

# WHEN MOBILE-RESPONSIVE WEBSITES ARE NOT ENOUGH, TURN TO SEO

*Cuinn Merrigan*

The steady rise of mobile usage—mobilegeddon, some have called it—will continue to impact the way practices market their services and the amount of leads they generate.

Adults now spend more time per day on mobile devices with digital media (2.8 hours per day, equating to 51% of the total) than on desktops, laptops, or other connected devices.<sup>1</sup>

Google, which owns almost 68% of the global search engine market,<sup>2</sup> was an early responder to the mobilegeddon trend. In April 2015 the company announced it would be updating its algorithms to give higher ranking priority to websites that are mobile-friendly, meaning they are easily read on a mobile device. This was done to make it easier for users to locate relevant, high-quality results from their searches—optimized for the device they are using. It's all about improving the experience of website visitors.

This change to Google's algorithms is still going strong today. If your practice has seen a drop in website leads over the last year, it could be because your website does not meet the new requirements for maintaining a "page 1" position within Google Search.

## RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN = RELEVANCE, BUT IS IT ENOUGH?

Consider this: 61% of marketers use responsive web design as part of their mobile SEO strategy.<sup>3</sup>

Responsive websites (those designed to automatically adjust to the viewer's

screen size, be it smartphone, laptop, tablet, or PC) are absolutely necessary for any size practice. You can check to see if your website is mobile-friendly by using Google's Mobile-Friendly Test tool: <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/>.

Consumers themselves (72% of them) want mobile-friendly sites, but 96% have been to sites that weren't mobile-ready.<sup>4</sup>

Simply building an attractive, easy-to-navigate, responsive website isn't enough. The site must also incorporate strong search engine optimization (SEO) strategies to keep the site's high page ranking. The "if you build it they will come" mentality does not work for websites. This is an ongoing process. Keep in mind that Google ranks SEO separately for mobile and desktop, but the SEO strategies are the same.

## TWO TYPES OF SEO STRATEGIES

The goal of SEO is to improve the position of your website in search engine results pages (SERPs). There are two ways to do this:

1. On-page SEO: Settings you apply on your site so it is optimized for search engines.
2. Off-page SEO: Activities outside the boundaries of the website.

## ON-PAGE SEO STRATEGIES

There are both "front end" and "back end" techniques to improve SEO on your website.

- **Keywords:** Each page of your site should be optimized for one keyword or phrase. Primary keywords should be included in your headlines (H1 tags), subheadings, and body copy when it is relevant to the content. It is important to remember to write for "humans" first and search engines second. You want the content of your site to flow well, be logical, and contain important information. Keywords should also be included in the specific page URL.
- **Image tags:** Images capture the attention of website visitors, so use them to your advantage. Make sure they load quickly and include captions. On average, captions under images are read 300% more frequently than the body copy on a web page.<sup>5</sup> Also, the file name you choose should tell Google what the image is without having to look at the image itself.
- **Title and meta tags:** These are lines of code contained in the background of a web page to help search engines learn what the page is all about.
- **Blogging:** Google is always crawling your site to find new content. By posting new blogs to your site each week or month, your site will appear fresh and get an SEO boost. Be sure to add appropriate keywords to each blog to drive more traffic to your site. Add a sharing widget on your blog to allow for sharing on social sites or emailing. The more your blogs are



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shared, the more your practice will appear to be an industry leader.

- **301 directs:** If you are updating your website to a responsive design, you might end up creating one or more new URLs. Technology called “301 directs” is used with inactive URLs to redirect the page to another location. You don’t want to leave a website visitor wondering where your site went, so make sure it is a permanent redirect.
- **XML sitemaps:** These allow search engine crawlers to move efficiently through your site and alert them to new content on your site.

#### OFF-PAGE SEO STRATEGIES

The internet is full of opportunities to increase your SERPs and boost traffic to your website using resources outside your own site.

- **Social networking:** Use social media to advertise your message and encourage Facebook likes, Twitter re-tweets, Pinterest pins, Instagram shares, and more.
- **Social bookmarking:** The more relevant your content on the Internet, the better chance you have at becoming bookmarked (the process of storing links to sites that visitors like) and shared across the Web.
- **Videos:** Educational or entertaining videos posted on your site or on YouTube or other social sites can go viral (in a good way), helping to boost traffic to your site. Make sure your videos contain relevant keywords and tags to get you the credit you deserve.
- **Local Business Listing (LBL) pages:** These online profiles can pop up without your knowledge—often with inaccurate information about your practice. There are thousands of directories that need to be monitored to ensure the correct address, phone number, website address, and other information are being shared online.

The more correct LBLs you have, the better chance you have at being found online.

- **Review sites:** Your online reputation is extremely important to your practice’s success. People look on review sites to read about other people’s experiences with your practice—before ever calling your office. Make sure your positive reviews significantly outnumber the negative ones. Take measures to monitor this every day so you can quickly respond to any negative feedback online.
- **Backlinks:** When other high-quality websites link back to your site in their own content, this improves your SERP. You may be tempted to purchase backlinks, but steer clear of this temptation. Purchased backlinks will only hurt your SEO because it will be viewed by Google and other search engines as unethical. Your site can even be penalized for such actions.

#### CHECK YOUR PAGE RANKING

Your website’s page rank is defined as a number between 0 and 10 that ranks the site’s importance according to Google. The more exposure you have online, the higher your page ranking and the more traffic you will generate to your website. You can check your page rank for free: <http://www.google-ankings.com/prindex.php>

If you want your practice to thrive, change with the times by incorporating a responsive website design that has a solid and ongoing SEO strategy in place. **AE**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Meeker, M. (2015, May 27). Internet trends 2015—code conference. KPCB. Retrieved from <http://www.smartinsights.com/internet-marketing-statistics/insights-from-kpcb-us-and-global-internet-trends-2015-report/>

<sup>2</sup>NetMarketShare. (2016, March). Desktop search engine market share. Retrieved from <https://www.netmarketshare.com/search-engine-market-share.aspx?qprid=4&qpcustomd=0>

<sup>3</sup>Ruffolo, B. (2015, Sept. 24). 25 SEO statistics for 2015 and what you can learn from them. IMPACT Branding & Design. Retrieved from: <https://www.impactbnd.com/blog/25-seo-statistics-for-2015-and-what-you-can-learn-from-them>

<sup>4</sup>Hof, R. (2012, Sept. 25). Google research: No mobile site = lost customers. Forbes. Retrieved from: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthof/2012/09/25/google-research-no-mobile-site-lost-customers/#23a1c0c51580>

<sup>5</sup>Tennant, B. The shocking truth about how web graphics affect conversion. Kissmetrics. Retrieved from: <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/shocking-truth-about-graphics/>



*Cuinn Merrigan (cuinn@fast-trackmarketing.com) is the chief operating officer at Fast Track Marketing in Broomfield, Colo.*

## IN A BLINK

- Google ranks SEO separately for mobile and desktop.
- SEO strategies are the same for mobile and desktop.
- The goal of SEO is to improve the position of your website in search engine results pages.

*For more on mobile-friendly practice websites, see Jeanne Holden’s article “Creating a Modern Practice Website—From Mobile Devices to SEO” in the May/June 2016 issue of Administrative Eyecare. —Ed.*