

 **PRET A PORTABLE** 

By Norm Johnston

Everyone remembers the story of the boy who cried wolf. In the digital world our equivalent is mobile. We are so used to mobile evangelists proclaiming it's the "year of mobile" that you can actually hear the collective groans at industry conferences. Eyes roll, shoulders shrug, minds tune out, and eventually people start playing around with their mobile phones. Now I'm from Ohio so I'm not entirely sure but I think that's what they call irony.

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I don't want to be alarmist but during all of these years of "year of mobile" some pretty significant changes have occurred in the way people are consuming the Internet. In fact, according to multiple studies, including GroupM and Morgan Stanley, more people are or very shortly will consume the Internet on

mobile devices than on PC's. Not a shock when you dig into the numbers. Tablets and other mobile devices are proliferating like gremlins. Just consider IDC data from last autumn that suggested tablet devices are now outselling PC's in the USA. dotMobi estimates there are now over 6,500 types of Web-capable mobile devices on the market. According to recent Forrester research, the average American now has five IP-enabled devices ranging from TV's to gaming consoles to tablets. And they are voraciously consuming media across all of them, often at the same time.

Outside the US and Europe a similar story is unfolding but with nuances. While nearly everyone has a mobile phone, most of these devices are not "smart" yet. However, that trifecta of cheaper smart devices, inexpensive subscription and pay-as-you-go plans, and of course good content will lead to an imminent explosion in mobile Internet usage. And the numbers are big, really big. According to IMS Research, smartphone sales in China will more than quadruple between 2010 and 2016 to reach 400 million units by 2016.



Source: ITU, Mark Lipacis, Morgan Stanley Research

All of this hasn't been lost on the Silicon Valley titans. Google's \$12.5 billion purchase of Motorola says it all. Not to be left behind, Apple, Microsoft, Yahoo and many others are conjuring up new mobile initiatives, acquisitions, and alliances. Unfortunately, this mad scramble for mobile dominance has led to fragmentation; content and application creators must develop for multiple and proprietary operating systems and programming languages, including Google's Android OS, Microsoft's Windows, and Apple's iOS.

Only 21% of Google's top advertisers have a Website designed for mobile.

The challenge for marketers is to keep up with all of this; how can they cost-effectively develop content for a cornucopia of different devices, operating systems, and programming languages. To-date many marketers have simply stuck their head in the sand. Arguably not a bad tactic if you're talking about a very small percentage of your target audience. Unfortunately that's no longer the case. According to ITU, there are already over 1.2 billion active mobile broadband subscriptions in the world, and the number is steadily and exponentially climbing.

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Now for the good news: there's a solution to all of this. It's called HTML5, which doesn't exactly give you a tingle down your spine, but is very exciting. Without descending into geek gibberish, HTML is the mark-up language behind the Web; in short, all the stuff under the hood. In the past, HTML has been dependent on all kinds of additional plugins to deliver the pretty and immersive experiences you've grown accustomed to on the Internet: music, video, animation and so on. Consequently, without plugins HTML and the Web are somewhat dysfunctional. To make matters worse, various mobile operating systems struggle or outright prohibit some plugins. For instance, Apple's iOS has notoriously blocked Adobe and its suite of features such as Flash, which is used extensively by many brand Web sites. Thankfully along comes HTML5, which eliminates all of these plumbing problems by establishing a new universal coding standard that works across operating systems, programming languages, and devices. Plus HTML5 dramatically reduces the need for any plugins by baking all of your favourite things into the code itself. No more dysfunctional consumer Web experiences. Think of HTML5 as Viagra for the portable Internet.

However, unlike Viagra, HTML5 could save marketers a fortune. Programming with HTML5 will enable Web publishers and marketers to develop content once and then have it seen everywhere. The smarter players in Silicon Valley have wisely embraced this new model. Yahoo in particular has reconfigured their platform into an HTML5 publishing engine called Cocktails. The first major offspring from this investment is Yahoo's new Livestand tablet application, which with one set of code can be seen on any mobile device. Create once, distribute everywhere.

Marketers should think seriously about moving towards Yahoo's model. It's one of the reasons we've setup our Mumbai Mobile Centre of Excellence in India, where we have a team of highly-experience developers fully trained on HTML5 programming. Our open-standard champions in India have developed hundreds of award-winning mobile Web sites and advertising campaigns for the likes of Nike, HSBC, and Ford. Mumbai offers the added bonus of great quality technicians at a much lower cost than you'd pay in many markets. Think of Mumbai as a cost-efficient, high-quality HTML5 hub producing Web content for a multi-device world.



Consider Mumbai your cost-efficient, high-quality HTML5 hub.

So the next time you're at a conference and someone starts talking mobile you may want to put your iPhone down for a few minutes. Like the boy who cried wolf, the later may have finally appeared. If the likes of Yahoo, Microsoft, and Google are taking mobile so seriously you may want to take their lead and reengineer your content for a portable world.

