



MOBILE SEARCH AUDITING GUIDE



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
CHOOSE THE RIGHT MOBILE PLATFORM.....	4
MAKE IT CRAWLABLE.....	6
THINK ABOUT KEYWORDS AND CONTENT.....	7
SPEED THINGS UP.....	8
DESIGN.....	10
CONSIDER PROGRESSIVE WEB APPS.....	10
MOBILE CTA'S.....	11
TRACKING.....	12

INTRODUCTION

Things move so fast in the world of search marketing, updates are released, algorithms change and there are always new tools and techniques for businesses to embrace if they want to achieve success. In the last decade, the number of smartphone users has risen sharply – a trend which shows little sign of slowing down.

The need for users to have information at their fingertips wherever they are and whenever they want, is a must, and as such, there is a real need for brands to embrace mobile search.

Mobile search and SEO is something that we have covered in great depth over the last few years. We've told brands and businesses why it is important, and why you must ensure it is a big part of your strategy, but we haven't really covered the actual ways to prepare and run a mobile audit for your site.

This guide will look at this aspect and should give you some pointers to set your brand on a mobile search journey – in essence it is the perfect mobile auditing checklist.

Making the changes below, and perfecting the following strategies can have a long lasting effect on your brand.

1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT MOBILE PLATFORM

The EAT update (expertise, authority and trust) places a higher significance on the type of content that Google is looking to rank a site for. In the case of both desktop and mobile, relevancy is a must and as such there are a number of different mobile page strategies.

Responsive design – These pages automatically change to fit the device you're reading it on.

Typically there have been four general screen sizes that responsive design has been aimed at: the widescreen desktop monitor, the smaller desktop (or laptop), the tablet and the mobile phone. This is key to implement if you want to offer the best user experience (UX) and prevent customers from leaving your site.

Dynamic serving - dynamic serving pages allow you to serve different HTML and CSS, depending on user agent, on a single URL. In that sense it provides the best of both worlds in terms of eliminating potential search engine indexation issues while providing a highly tailored user experience for both desktop and mobile.

The most important thing here is to notify Google (this is what webmasters recommend) that your page is mobile and needs crawling appropriately.

Separate mobile page - You can host a mobile version of your site on separate URLs, such as a mobile sub-domain (m.example.com), an entirely separate mobile domain (example.mobi), or even in a sub-folder (example.com/mobile).

The pros to this type of strategy are that a separate site offers the ability to publish different and specific mobile content (with the potential to optimise for mobile-specific search intent), as well as the ability to tailor a fully mobile-centric UX. But be warned there are negative such as a higher cost of maintenance (server/design). It may also mean a more complicated set of SEO requirements due to bi-direction annotation.

Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) - AMP is Google's accessible framework for creating fast-loading mobile web pages that will boost both the UX and availability of your content for those not browsing on desktop.

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“Although experienced developers can often achieve similar results through intensive performance optimisations, publishers often neglect this due to resource constraints.

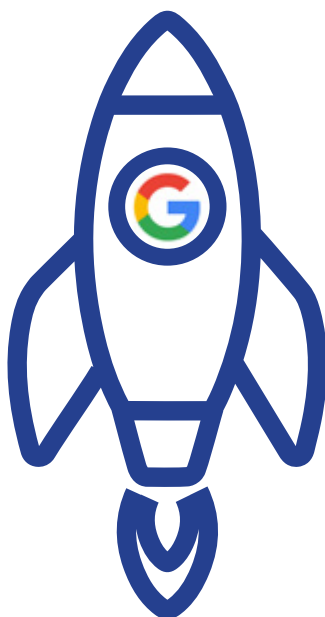
“AMP allows these optimisations to be easily achieved without altering the primary mobile web experience.”

Some of the main benefits of using AMP are:

- Improves site speed
- Makes existing content more accessible
- Decreases bounce rate
- Improves site performance
- Adds monetary value

With one of the main focuses for businesses looking to make progress online, being ready for Mobile-First, it is vital that ranking high in mobile search results is a priority.

In truth there is no answer as to which of the strategies is best to adopt and we'd recommend a bespoke strategy depending on the type of site, the size of it and how you plan to develop future pages.



2. MAKE IT CRAWLABLE

Your pages are only useful if they can be found. It must be a priority therefore that mobile-specific content can be differentiated from desktop-specific content. If you get this right you can create good UX in both the mobile and the desktop experience. Search engine spiders and Googlebot needs to be able to discover, crawl and index your web pages in order for them to rank. The best way to ensure that your site is crawlable is as follows:

- Create a mobile XML sitemap with a `<mobile:mobile/>` declaration after each URL listing.
- Submit your mobile XML sitemap to Google Search Console.
- Allow the Googlebot access to your site.
- Remove popups and lightboxes as both of these can't be discovered through crawling.
- Make sure to implement `rel=canonical`, `rel=alternate` media and Vary: `User-Agent`

HTTP Header tags as needed to tell Google when it should deliver a desktop version of your web page and when it should deliver a mobile version.

