THE SAVVY MARKETER'S GUIDE TO RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

How to create a single website that delivers a better experience across all devices

The Savvy Marketer's Guide™
A BrandErgonomics® publication from Quarry Integrated Communications.

ABOUT QUARRY

Quarry is a buyer experience agency with a 40-year history of helping B2B marketers convert branding into buying. Our focus on the buyer's perspective enables the design and delivery of experiences that are aligned with how customers want to engage. This practice – which we call BrandErgonomics® – spans the traditional disciplines of effective marketing and communications as well as all newer forms of engagement, such as mobile and social media.

Quarry offers extensive experience in buyer insight, brand strategy, demand generation, marketing automation (Eloqua® Level 1 certified partner), user experience design, buyer and stakeholder communications and sales enablement. Responsive Web Design is just one of the pathways that can help you build your brand through a thoughtfully designed buyer experience.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

At Quarry, we've been helping our clients deliver fabulous buyer experiences for almost four decades. We've seen a lot of trends come and go. Mobile is decidedly not a trend; it's a new way of life. In developing online solutions for our clients, we've found that Responsive Web Design helps overcome a number of barriers.

We wanted to create a practical, informative resource specifically for innovative marketers who are looking to solve pressing business challenges in a mobile context. We hope *The Savvy Marketer's Guide to Responsive Web Design* helps you make strides in the online experiences you provide your buyers.

This Guide was written by Richard Hill and Frances Ranger, with important contributions and expertise from Patti Annable, Norm Clare, Glen Drummond, Walid Hassanein, Mark Heine, Tony Mohr, Dean Whillier and Ken Whyte. It was designed by Jamie Keith.

We would love to hear your feedback about the Guide, and we'd welcome the opportunity to discuss your Responsive Web Design needs or the broader challenges of building your brand in today's buyer-centric universe using the practice of BrandErgonomics®.

Please contact us at responsive@quarry.com

Thank you!

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The Internet changed everything for buyers. Now your buyers are changing the Internet. Their adoption of mobile web devices – smartphones and tablets – has become more of a tsunami than a trend. And if you're not providing buyers a mobile-friendly website experience, you're killing your brand.

So, how can you respond?
To start, consider Responsive Web Design.

In this Guide, you'll learn:

- The true global magnitude of mobile adoption, both generally and for B2B buyers.
- Why current mobile solutions simply can't scale to meet the rapid proliferation of device types and screen sizes.
- At least 10 direct benefits to your business and your buyers when you adopt the principles of Responsive Web Design.
- 6 ways to get started, today.

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SURPRISE! YOUR SITE IS ALREADY MOBILE

In a recent eConsultancy survey, 70% of companies said they had yet to launch a mobile site.[1] They were 100% wrong. Consider this healthy dose of reality:

> **"If you have a website, you're already in the mobile world – and chances are you're making a terrible impression with audiences. Why? Because your amped-up, tricked-out websites, replete with all those bells, whistles, sub-navs and flash movies that sing harmonies on laptop-sized screens, produce a chaotic cacophony to users viewing them on the miniature screens of their mobile devices."** (Christina "CK" Kerley)[2]

46% of respondents stated they're unlikely to return to a website that they had trouble accessing via their phone and 34% said they'd likely visit a competitor's mobile site instead.[3] Ouch!

The online experience your brand delivers becomes your brand to your potential buyers. And they don't give you a pass for providing a shoddy experience (offering an unappealing layout, making them scroll, pan or zoom excessively to see your content or, worse, making them wait) simply because they've chosen to interact with you on a mobile device. In a recent survey of mobile web users by Compuware Corporation, 71% of respondents stated they expect websites to load as quickly, almost as quickly or faster on their mobile phone compared to the computer they use at home.[3]

What happens when you don't deliver? The same survey demonstrated that poor mobile experiences injure your brand significantly. 46% of respondents stated they're unlikely to return to a website that they had trouble accessing via their phone and 34% said they'd likely visit a competitor's mobile site instead.[3] Ouch!

Delivering a poor experience is bad for your brand. Obvious, yes, but it bears repeating. Human beings seem to be naturally wired to remember negative events in greater detail than positive ones.[4] That means your potential buyers are more likely to remember their frustration trying to navigate your website using their smartphone on a single business trip than they will the three previous visits on their laptop from the office. If you're lucky, they won't tell anyone about it, but the quick-share social world makes publishing a bad review increasingly likely – and even 140 characters or fewer can cause significant damage.

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WIIFMB? (WHAT'S IN IT FOR MY BUSINESS?)

We'll get into the what and how of Responsive Web Design shortly but first, let's consider the why. Responsive Web Design does more than simply help you to avoid damaging your brand. It allows you to deliver experiences that are aligned with how your buyers and prospects want to engage – the core principle behind the practice of BrandErgonomics®.

We believe Responsive Web Design delivers at least 10 direct benefits to your business.

Interested in BrandErgonomics®? Check out http://bit.ly/Pao4vf for a brief overview.

1. **Build brand equity.** You delight buyers, and build greater equity into your brand, when you deliver the right user experience for the right screen size at the right time.
2. **Offer a consistent brand experience.** You'll offer a consistent (note: not "identical") brand experience across devices for your potential buyers.
3. **Prioritize your messaging.** You can maintain prioritization and flow of your messaging regardless of device.
4. **Address buyers' needs.** You can use context-inspired content strategy and information architecture to address buyers' needs.
5. **Save money and time.** You can build and manage a single site with a single code base for long-term cost savings and easier maintenance.
6. **Increase efficiency.** You can consolidate content management for greater efficiency and consistency.
7. **Lower complexity.** You can lower complexity in some respects, with no special technology required to sniff browsers and redirect.
8. **Provide clarity.** Marketing tactics can promote one URL to buyers and prospects.
9. **Build traffic.** You can enable better SEO, with all traffic building visibility for the same site.
10. **Prepare your online presence for the future.** Savvy marketers know that there is always a next big thing on the horizon. Get ready for it today.

