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Native Apps or Web Based Apps?... Which Rules for Your Business?

What is the best “mobile strategy” to reach your customers? What is the best “application” to reach both current and potential customers? Is it a mobile “native” application or a mobile “web based” application?

STATS: Mobile web users will outnumber PC Internet users in two years and the trend is already clear to see. Almost half of Facebook users are already mobile and those users are twice as active as PC users. 40% of Twitter’s traffic is now mobile; over 10 billion iPhone applications have been downloaded.

When you look at the emerging generations of mobile users the numbers are even more telling. Generation Y is a home grown mobile generation. According to research from the well-known Neilson Group, Gen-Y’ers send on average over 3,400 text messages per month and their mobile data consumption has risen 400% in two years.

Do not write off the older generation. A Pew Internet American Life Study found that the **fastest age range for smartphone adoption** is occurring among 45- to 65-year olds whose primary adoption driver **is usability**: Mature users want to perform tasks faster and make their day-to-day lives easier.

What does this shift to mobile mean for your business? Clearly it means you must have a compelling mobile strategy, plus the right tools to manage your mobile platform of choice. That being said, the immediate problem is that mobile is complex and sometimes unnecessarily shrouded behind a “Wizard of Oz” curtain.

We are clearly at a tipping point towards the mobile internet. It will no doubt impact different vertical markets in different ways, some being impacted by mobile more than others. All markets however will be disrupted as we move forward with adaptation. Unquestionably business will be impacted heavily by mobile applications **that are easy to use, relationship based, easily personalized and mobile device agnostic**.

How does a business **keep it simple** and at the same time allow their mobile platform to be flexible, dynamic, easy to update yet responsive to daily changes? Can these parameters be achieved without a feared “**forklift update**” that may be required when native applications require changes to software or updates to their operating systems? Is “simple” even possible in 2011?

The answer is “yes”.

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The majority of businesses know they must deliver their content and message in the right format, to the right device, with the right sets of information just-in-time to an expressed need from a visitor. It is important to decide how to deliver this information and how personalized that delivery should be to a visitor requesting it on a mobile platform.

Changing Your Content Strategy is Inevitable in 2011.

When embarking on a mobile strategy the largest shift web publishers need to make is in their content strategy. Using the PC as an analogy, the PC web content is built around brand-centered design and information architectures. By contrast, effective mobile platforms are built around task-based user experiences which need to be anticipated in advance by mobile app developers.

Questions should arise like: “If a visitor comes to our mobile site, based on our print advertising, what are the top reasons they might come to this location? If they do, what do they expect to find?”

Look at any standard computer based website today. There is always an “About Us.” section. They often use their PC’s to “graze”. However, “When visitors come to your mobile site, do they have the **same needs** as someone surfing the web on a PC? Are they looking for general information or specific needs? Are they looking for particular or more generalized information? If they have scanned a QR Code, for example, it is clear they are seeking specific information about your advertised product.

Mobile platform effectiveness is enhanced by delivering valuable services which are optimized for all mobile devices. Mobile optimized web sites designed to be accessed by all mobile phones are now at a premium in 2011.

Most mobile platform experts agree that mobile platforms move the “user friendly engagement” needle when they are responsive to the **immediate perceived needs** of the visitor. Bounce rates drop in relation to mobile sites that meet the perceived needs of visitors.

Two kinds of mobile sites prevail currently: (i) “shovel information” mobile sites which are largely unresponsive to the immediate needs of visitors and require them to “drill down” to find information they are seeking, and (ii) more personalized sites that **anticipate and respond** to the perceived needs of newly arrived visitors.

As the mobile solution industry has evolved, focus has shifted away from “shovel” and “drill

down” sites to a more personalized experience permitting visitors to engage with content and services on their terms. “About us” pages, “my bio” links and “historical data” have little relevance within an environment which is designed to “engage the visitor”.

Effective content strategies are moving from static publishing of information to more application-based “I need this now” icons, links and information delivery from a mobile platform.

Which Mobile Platform is best for Business: Native Applications or Web Applications?

“The mobile Internet has changed completely over the past few years. It has transformed from a lightly visited and marginally useful novelty to a quickly growing medium that business would be foolish to ignore. Handsets have powerful browsers, networks can support data-rich sites, and mobile Internet content is now providing real utility—with Marriott's mobile bookings generating \$1.25 million in the first 100 days of its launch, serving as an excellent example. Understanding how and why the mobile Internet is growing is the first step in adopting an effective mobile strategy to develop a presence on this increasingly important and trafficked medium.” —Making the Case for the Mobile Internet, July 29, 2010, Forrester Research, Inc.

