Are You Ready for a Mobile-Centric World?

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Most manufacturing executives wrestle daily with important issues like industry consolidation, global competition and eco-manufacturing trends. Another issue that many of them should be considering, but don't, is: How ready is my digital ecosystem for an increasingly mobile, touch-based world?

For our purposes, we're defining a digital ecosystem as the locus of online and digital touchpoints an organization uses to interact with customers, partners and employees. Components of the ecosystem include your website, email, search engines, blog and portals.

Your ecosystem is most likely oriented and optimized primarily around the traditional mouse/desktop model — while your customers and sales reps are increasingly plugged into mobile devices to connect with you. If this isn't happening to you yet, technology trends like the advent of Windows 8, the increasing adoption of Apple products and bring your own device (BYOD) in the workplace — not to mention the activities of your competitors — will change all that.

Given this context, becoming both device and context-ready in your digital ecosystem should be a prime consideration in terms of your ongoing efforts to innovate and differentiate your offerings in order to grow your business. So the question becomes, "How do I move beyond today's desktop-bound world to embrace the device/context-ready world of the future?"

Because re-architecting an ecosystem that has taken years to construct can be viewed as a "boil the ocean" type of project, many manufacturers, including globally recognized brands, have been reluctant to jump in with both feet. But given the trends noted above — and the moves of your competitors — action on some

level to become mobile-ready is becoming less and less of an option.

How to begin? At this point, the conversation often focuses on adopting a sexy app, but this is generally not the approach that will deliver the most business value. A more practical approach is to develop a mobile strategy, if you haven't done so already. Some good starter questions to get the process rolling include:

1. "What are the key business objectives and pain points mobile can support?
2. "What segments should I focus on?
3. "How can I improve my product with mobile?"
4. "What competitive advantages can mobile provide?"

The important thing is to keep the focus on areas where you'll have the most reach and business impact.

Chances are your web team has already discussed mobilizing your platforms, creating a separate mobile site, implementing responsive design (i.e. content that automatically adapts to the device type), apps or some combination of those options. Maybe a complete website overhaul is out of the question, budget-wise. In that case, an app may be a more affordable option, and it can be done in parallel with site improvements. Don't think it has to be an "either or" situation; in other words, don't take apps off the table, but don't invest in them at the expense of your website. Focus on building a solid base experience, then you can start moving up and driving people to that experience.

In our experience working with manufacturers, we've found that very few of them are seeking to optimize their mobile ecosystem, even though many of their customers and prospects like connecting via devices. With that in mind, here are five ways to get started on optimizing your broader mobile ecosystem:

1. Email templates that are mobile-ready — If your email marketing campaigns are only optimized for the desktop, consider this: 10 percent to 20 percent of emails are opened on a mobile device. According to a study by eConsultancy [1], of those that are opened, 63 percent of non-optimized emails are either deleted or closed immediately if they aren't mobile compatible. Developing mobile-ready templates is a surefire way to build engagement and increase email click-through rates (CTR).

2. Optimize a small portion of your website for mobile — Your mobile-compatible email campaigns can be supplemented with mobile-optimized landing pages, keeping your audience engaged online. Focus on a small percentage of key pages, such as the homepage or product pages. Microsoft recently followed this approach with the launch of a responsive design home page [2], with plans to roll out the technology over time across its entire site.

3. Mobile-optimized SEO — Conduct a review of your search engine optimization (SEO) results on mobile. How does search for your brand differ on mobile? Mobile search is a prime researching tool [3], cultivating customers more efficiently with lower cost per click (CPC) and more effectively with higher CTR than desktop

search. SEO has a place both on the web and in the growing app marketplace, and local search [4] is frankly more important on a mobile device. Start with a mobile site map for SEO and leverage Google+ and Bing. Optimize your metadata to include your location so people can find you when they're nearby.

4. Search engine marketing (SEM) campaigns that are mobile-specific — As with other forms of online advertising, paid search is becoming an important factor on mobile. You're likely already running a Google AdWords campaign, but you may be missing out on mobile customers and prospects and their online searches. Start by building unique keywords and ad groups for mobile; check out Google's get mobilized site [5] for some tips and help.

5. Alter Your Mindset — Are you focused on creating mobile and touch-optimized experiences when planning new digital initiatives or optimizing existing programs? In our work with manufacturers and industrial product marketers, the answer is often no. Shift your mindset toward becoming more mobile-aware and you'll likely find quick wins and low-hanging fruit.

These five practices will help you augment your current marketing strategy by being prepared for success in an increasingly device- and context-ready world. Need some more insights on this subject? We recently gave a presentation on the new mobile frontier; check out some of our findings [6].

What's your take? Feel free to comment below! For more information, please visit www.theprimacy.com *[7].*

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