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MOBILE REALLY MATTERS

Your buyers and prospects engage with your brand across a multitude of touchpoints, but their growing mobile use is perhaps one of the most dramatic changes in their relationship with you. Today's online landscape is becoming increasingly untethered from the desktop for your buyers, and the screen sizes they use are becoming both smaller and bigger simultaneously. Consider these mobile metrics:

Mobile devices are predicted to overtake desktops as the most popular way to access the web between 2013 and 2015.[15,16]

Smartphones

- Nearly half (46%) of American adults own a smartphone[5]; in Canada that number is 33%.[6]
- Australia, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom each already have more than 50% of their population on smartphones.[7]
- More smartphones were shipped than PCs for the first time in 2011.[8]

Tablets/eReaders

- Global tablet use (not including eReaders) is also booming, with shipments reaching 66.9 million units in 2011, a 260% increase from 18.6 million units the previous years.[9]
- 29% of U.S. adults own a tablet or eReader, up from just 2% less than 3 years ago.[10] In Canada, that number has risen to 20% from 7% in just 6 months.[11]
- In 2011, there were 33.7 million tablet users in the U.S.; by 2014, estimates suggest that number will reach 89.5 million.[12]

Mobile web browsing

- Website views originating from mobile devices are growing at an incredible pace, almost doubling from 5.75% of all global web traffic in May 2011 to 10.13% in May 2012.[13]
- 25% of smartphone users rely on their device for the majority of their web access, with a third of these not having a home Internet connection at all – that is, their primary web browsing experience is from a mobile device.[14]

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The numbers are jaw dropping. Clearly, mobile usage has become pervasive in our lives, across cultures and demographics. In fact, it's been said that there are more mobile communication devices than toothbrushes in the world! (Think about that for a moment.)

As a marketer, your task is not about "going mobile." Not anymore. Now it's about taking charge of the mobile experience you deliver to your buyers and prospects.

Curiously though, many business-to-business marketers are late to the party. Think you can risk ignoring the mobile experience – or delaying your implementation for another quarter – because you're B2B and your buyers use the web differently? Think again:

- More than 70% of executives under 40 classify mobile as their primary communications tool.[16]
- Over 50% of executives prefer to make business purchases on mobile web rather than telephone.[17]
- 72% of the U.S. workforce is already mobile; 75% will be by 2013.[18]

Finally, B2B buyers do not make purchase decisions on impulse. They research online extensively. And more often than ever, they are doing that research using a mobile phone or tablet. In June 2011, Compete and Google found that 28% of American B2B C-level executives used their mobile phone and 21% used their tablet to research business purchases.[19]

> **"Given the near complete penetration of smartphones and high adoption rates of tablets among this key target audience for B2B marketers, it's no surprise these devices have infiltrated the B2B purchase decision-making process. They are now used in all major phases of the buying cycle to save professionals' time."** (Lauren Fisher, eMarketer Analyst)[19]

Did you read that? B2B buyers are coming to your website to save themselves time. If your website is difficult or impossible to use on their chosen device, imagine how it could affect their decision to do business with you.

Mobile has become an important, often primary, means that your potential buyers are connecting with you. So when they offer you the gift of their attention, you'd better be prepared to deliver a rewarding experience – however they choose to engage.

As a marketer, your task is not about "going mobile." Not anymore. Now it's about taking charge of the mobile experience you deliver to your buyers and prospects. Let's talk about your path forward.

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DOESN'T "GOING MOBILE" REALLY MEAN WE SHOULD BUILD A SEPARATE MOBILE SITE?

The case for mobile is strong, we're confident you agree. But you may be wondering what's wrong with the "old" approach to mobile web development, where you build a single dedicated mobile site. The answer in short: building a single site to accommodate the lowest common denominator device or trying to keep up with the explosion in device diversity is an exercise in frustration and futility.

See, in the early days, the mobile web was a simpler place. Expectations were low, and there were only a handful of popular devices you needed to consider. While they added some level of complexity to the process of building and maintaining a website, it was manageable.

Today, expectations are high and there are literally thousands of mobile device models – each with varying screen sizes and hardware capabilities – that could possibly be visiting your website in a variety of mobile contexts. Developing for mobile means that we simply can no longer develop how we used to, treating the mobile screen as a predictable "fixed canvas" and making limited assumptions about what devices our buyers are using or how and why they are visiting our site.

Clearly, creating a version of your website for every possible device has become at least impractical, if not impossible. So how can you ensure you deliver the experience your brand deserves across the vast range of screens, from the smallest mobile handset to the biggest Internet-enabled television?

Did you know there are about 6,500 different models of mobile devices that are capable of accessing your website? The specifications and features of these devices vary massively, screen sizes particularly. All indications suggest that this diversity will continue to increase.[20]

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RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN CHANGES THE GAME

Fortunately, Responsive Web Design offers a more versatile approach. The term was coined by Ethan Marcotte and popularized in his 2010 article for the web magazine *A List Apart*.[21] Here's our general definition for the term here at Quarry:

A responsive website fluidly adapts its layout, content, even functionality, as screen sizes get smaller (or bigger) or as devices are rotated. It ensures that whether people visit your website using a smartphone, tablet, laptop, desktop, even widescreen TV, your brand delivers a more consistent (but not necessarily identical) experience with appropriate layout for the right device at the right time.