Google developers recommend that you make sure that Googlebot can crawl your JavaScript, CSS and image files by using the 'URL Inspection Tool' in Search Console.

This will allow you to see exactly how Googlebot sees and renders your content, and it will help you identify and fix a number of indexing issues on your site. In essence you want the Googlebot to see your site in the same way a user does. If your site's robots.txt file disallows crawling of these assets, it directly harms how well our algorithms render and index your content.



3. THINK ABOUT KEYWORDS AND CONTENT

One misconception is that your content is your content, and that it can be the same for both the mobile and desktop versions of your site. In truth brands need to be aware that users typically use different search queries on mobile than on desktop. When typing in a query, search terms tend to be shorter, as speed and accessibility are key on mobile. Aside from query length, there is also a greater emphasis on local searches. People using mobile for searching are often on the move, hence the need to focus more heavily on a local search strategy.

Another factor, and something that we have covered in depth, is the rise of voice search, when used on mobile (a trend that is on the rise) there is a real need to remember the style with which searches are performed.

When it comes to your content you should conduct mobile specific keyword research. A great way to do this is through Keyword Planner, and specifically, the 'Mobile Trends' section. This part of the tool allows you to see which of the keywords you are already targeting have the most search volume on mobile. This permits you to search for potential new queries that you want to build into your future strategy.

In a piece by Search Engine Watch, businesses were advised to look at which keywords searchers are using on different devices via Google Search Console. Within your Search Analytics you should select 'mobile' under the Devices dropdown. Google Search Console data is never fully comprehensive, but it is nevertheless useful as a guide, and for a touch of inspiration in the research phase.

Determining how much written content to feature on your site can be tricky. We all know that long form content can be incredibly valuable to an SEO campaign, but mobile users generally don't have the capacity to consume larger volumes of content. Keep content short at a top level and then expand on your services and products in long form blogs. This latter content will allow you to rank for more keywords and add to the EAT of your site without scaring away readers looking for snippets of information.

One common mistake businesses make is with video content; they use unplayable content on their mobile pages. Some types of videos or content are not playable on mobile devices, such as license-constrained media or experiences that require Flash or other players that are not broadly supported on mobile devices. Unplayable content, when featured on a page of any website can be very frustrating for users. This all adds to poor UX so it is suggested that you use video that can be played on all devices and that you use HTML5 standards for all animated content.



4. SPEED THINGS UP

Speed has been used as a ranking signal for quite some time, though it was mostly focused on desktop searches. To fill the mobile gap, Google announced the so-called Speed Update last year and as such there is a real need to make sure your site is as fast as possible. Google itself suggests that at least 85% of all users expect the mobile site to be as fast as desktop if not faster. The need for good site speed is especially true on mobiles, due to the combination of less power and a reliance on data over wifi.

If we were to pick random site (<http://deliveroo.co.uk/>) and run it through Google's PageSpeed Insights tool, you get the following results.



As you can see from the above images the site speed varies massively from mobile to desktop.

The mobile figure of 46 is considered to be in the 'slow' category (albeit at the top end), this will be a concern for the brand as you have to imagine that the vast majority of their orders are placed through the app or on the mobile site.

If you use this tool as part of your audit then you can work through the recommendations and improve this.

Things that appear in the list below the speed score include:

- Optimising images
- Eliminating render-blocking resources
- Deferring unused CSS
- Ensuring that text remains visible during webfont load
- Reducing the JavaScript execution time
- Minimalizing critical request depth

Focusing on speed can be both positive and negative as seen in the below table:

Company	Load Time Change / Results	Impact
amazon	0.1 second increase 1% decrease in sales	\$1.3B / year
Walmart	1 second decrease 2% increase in conversions	\$274M / year
YAHOO!	0.4 second decrease 9% increase in traffic	600M visitors per month



5. DESIGN

Once you've got your content in place and have undertaken all of the relevant keyword research you need to present it in a way that plays to good UX. You should bear in mind and implement the following and make sure that you test and re-design at all stages:

- Make navigation as smooth and intuitive as possible.
- Check above-the-fold content on mobile – ensure that the most important elements are there and not cut off midway.
- Avoid the use of pop-ups on mobile (which can effect speed) as they can be difficult to exit and a source of frustration for the user.
- Remove any use of Flash on the site, as they can cause loading issues on mobile.
- Make any videos responsive so that the screen adapts to the phone size. Use HTML5 video player, as it makes rendering on mobile easier.
- Check that the mobile and desktop designs match up for consistency.



