desktop.¹
- 63% of Americans, 41% of Europeans and 67% of APAC users close or delete emails not optimized for mobile²
- Optimized mobile email improves click through and conversions.
- Optimized mobile email reduces attrition rate and improves brand performance



The need for mobile emailing

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What can be done to address this challenge?

To address the mobile email challenge companies today have these options:

- Do nothing, and send the desktop version, the popular choice³
- Segment mobile users and send them a dedicated “skinny” mobile email
- Consciously design a one size fits all template which will be a compromise between desktop and mobile i.e: big text, one column layout
- Use responsive code in the custom HTML level
- Use responsive templates: this is the “win win” approach but still not offered by most ESP’s.

What is responsive email design?

What is responsive email design?

Responsive email design is additional code that is embedded to the email HTML so it can respond to the screen that opens it, and makes the email render differently on different-sized screens. This is done by “media queries” that query the screen width and apply the CSS only if the screen is below a determined cut-off point. When responsive design is applied to email it dramatically improves mobile response rates. While seen more and more with websites, when it come to email this approach is relatively new and it is lagging behind the adoption of smartphones. Advanced users have been using responsive code in custom HTML, but responsive templates are still in the realm of only a few ESP’s, therefore it is not available to most emarketers.

The messaging today should be as recipient centric as possible, and the emarketer should strive to send their audience the most relevant content: according to their interests, time zone, location, and the device they are using. Responsive design addresses the latter challenge, in that you cannot guess with what device your user will open your email on, it could be their desktop, tablet, mobile or any other gadget. And as they often have a short attention span, if it is not optimised for the device they reads it on, they may delete or ignore it.



What can you do with responsive design?

The following can be addressed with responsive email design, and are built in as features in a good responsive template:

Font size

Small font sizes that are good for the desktop will not work well for mobiles, since users will need to zoom in to read with comfort. Apple recommends 17-22 pixels for mobile screens. The responsive code will make sure that desktops will display small font sizes and mobiles will see a larger font.

Vertical Layout

Desktop emails use a more horizontal real estate orientation: you can have images with text on the side, you can benefit from two, three or even four column layout, and work well on the desktop. With mobile email the story is very different. The orientation should be vertical, with one content item per “floor”, so if for the desktop email you have text on the side of the image, on the mobile email the text should be below the image. Multi column layout will change to single column layout, placing the content items underneath each other. The ideal responsive design should automatically make this switch.

Bigger call to action

You will want to make it easier to click the links within the email and track those links. Small text links that work well for a desktop's mouse will not work for the “fat fingers” of the mobile device users. Responsive design can automatically convert the text link that will be used for desktops to a button with bigger hit area for the mobile email.

Padding

When the buttons are quite close to each other it is not an issue when using a mouse. But for large fingers on small screens you should increase the padding around the button so they are further apart from each other and do not obstruct other content.

Scaling

The desktop email will not always scale properly on the mobile device. Changing fixed to fluid containers and adding some more client specific code to tackle different mobile devices will make sure that the email is opened at full scale on the smaller screen.

More focused content

As always, less is more. But still, with the desktop email you can have 3-4 conversion objectives within one email, in a mobile email you should ideally have only one. The mobile user will usually have a shorter attention span as they might be on the move when trying to read the email. They will have less screen real estate to handle more than one objective that you present to them. In other words they are more likely to stop reading after the first objective you challenge them with. With a mobile responsive template you can easily hide complete content sections and elements and make them visible only for the desktop.

Remove unnecessary decoration

For desktops, sometimes an image is just a nice side decoration to compliment a paragraph. For the mobile small images don't work. If you decide to put an image in there it should cover the entire screen. Therefore if it is just for decoration or to fill a space, text is more important. The mobile responsive template can hide images from sections in the UI without needing to specifically and manually add code for each image.



What can you do with responsive design?

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Normal



Responsive

Hide side bars and navigation bars

In desktop emails you can even have side bars with different content and links similar to what you have in your website. Top navigation bars with 4 to 6 links can also work well. You want to catch your recipients eye with variety. With mobiles these elements will not work since they will always take too much room, the links will be too small, and often you may see that the line breaks in the middle of the button caption.

The responsive design should hide these sections from mobile and keep them for the desktops.

Or at least change a six item navigation bar to a simpler three items one.

Hide the preheader

“If you can’t see this email click here...”. do you really want this line of text to take your best 20% of real estate of the mobile screen? The responsive design should remove this sentence for mobiles readers - iPhones will download all the images by default so this sentence is unnecessary for them. For other smartphone users should already know where to press to download the images instead of going online.

Dedicated mobile images

Another thing that worth optimising is the actual images you use for mobiles. With sophisticated responsive design you can show different images for mobile then those for desktops. Why would you want to do that? In most cases you won’t have to but there are a few reasons why it may be beneficial: Firstly you can show dedicated mobile content such as “download our app from the appstore” image, shown only for the mobile users. Secondly, you may wish to upload an image that is lighter in kb to make it easier for some mobile clients to render and handle. Thirdly, you might want to play with different proportions of the image to optimise real-estate on the mobile; for example make the banner image taller and with bigger fonts.

Agronomics

Many mobile users will hold their mobile in the right hand and use their right thumb to click. Best practice is to align all text to the left, and avoid placing buttons in the bottom right side. This will not be necessary for email destined for the desktop as the responsive design will automatically change text alignment to the left, and buttons alignment to be larger and centred.

Live Preview

As you build your responsive email you will want to preview both the desktop and the mobile version. When using custom HTML or responsive templates that are not truly integrated to the ESP product you simply don’t have that option. This makes editing the responsive elements of your email difficult as you will not see the output and cannot be sure you have everything displayed the way you intended.

Last but not least

If you do manage to send a responsive email that is optimised both for desktops and for mobiles, you will undoubtedly get better click through rates. But in order to get better conversions, don’t forget to make a mobile landing page on your website. Your web provider should be able to utilise responsive web design as well.



Conclusions

It is no longer an option to just send the desktop version of emails to your mobile users if you want to maintain or improve your open and click rates. Marketers who ignore the move towards mobile will be left behind. Out of all the possible strategies responsive email is the best approach that allows you to maximise your email potential without compromise. Responsive emails have been in the realm of those with access and resources to invest in bespoke HTML coding. Even then they lack the power of an integrated template that lets a lower-skilled user to build responsive emails easily and quickly.

For more information regarding our mobile responsive template please contact emarsys.

References

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