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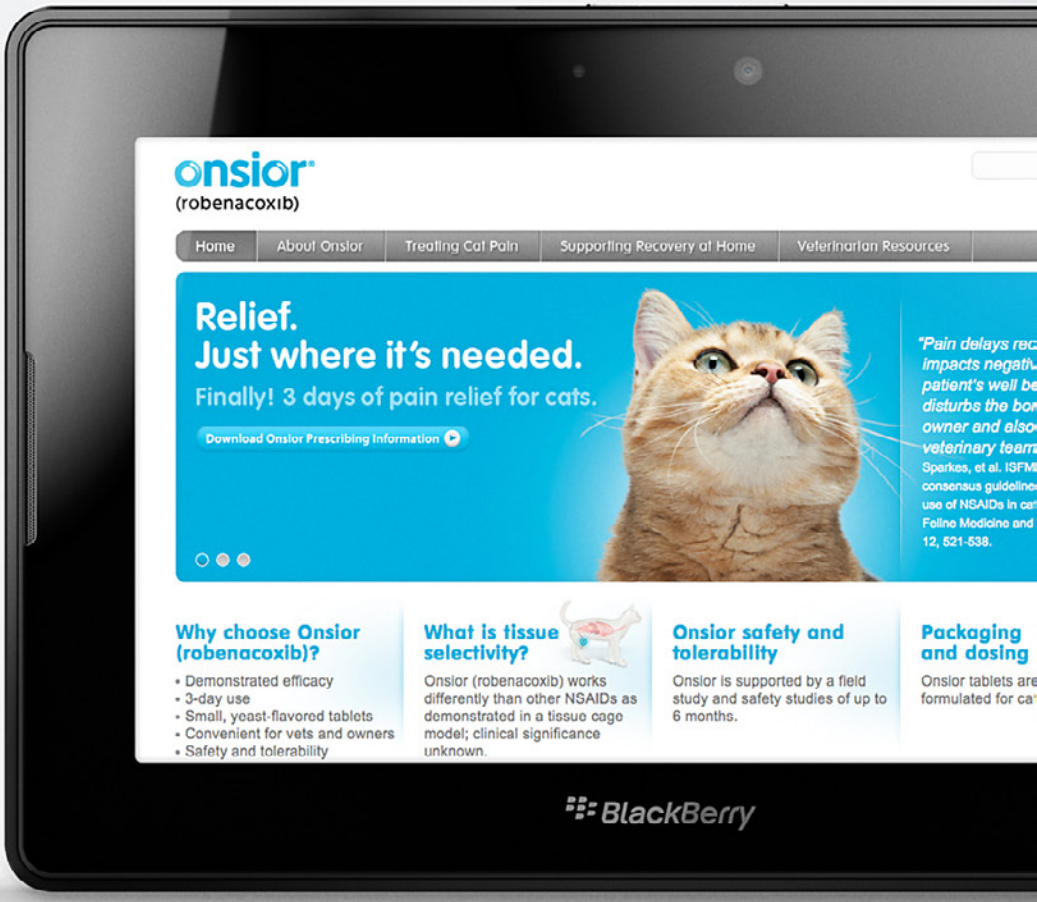
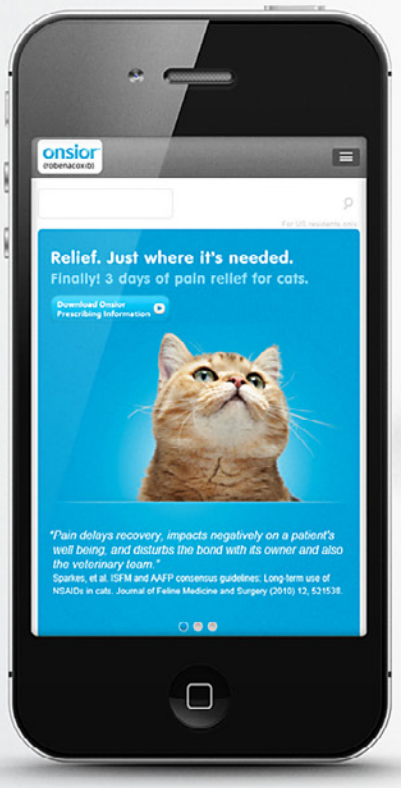
A FEW FAVORITE EXAMPLES OF RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN





This responsive website targets U.S. veterinarians to support the launch of Onsior, a pain relief medication for cats. Notice how the layout, functionality and content in this single website adapt in response to the different browser sizes when viewed on different devices – while maintaining consistency in brand experience, user experience and the marketing messages conveyed.