6. CONSIDER PROGRESSIVE WEB APPS

A Progressive Web App (PWA) is an app that combines the best of a website with the ease of an app. It uses an almost 'blind' method of searching whereby you open the app and it will display what you want based on previous preference. They are websites that enable an app shell and configuration file to be downloaded to a smartphone, which allows the app to take on all the best characteristics of a native app while living on the web.

The benefits of PWAs are:

- They allow for an app icon, full-screen display without an address bar, speedy on- and offline functionality and push notifications.
- They are a good way to help companies build a bridge between the discoverability of the web and the engagement and satisfaction that users experience with apps, all while minimising overheads.
- They can be used directly on the web or installed like a native app on Android devices (and iOS devices soon, too). That means there is a lot less to maintain, optimise and promote, so they are incredibly attractive to savvy companies of all sizes.

7. MOBILE CTAS

The part of a site where you can actually drive a conversion is through a clear call-to-action (CTA). Ask yourself, what do you want the visitor to do? Make it clear and simple for them to do it. Limiting the options on each page can be an effective technique.

Perhaps the most important aspect affecting mobile landing page success is relevancy: a landing page (especially on mobile where users are time savvy) should always seek to provide what the consumer is expecting to see.

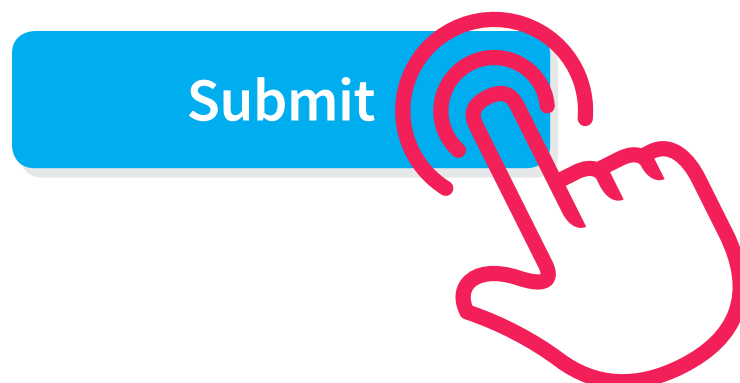
The types of business that rely on a mobile CTA more than a desktop one tend to be retail sites or those that offer a booking system like restaurants, dentists or hairdressers. It's really important that shops, restaurants and hotels are optimising mobile landing pages correctly or the chances are they're missing out on potential sales and bookings.

Mobile searchers by definition have a phone in their hand and the stats show that it's likely that they are searching for contact details, so businesses should consider including a large CTA that simply says 'Call now'.

Things to consider when designing your mobile CTAs:

- Make it look clickable
- Play with different sizes
- Alter the colours – make it stand out
- Less words can mean more
- Think of the user journey down the page/scrolling
- Run testing (preferably A/B testing) on all of the above to ensure they are working at 100%

Just as important as the CTA itself is CTA location. One of the most contentious debates of CRO is scrolling and whether or not to place content before or after the fold. Research always points that content below the fold doesn't receive attention, sometimes as low as 23% viewability. However, there have been recent studies to refute that fact such as Time magazine's research stating 66.7% of time on a page is spent below the fold.



8. TRACKING

A site that looks nice and contains all of the relevant information is nice but how is it performing? Analytics allow you to see both the current and comparable performance of your site and can give you precious insight into areas that need work.

Depending on the type of site that you run you might want to focus on the number of sessions, the bounce rate or for retail sites the conversion rates and ROI.

Make sure that you set up all of your mobile goals early and that you are constantly checking them. YoY or MoM analysis is vital.

One thing to remember desktop rank and mobile rank can differ greatly. Page one in mobile search engine results pages (SERPs) tends to include significantly fewer organic results than desktop SERPs, and the keywords your personas are using to search for you in the desktop experience are not necessarily the words they're using in mobile.

Make sure your mobile stats are coming from true analysis of mobile SERP activity.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The need for speed is a necessity when it comes to mobile. Auditing your site in terms of mobile optimisation is a must. If you are serious about a forward thinking search and marketing strategy, then you need to check your current site against all of the above points, implement the changes and you'll be well on the way to success.



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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year and Digital Agency of the Year 2018, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

YOUR BESPOKE ORGANIC SEARCH (SEO) ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

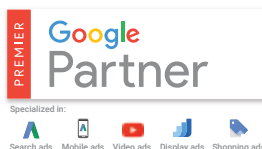
REQUEST NOW



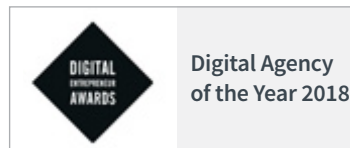
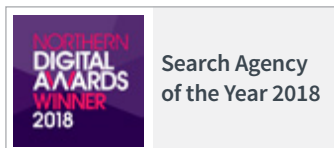
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