

Responsive Web Design Best Practices

1. **What is Responsive Web Design?** Responsive web design is a web design method that automatically adapts the rendering of a web page according to the screen size or orientation of the device (tablet, desktop, smartphone, etc.). Adaptation is done by changing image size and text layout after detection of the device or screen size. Responsive web design enables a good user experience and allows cost reduction by avoiding the creation of multiple web or mobile pages. Responsive design prioritizes the mobile phone experience first, then adapts the design to larger formats on tablet and desktop.
2. **Responsive design is no longer optional.** Google has for years advocated responsive design and actively punishes non-responsive mobile experiences from an SEO perspective. Since high SEO rankings should be a priority for any retailer, responsive design should be given.
3. **Don't forget the basics.** While good responsive design can be a great way to gain exposure for your site, it can also have the unintended consequence of drawing attention to the shortcomings of your ecommerce business. Make sure you address any fundamental flaws in your product content management processes prior to executing any mobile strategy.
4. **Know who your customers are and what devices they use.** Use analytic data to determine what your largest and most important customer demographics are. What devices (and their corresponding screen sizes) they use will direct where your responsive design efforts should be pointed. Then track key metrics to monitor the effectiveness of each tactic. Additionally, track which OS and screen type they are viewing on – these minor differences also matter for design of the webpage.
5. **Execute usability tests to improve site usability, not just design.** Usability tests and actively soliciting customer feedback through interviewing and surveying are good ways of knowing their needs. Use your understanding of them to design with them in mind.
6. **Don't just design for the space, design for functionality.** Remember that mobile devices and tablets don't just have different screen sizes; they also have extra functionality such as finding user location and ability to make phone calls, while they lack the ability to use hover menus.
7. **Create a fluid layout that works in any screen size.** Don't limit yourself to only strict device-based layouts or breakpoints. Maintain fluidity and have something ready to go when the next new device or intermediate screen size becomes popular without having to scramble. Fluid layouts work well because they allow for maximum flexibility of web page screen size.
8. **Start small and work your way up.** Start by designing for the smallest (mobile browsers) and scale up for tablets and desktop browsers by using CSS rules to display additional content. Deliver assets for each screen size and ensure your tech team is coding for each screen size.
9. **Be mindful of the size of your content and when you serve it.** Studies have consistently shown that the slower a page loads the more likely that the user abandons the site. Optimizing your content (everything from images to CSS to JavaScript resources) can provide a lighter weight delivery and reduce load times.
10. **Fluidly scale your images.** By scaling and caching images to fluidly serve up based on display size, you can vastly optimize the size of images and load times for smaller devices. Use icon fonts when possible as they provide a scalable and editable alternative for commonly used images, resulting in a much lighter footprint.

eCommerce Diligence™ Checklist

Responsive Web Design Key Questions to Ask Providers

Company

1. How long have you been in this business?
2. How many customers have you sold? How many have left your company, and why?
3. What size or types of clients fall into your “sweet spot”? Won any awards in that space?
4. What peripheral or supporting services do you offer (e.g., technology, SEO/SEM, usability testing)?
5. What sites have you implemented across multiple devices and screen sizes with similar functionality/content? With differing functionality/content?

Products/Services

1. What information do you need from my company as part of the site design?
2. What optional services do you provide as part of the site design?
3. How long to design a basic site? A sophisticated one?
4. What is your process for working with a third-party ecommerce provider?
5. Do I own all licenses and artworks created/purchased as part of this process, or are they under your name?
6. Which third-party ecommerce platform providers have you worked with in the past? How did they affect your design?
7. Are there any platforms or devices for which you specialize?
8. Are there any platforms or devices which you do not serve?

Process/Practices

1. What is your responsive design philosophy as it relates to ecommerce?
2. What key design practices are included in your service?
3. What practices do you follow to improve usability?
4. Please explain your design methodology.
 - a. How does the process work?
 - b. How do you work with my team and my technology providers (ecommerce, search, etc.)?
 - c. What is your process for wire frame review?
 - d. What is your process for creative review?
 - e. What types of documentation do you provide (e.g., wire frames, style guide, etc.)?

Pricing

1. What is your pricing model for your services?
2. Are there any additional fees (e.g., implementation, usability testing)?