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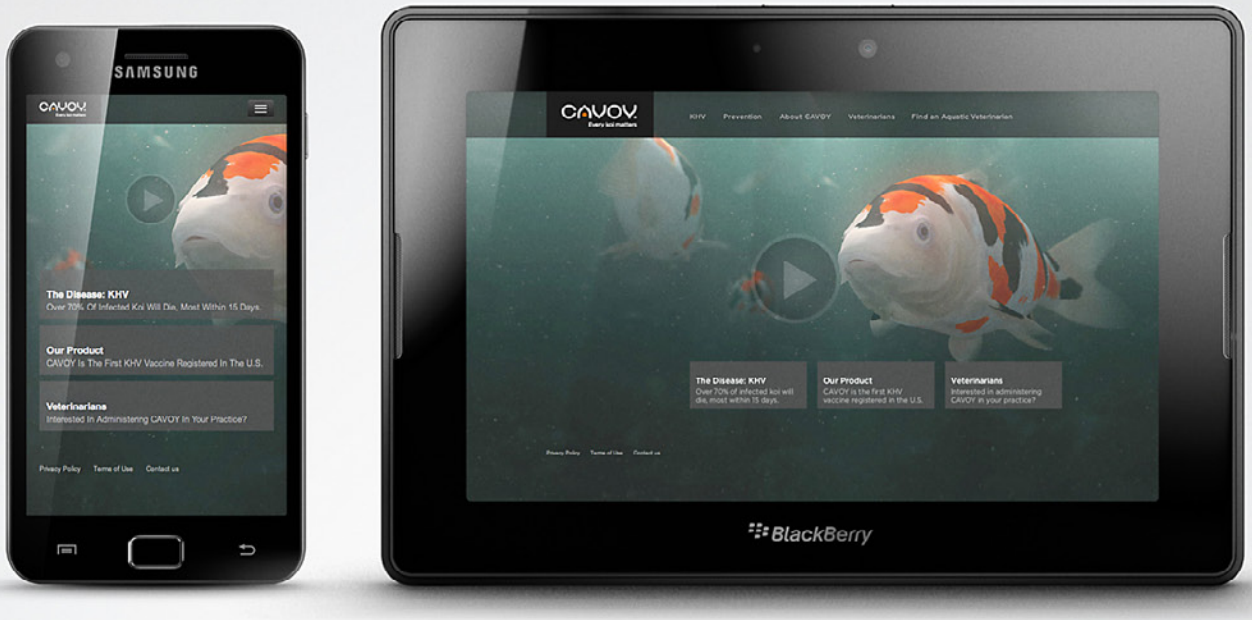

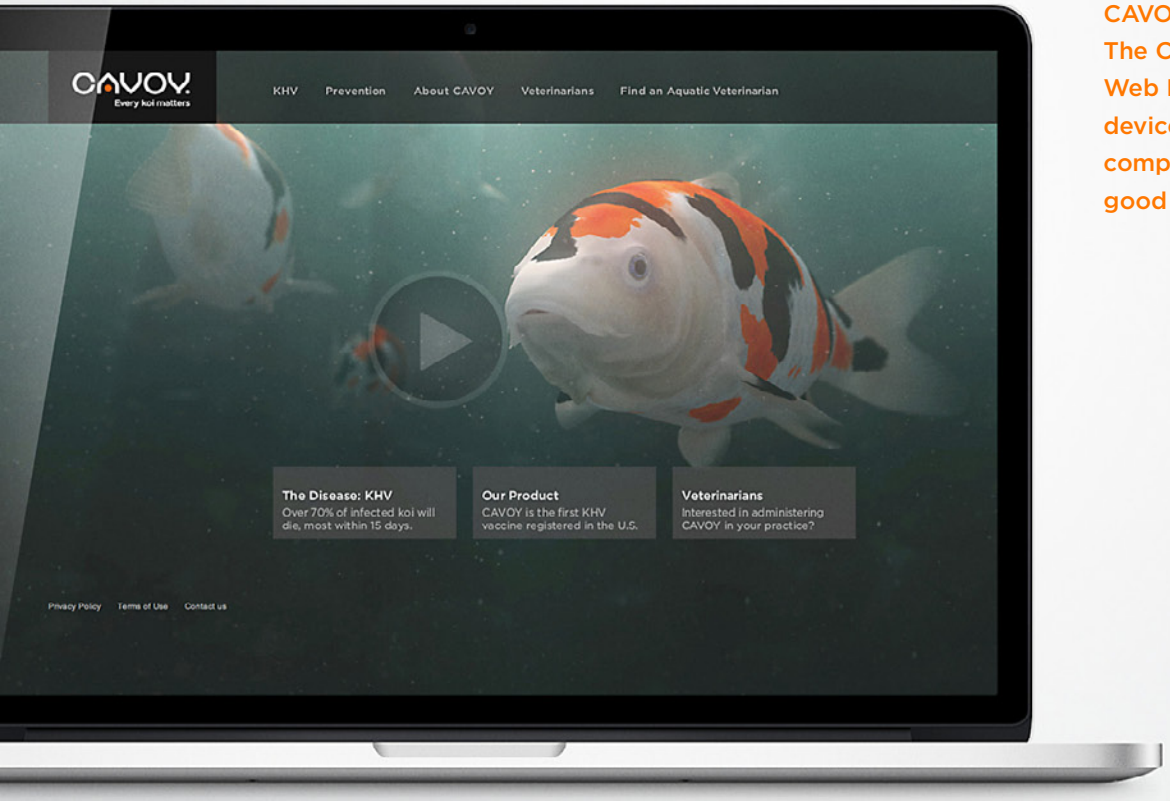

CAVOY is a product for koi fish. The CAVOY site uses Responsive Web Design to ensure that multiple device sizes, as well as desktop computers, get a consistently good brand experience.

