DIGITAL TRENDS

The importance of responsive web design

by **Ivan Hrušovský**, Product manager, Atte s.r.o.

Atte

What device do you use to surf the web? How often and why? You probably use a laptop or desktop at your office, your smartphone or tablet while commuting or waiting for someone, and you may also use a smart TV or videogame console, e.g. PlayStation or Xbox at home to surf the internet. We use so many different devices, with different screen sizes to connect to the internet. What does your website look like on these devices?

Then and now
Chart 1 shows how mobile internet usage skyrocketed from 2010 to 2014. Smartphones made the internet more personal. With the internet in our pocket, we tend to spend much more time online.

Consumer preferences have changed dramatically. Who wants to wait more than a few seconds for a website to load? Yet, there were times when people used to make coffee while waiting to be connected to the internet (do you remember dial-up?).

Mobile phones significantly changed the way we use the internet. Suddenly, it was possible to search for information on the go, but websites were not ready, connections were slow and data plans were not designed for downloading high data volumes. This was the WAP era, when many businesses took advantage of this new opportunity and created suites of websites "m.somewebsite.com" connected to their original "www" sites. In the beginning, there were just few a mobile

phones able to connect to the internet, so the only issue was handling another website with limited data available to mobile users. Later, it became more difficult to keep up with the variety of new different mobile screens and customers required more information to be accessible via mobiles.

Today, there are not only more people using their mobile devices to surf the internet, but they are also spending more time on mobile devices than on any other device. Chart 2 shows how mobile has overtaken desktop / laptop and other connected devices.

The key finding of the KPCB survey is: if you are not able to reach a mobile audience via online campaigns and a responsive website, you will be losing out to competitors.

What is "responsive web design"?
Responsive web design is a set of techniques enabling your website to change based on screen size and device capabilities without the need to

load a huge website and then zoom in and out to find content.

What are the benefits?
The most important benefit of responsive web design is a better user experience. We access the internet using many different devices with many different screen sizes. Responsive web design means that every user will have a positive experience when visiting your website. This leads to a higher probability of them engaging with you rather than the competitors.

On April 21 2015, Google began using mobile-friendliness as a ranking signal. This means a responsive website receives an improved search engine ranking and so is better SEO optimized.

A responsive website is more complex to create, but is better able to adapt to any screen size, including those yet to come. This gives you a huge advantage – being on the same page as brand new devices about to hit the market. A responsive website will last longer with updates

made to only one site. This means huge cost effectiveness in the long run.

By adapting to responsive web design, your website will load faster not only on laptops and desktops, but more importantly on mobile devices. Adapting to responsive web design will also unify your website visitor statistics. No more combining statistics from different websites – one for desktop and laptop users, and a "special" website just for visitors from mobile devices.

How do I know if my website is responsive?
You may have just had a new website created, or you want to know if your website has a responsive feature. There are many ways to check this. For example, using Google – go to the website below and enter the website you are interested in: www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly

Every website should be created in line with the mobile-first approach, which provides many benefits visitors as well as the website owner.

To sum up:
- Is your web design modern and responsive?
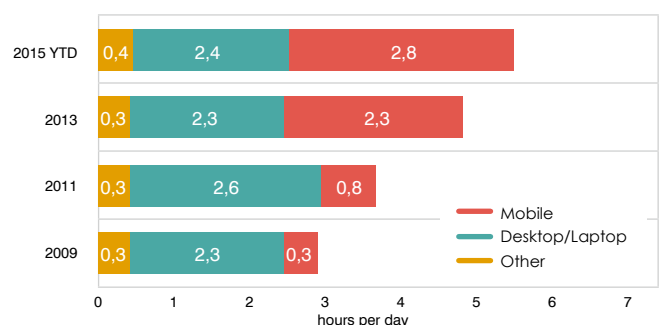- Do you market your products and/or services online?

If your answer is no, you need to act quickly. Doing business online requires a fast response and the ability to adapt rapidly to a changing environment.

Chart 1: Growth of internet usage from 2010 to 2014
Total Digital Media Time Spent by Platform
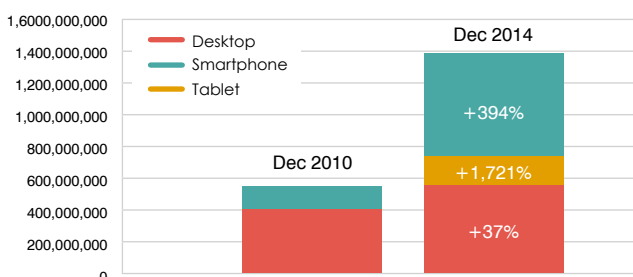
Source: www.comscore.com

Chart 2: Internet Usage Growth
Time Spent per Adult User per Day with Digital Media

Source: www.kpcb.com