

What Is Responsive Web Design And Why You Should Care.

Peter Gleeson August 08, 2013



Google announced last year that the web design industry was being encouraged to shift towards what is known as responsive web design. In Australia the message is taking some time to get through. We followed some of the current trends to bring you an update.

(Newswire.net -- August 9, 2013) Late in 2012 Google announced some recommendations for web developers that would assist the universal trend towards internet access by mobile device. But because many are still reeling from Google's Panda and Penguin 1 & 2 episodes the message seems to have been lost.

This is what Google released back in December 2012.

"Google recommends webmasters follow the industry best practice of using responsive web design, namely serving the same HTML for...rendering on each device....If responsive design is not the best option to serve your users, Google supports that...HTML can be on the same URL or on different URLs, and Googlebot can handle both setups appropriately" Last updated December 3, 2012

So what does all this mean? Let's try and approach this in simpler terms

Responsive Web Design

Since the rise of smart phones, tablets and notebooks the world has been flooded with various sized mobile devices. So in order to adapt, those in web development need to embrace new methods of presenting data to multiple sized screens - all at the one time. Thus was born the term '[responsive web design](#)'.

Simply put it means the content your looking at will respond to the size of the screen on the device you're looking at it with. You can tell if a website has responsive design by reducing the browser window on your desktop PC to different sizes. Try matching the size of the many different devices. So that's where the fun begins.

We set about accessing a range of Australian websites to test it out. The results were very mixed indeed and if you are a business owner you may like to try this yourself. Why you ask? Well if you have competitors then try theirs first. If they haven't yet "responded to the call" you might take the advantage and gain an upper hand. After all, have you seen how many people are using mobile devices for browsing lately?

To be fair Google does mention you can deliver your content on a separate site or [mobile website](#) as they're called. This can be a solid alternative to responsive design for a website if your content is suited or your budget under constraint. Either way it will display in a readable format on a mobile device. That is to say you can view it without zooming in and out to find things.

Another statement by Google reveals how serious they are about this new trend. *"To improve the search experience for smartphone users.....we plan to roll out several ranking changes in the near future that address sites that are misconfigured for smartphone users...."* June 11, 2013

That in itself should be enough to scare many business owners. But it doesn't seem to be working just yet. The company called [Fusion Themes](#) which I link to in this article have aligned their design team to comply with these industry best practices. Overseas institutes were quick to introduce new methods to accommodate this rising trend so they were quick to employ some of their graduates.

Considering the population and number of mobile devices in some overseas countries its little wonder they are

preparing. Of all those sites we looked at to examine this new discipline in web design, Sydney seems to have the most sites using responsive web design or mobile websites. If your site has not been updated perhaps you too will heed the message.

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Peter Gleeson
4/12 James Rd
Toukley
NSW 2263
Australia

Email: lob@exemail.com.au

Phone: (02) 8090 6968

[Google](#)