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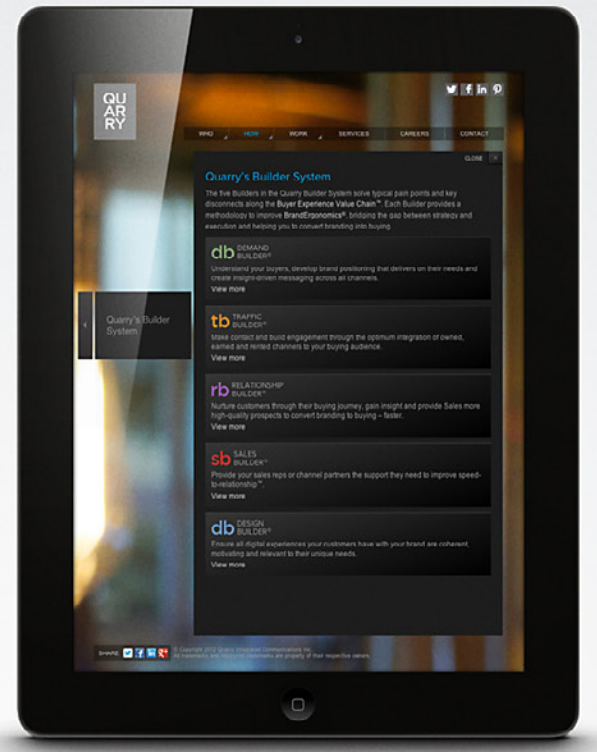
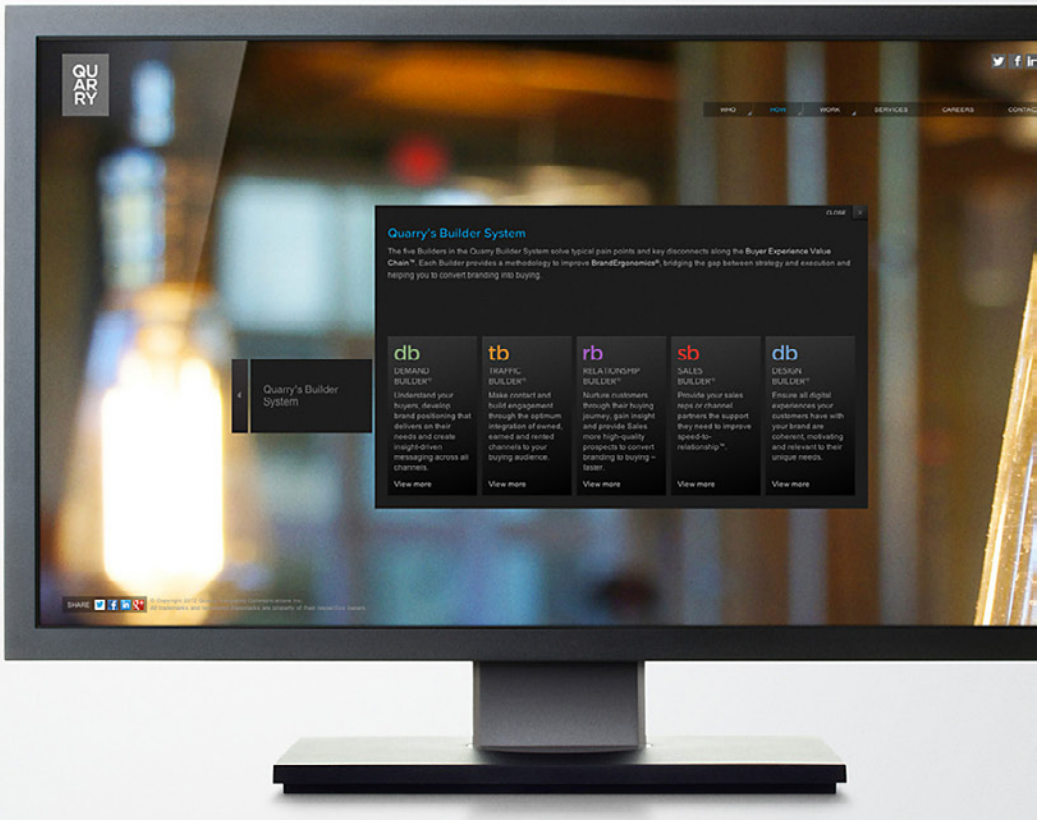
At Quarry, we've taken our own advice. Quarry.com was previously a Flash website. It has been rebuilt from the ground up using HTML5 while keeping the original interactions and experience intact. Both height and width are considered when this site responds to browser sizes on different devices. As a result, the experience on each device is very well suited to its unique form factor.





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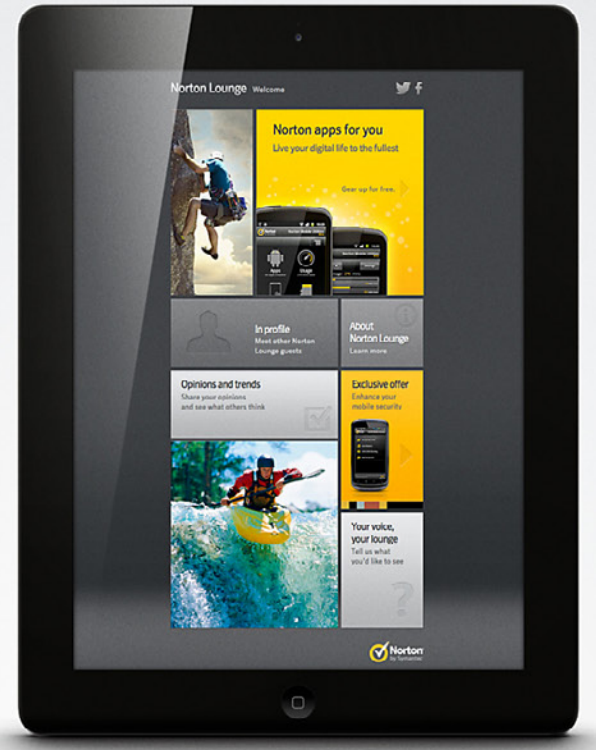

This highly interactive website is designed specifically for desktop and tablets. To accommodate smaller devices, interactions have been responsibly designed to enable an appealing and functional smartphone experience.