Historically, businesses looking to interact with mobile customers had **only one option** — to build a native mobile app that would be available for download. Mobile visitors needed to find, select and install the app, and occasionally download updates. One of the prerequisites with this approach was the extensive infrastructure required for basic creation, distribution and maintenance updates. Beyond the creation and distribution infrastructure, businesses using the “native mobile application” approach needed to create customized versions of the app for each of the mobile platforms on which it would run (Android, Mac O/S, RIM, etc.). This in turn also required individual updates for end-users to install as the device software operating system changed, and as the needs of users changed.

Despite some benefits, this native application approach is losing ground to web based applications because of cost, maintenance and usability reasons. This shift has been attributed to businesses needing an easier way to deliver **hyper-local experiences on any mobile device** without the overhead of creation, distribution and maintenance of a native application and its ever-present spectre of “forklift upgrades”.

Developers have found an alternative way to tackle mobile marketing by redesigning this challenge of delivering “just-in-time” information. Rather than taking the “shovel” and one size fits all native app approach, businesses have opted for investing time in providing an **unparalleled mobile web experience with customizations** to the anticipated type of visitor that may come to the mobile site. This involves leveraging the browser capabilities on mobile devices and using it as a gateway to instantly deliver a customized experience to visitors.

Unlike native apps, a web based mobile app allows businesses, to engage users in a more cost effective, efficient manner. Owing largely to the recent advent of HTML 5 and Java Script, web based apps functionalities can be easily replicated via web browsers, without the need for the underlying infrastructure of a native application’s creation and maintenance.

With web based applications, users are not required to download any apps or maintenance updates. Instead they are taken to a mobile URL by scanning a QRCode or clicking on a link in an email or otherwise “calling up” a URL via their mobile browser. It instantly delivers the most up-to-date application to their device. The URL can be bookmarked like a local app on their device desktop for repeat use and visits.

Let’s also now consider the “usability” value question of device specific and device agnostic mobile applications. Are there functionalities and cost implementation factors that differ?

The answer is also yes.

Current browser technologies allow web content delivered through web based mobile applications to be automatically adapted to the characteristics of over 11,000 mobile devices, whereby the content and layout of a landing page website is adjusted to the unique capabilities of a mobile access device. This includes design criteria such as navigation options, screen sizes, browsers, markups and multimedia format. Considering that an average website is accessed by up to one thousand different types of devices, each with their individual settings and limitations, there is a definite need for content accessibility to be as **device agnostic** as possible.

Non-finger touch devices like Blackberry or Nokia are able to run and access the functionality and content of a Web based application, but only touchscreen devices like the Android, iPhone/iPad, etc. can run most native apps. Is this significant in terms of market share? Please carefully review these statistics and projections through 2012 and beyond: [Gartner Says Android to Command Nearly Half of Worldwide Smartphone Operating System Market by Year-End 2012.](#)

Table 1

Worldwide Mobile Communications Device Open OS Sales to End Users by OS (Thousands of Units)

OS	2010	2011	2012	2015
Symbian	111,577	89,930	32,666	661
Market Share (%)	37.6	19.2	5.2	0.1
Android	67,225	179,873	310,088	539,318
Market Share (%)	22.7	38.5	49.2	48.8
Research In Motion	47,452	62,600	79,335	122,864
Market Share (%)	16.0	13.4	12.6	11.1

iOS	46,598	90,560	118,848	189,924
Market Share (%)	15.7	19.4	18.9	17.2
Microsoft	12,378	26,346	68,156	215,998
Market Share (%)	4.2	5.6	10.8	19.5
Other Operating Systems	11,417.4	18,392.3	21,383.7	36,133.9
Market Share (%)	3.8	3.9	3.4	3.3
Total Market	296,647	467,701	630,476	1,104,898

Source: Gartner (April 2011)

With HTML 5, web based applications delivering content are now available ***even in offline mode so users can still access the app when they do not have cell reception or are connected to a Wi-Fi network.*** HTML 5 even allows the content and pictures of the app to be adjusted based on the connection a user has — be it Wi-Fi, 3G/4G or offline.

Benefits for businesses from web based mobile applications are even greater since they can immediately deliver existing web content from an optimized web page to a mobile device in a highly customized manner that takes into consideration the individual consumer preferences and their specific mobile device parameters. This is a benefit to the end user desiring a “just-in-time” relationship with the web site.

Another significant advantage for businesses is that instead of having to develop applications for each device platform, only one application is built and delivered to all mobile platforms.

These apps are designed and operated like a native application for a truly context-aware, consistent web experience from a single source but with flexibilities to change the landing page and user experience in a moment’s notice.

For More Information on developing and integrating mobile applications into your business strategy with QRcodes enhanced interactive elements, go to our [website](#) or contact directsalesqr codes@gmail.com or 603.729.3066.

"Just in Time" Information

Delivered to **YOUR CUSTOMERS** on their Phones
Reaching them Where They Are -- On the Go - When They Want it!