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THE INGREDIENTS OF RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

Technically speaking, the practice of building a responsive website as discussed by Marcotte draws on a couple of key ingredients: namely, fluid grids and layouts (with flexible images and media) that use media queries within Cascading Style Sheets. In our experience, we have found that fixed grids are sometimes a better choice than flexible grids to manage design or resource constraints. A combination of fixed and flexible elements often provides the best solution overall.

Let's quickly parse those terms a bit. **Cascading Style Sheets** (or CSS) are used to create, organize and encode sets of rules that define basic website layouts. The look and layout are described separately from the content, so that a web page can be displayed differently by the browser in response to different media query results.

Want to play a bit? Open your desktop browser and launch a few of your favorite websites. You can check if they're responsive by clicking and dragging the bottom right corner of your window to see how they resize.

Media queries, a relatively new enhancement of CSS3, are the real secret behind making a site responsive. These are the magic bits of code that inform the browser, on load, which styles it should or should not apply to the page, based on information about the device such as its screen size, orientation, pixel density and so on. The same website can then be visually rendered as different layouts for different situations to appropriately optimize the user experience.

Layouts designed with a **fluid grid**, including flexible images and media, use percentages rather than fixed pixels to determine size. This way, website designs stay proportionate as they resize to fit smaller or bigger screen sizes. Similarly, images and embedded media (like videos) must be coded in the same way to ensure dimensions are treated proportionately when screens resize. **Fixed grids**, on the other hand, allow the designer a bit more control over how the layout looks at every resize and avoids the problem of split pixels (the fuzziness that results when the number of pixels is not evenly divisible). We find that, depending on the scenario and the budget, a fixed grid with fluid elements often provides a good solution.

If you want to dig in further to some of the specialized terminology of Responsive Web Design, see **Appendix A**. For a deeper dive on how the ingredients of Responsive Web Design work together, check out **Appendix B**.

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IS RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN JUST ABOUT CREATING A BETTER LAYOUT FOR MOBILE?

If layout is the main challenge your mobile visitors encounter with your website, Responsive Web Design will help provide a better experience. The benefits don't have to stop there, however; layout is only one factor in your mobile visitor's experience. Responsive Web Design goes beyond how a website looks or flows according to screen size. It gives you the ability to respond to the likely context of use, whether on the go or in the office.

Take a moment to ask yourself some questions about your potential buyers:

- Why do they engage with your website?
- Do they use your website in the same way when they are sitting behind their desks as they do when they're on the go?
- Do they have the same goals (e.g., researching versus decision making, comparing models versus double-checking specifications or, perhaps, on-the-fly troubleshooting)?
- Can you anticipate when they may be looking for information depth or when they may have a quick question that requires an answer?

Once you have a robust understanding of what your site visitors want and when, you can fold that knowledge into your site design. You can ensure, for example, that the most relevant features for on-the-go use (price comparisons, special offers, particular tools or widgets, schedules, etc.) are the most prominent when the site is accessed by a buyer using a mobile device.

Note that, even if you choose not to display all of the website's content on a mobile device, the content is still delivered. So if you have significant amounts of content that you don't want to show on a mobile device, you should employ other technologies and/or techniques in addition to Responsive Web Design to produce responsible delivery in consideration for data usage, connection speeds, latency and, to some extent, device capabilities.

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6 WAYS TO GET STARTED WITH RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

Moving towards creating more mobile-friendly website experiences using Responsive Web Design may be one of the best decisions you make this year, putting you back on the right side of what may be the biggest market trend since the birth of the Internet itself. That being said, every journey begins with a single step, so here are some suggestions for responsible, practical places to start:

1. Kick-start the conversation

Armed with this Guide and your newfound knowledge about Responsive Web Design, it's up to you to lead the charge within your organization. Kick-start the conversation with your colleagues and organizational decision makers by challenging yourselves to answer these questions:

1. "How mobile-friendly is our website today, really?"
2. "Are the experiences we deliver in line with our brand promise?"
3. "In what ways could we make those experiences better for mobile visitors?"

If it helps, share the key things you've learned about Responsive Web Design from this Guide and the impact (and efficiencies) it could bring to your digital strategy.

Tip: You can download and use in your discussions a short presentation that contains key mobile growth stats and some information about the concept of Responsive Web Design: http://www.slideshare.net/QuarryCommunications/

2. Prepare yourself with proof

Strengthen your evidence-based business case for a responsive website by putting in place the measurement tools you'll need to answer this key question: "To what extent are our buyers using mobile devices to engage with us today?"

There are many impressive mobile device statistics out there – some in this Guide – but none of them can replace the confidence of having real, current data about your own buyers and prospects. Your web analytics software may provide that kind of mobile visitor data, but you should be aware that unless your site is already well optimized for mobile, any data around mobile visitors may be grossly under represented as a reflection of true potential. That's because, as we mentioned earlier, once a mobile browser visits a website and has a poor experience, they are unlikely to return to that website again.

What could offer a better proxy of true mobile adoption and engagement rates within your own buyer and prospect base? Email analytics can be very useful if your organization has any kind of outbound email program. Specifically, email analytics software, such as Litmus, that can clearly identify mobile versus desktop engagement. With just a snippet of HTML code to be added as part of your next email campaign, you can open up a world of insights for mobile (and email marketing) planning purposes.

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3. Start with a campaign landing page or two

Do you build microsites or campaign-specific landing pages within typical marketing campaigns? If so, the next one you undertake is a natural for trying Responsive Web Design. It will allow you to think deeply about your buyers and their needs, gain experience on a manageable scale and build a case for taking the responsive approach across your web properties. While we're talking about campaign landing pages, consider:

a. **Maximizing click-throughs from mobile email.** Marketers seem to have the misconception that if people read emails first on a mobile device, they then go back and have a second look on the desktop. Data clearly shows that that's not happening. You get one chance for your brand to impress. Assuming your email does exactly what you intend – drive readers to click through on a link – that link must lead to an online experience that reflects well on your brand, whether it's on a mobile device or a desktop. If it's a poor experience, not only have you "wasted" that click, you've pretty much guaranteed that your emails will be ignored in the future. A responsive site enables you to reward the click with a great experience that could propel the visitor forward on his or her buying journey.

Tip: If you use a marketing automation platform, such as Eloqua, to create your campaign landing pages, good news: these landing pages can be designed responsively too.

b. **If you're using a QR code in your campaigns, make sure the resulting destination is mobile-friendly.** Imagine, if you will, the frustration of a person who has just managed to scan a QR code (not always a simple proposition) only to find that the website launched is not ideal for a mobile device. It is shocking how often this disconnect occurs. If you are planning to incorporate QR codes anywhere in your marketing plan, either as a central element of a campaign or as an add-on, you must ensure that it directs to an online experience that suits your buyers' wide range of mobile devices – both smartphones and tablets.

4. Consider a "responsive retrofit" for your existing sites

Responsive Web Design isn't just for brand new sites. In certain situations, it may be possible to recalibrate your existing websites with media queries that enable them to become "responsive" too. Think of this approach as a "responsive retrofit" without a full site redesign and rebuild. Relatively quickly, and at a lower cost than a completely new build, your website will begin providing more of your buyers with a better brand experience. You can also reap savings in the long term by simplifying content management and website maintenance processes.

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5. Assess the "responsive-readiness" of your current site

To understand whether or not your site is a good candidate for a responsive retrofit, have your digital marketing team or agency conduct a responsive-readiness audit. Such an audit should answer the following questions, among others:

- Is the look, feel and content of the website still current and appropriate?
- Does the website use clean semantic markup?
- How is it laid out?
  - Simple layout?
  - A grid system?
  - Non-table-based?
- Does it use a framework?
- What types of interactions does it enable, and how complex are they?
- What types of media are used (images, Flash, video, etc.)?

The information you compile in the audit should provide guidance as to whether it's a relatively simple proposition to make your current site responsive or whether a greater degree of effort will be necessary.

6. Put aside some budget for a pilot this year

Piloting – trialing an initiative on a small scale before rolling it out in full – offers a great way to bridge the gap between your need to deliver relatively predictable outcomes and your other need as a savvy marketer: to drive innovation and try new ideas.

Get a quick overview of Schmidt's piloting approach here: http://bit.ly/NroYF1

Eric Schmidt of Google pioneered the 70/20/10 model, where 70% of budgets go towards well-tested tactics, 20% towards early stage tactics and 10% towards truly innovative initiatives. Given the impact it could have on your organization's ability to deliver better digital experiences, Responsive Web Design should represent a great candidate for budget allocation from both your 10% and 20% buckets in the coming year.

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BUILD YOUR BRAND RESPONSIVELY

It seems like a truism, but it's one B2B marketers sometimes forget: we are still connecting and building relationships with people, even if they are purchasing on behalf of a business. The human experience is paramount. If you provide a poor brand experience on the platform your buyers choose to use, whether that's mobile or desktop, you signal to them that your brand does not fit their expectations or preferences. As a marketer, that's simply irresponsible: your brand and your bottom line lose.

Responsive Web Design does not stand in for understanding the needs and preferences of your buyers. What it does, however, is allow you to take your deep insight about your buyers and make a meaningful connection with them across platforms or contexts. It allows you to deliver an experience that builds your brand according to the buyer-centered principles of BrandErgonomics® – rather than killing it at the speed of mobile adoption.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF MYSTERIOUS TERMS

Breakpoints

In Responsive Web Design, the term "breakpoints" describes the exact moments along a spectrum of pixel width ranges whereby one responsive size range (with corresponding layout) should give way to another. There's a direct correlation between number of breakpoints and number of layouts you'll need to create to support each responsive size range (e.g., one breakpoint creates two responsive size ranges and requires two layouts, two breakpoints require three layouts and so on).

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)

Cascading Style Sheets (or CSS) are what developers everywhere use to create, organize and encode sets of rules that define basic website layouts. The CSS specifications are maintained by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The recent release of CSS3 has brought with it some enhancements to certain modules, including media queries (see next page).

Device Diversity

Device diversity is a term that refers to the proliferation in the number of distinct web-capable mobile devices in use today. At least 6,500 different models of mobile device are estimated to be available, each with substantial differences, particularly in regard to screen size.

Fixed Grid

In these layouts, the width of the entire page is set with a specific numerical value (number of pixels). The layout remains that same width, regardless of the size of the browser window viewing the page. Fixed width layouts allow designers more direct control over how the page will look in most situations. Importantly, media queries (the key mechanism that enables a website to be "responsive") can still be incorporated if you use a fixed grid approach.

Fluid (or Flexible) Grid

This approach requires developers to code layouts using percentages, not pixels. This way, website designs stay proportionate as they resize to fit smaller (or bigger) screen sizes. Fluid grids are commonly made up of five components: typography, containers, margins, padding and flexible images/media. Fluid-width layouts will always stretch to fit your browser window, no matter how wide it gets. Fluid grids deliver a great deal of flexibility and need to be designed well to work across a broad spectrum; sometimes a fixed grid or combination of fluid and fixed will be a more responsible choice.

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Flexible Images/Media

Similar to the concept of a fluid grid, flexible images and embedded media (like videos) need to be coded in a way that uses percentages, not pixels, to ensure dimensions are treated proportionately when screens resize. And like fluid grids, flexible images must also be used responsibly. An image intended for ultra-large monitors should not be automatically scaled down and used on a smartphone and vice versa. Media queries should specify which images are appropriate for each responsive size range.

Media Queries

Media queries are the key mechanism that enables a website to be "responsive." That's because media queries allow the accessing browser to determine which design styles it should display, based on very specific properties about the device, including screen width and height, aspect ratio, orientation (portrait or landscape), color depth and resolution, to name a few. Media queries are an enhancement of the @media rules of CSS. A full list of media queries are available on the official W3C website at http://www.w3.org/TR/css3-mediaqueries/

Responsive Size Range

The responsive size range is the span of pixel widths between two breakpoints which a website layout is designed to suit. A website with one breakpoint creates two responsive size ranges (one for all screen sizes larger than the breakpoint and one for all screen sizes smaller). A website with three breakpoints would have four responsive size ranges and so on.

Responsive Web Design (RWD)

The practice of designing and developing websites that fluidly adapt layout, content, even functionality, in response to a visitor's screen size, resolution and orientation – instead of providing each device a specific website.

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APPENDIX B: RESPONSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGNERS

Does every situation require a fluid (flexible) grid?

From reading many of the discussions out there, you could certainly conclude that fluid or flexible grids are integral to Responsive Web Design. Fluid grids allow for virtually unlimited flexibility in layout resizing to fit the device window, which is certainly in keeping with the purpose of Responsive Web Design. However, because they do stretch to fit as wide as the largest screen, they tend to look very wide and very short on larger screens – not necessarily a great aesthetic experience for the audience.

Our approach to the fixed versus fluid debate? Be flexible. (Insert groan here.) Some of the best Responsive Web Designs use a blend of both fixed and fluid elements. The point with Responsive Web Design is to solve challenges and to make the website experience of your buyers and prospects better – not to adhere to a rigid, prescriptive approach.

Depending on the needs and resources of our clients – is this website a responsive retrofit or a new build? What media is included? Are the existing media flexible or fixed sizes? – we often recommend a combination of fixed and fluid elements to attain the best solution.

How do you know when you've reached the breakpoint?

In your Responsive Web Design journey, you'll hear the term "breakpoint" quite a lot. It's a critically important concept with wide-reaching implications for the responsive design planning, creation and website maintenance process.

Understanding the concept of a breakpoint starts by recognizing that various web-capable mobile devices have a wide range of screen widths and heights.

The breakpoints represent the exact moments along a spectrum of screen-size width/height ranges where you decide when one layout should fluidly give way to another. They are the tipping points at which (potentially significant) structural changes occur to the visual layout of your site. In our experience, responsive websites typically have between one and three breakpoints, requiring two to four visual layouts, but there can be any number of breakpoints.

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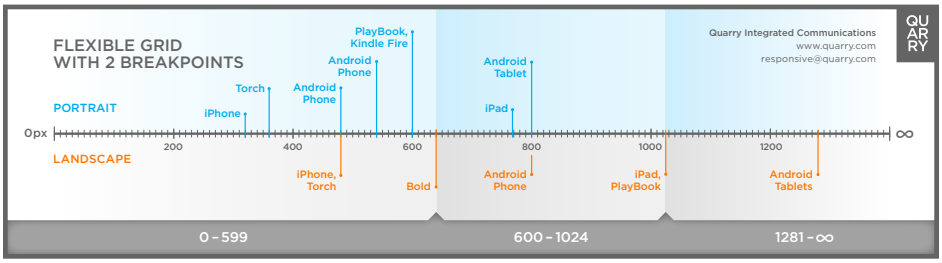
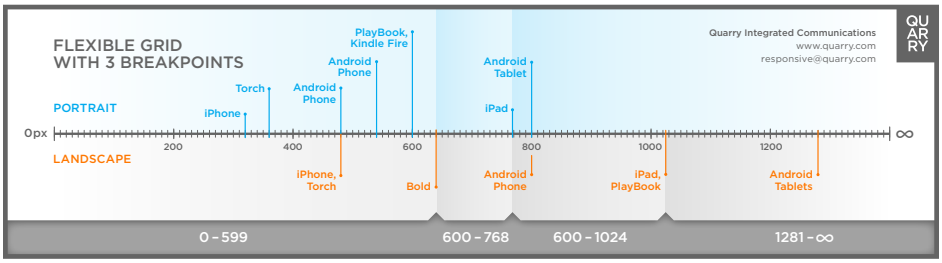
The below images reflect some rules of thumb our designers have found helpful in recommending layouts and planning breakpoints for Responsive Web Design projects.





Determining how many breakpoints your site will have is an important decision with a direct correlation to budget – for each breakpoint you define, another style (layout) will be required, requiring incremental design and development time and effort. Making this decision depends on what devices you think (or better still, you know) your buyers commonly use, together with your own scope in terms of content, design, intent and available project time and money.

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[1] Econsultancy: http://econsultancy.com/us/reports/conversion-rate-optimization-report.
[2] B2B Mobile Revolution: http://www.b2bmobilerevolution.com/.
[3] Compuware APM: http://www.gomez.com/resources/whitepapers/survey-report-what-users-want-from-mobile/.
[4] Daily Science: http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/08/070828110711.htm.
[5] Pew Research Center: http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Smartphone-Update-2012.
[6] Our Mobile Planet, Canada: http://www.ourmobileplanet.com/en/downloads/.
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[17] Forbes, as cited in B2B Mobile Revolution: http://www.b2bmobilerevolution.com/.
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THE SAVVY MARKETER'S GUIDE TO RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

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