



Your target audience consumes information on-the-go...

Your desktop website doesn't work on their mobile devices.

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## IR Strategy: Why You Need a Mobile Website Now

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## IR Strategy: Why You Need A Mobile Website Now

Why is a mobile website critical to your IR strategy? For starters, desktop websites don't work on mobile phones. In a world where 40%+ of consumers and 80%+ of corporate decision-makers access the Internet via their mobile phones, that's a big problem. Fortunately, the problem can be solved with a mobile-optimized website. Capable of delivering facts, images, and videos via mobile phones, a mobile website not only makes your story accessible to a target audience that it constantly consuming information on-the-go, but it also enables your management and IR teams to use their mobile phones as powerful multimedia presentation devices that can help to stir interest and close deals.

But creating a *mobile* website is highly complex. In addition to your desktop website, you need a separate, mobile-formatted website with:

- A device recognition platform that identifies 5000+ unique mobile phone models
- A dynamic mobile website rendering platform that delivers proper screen size and functionality for each requesting device
- Mobile multimedia trans-coding systems
- Mobile streaming media servers for dissemination of audio and video content via mobile devices

You must also decide which content from your desktop website should be included on your mobile website based on your evaluation of what content is most relevant to the *mobile* user.

Done properly, a mobile website injects new value into your IR strategy by delivering on-demand information about your company that can be shared and consumed anytime, anywhere. A mobile website to delivers a serious competitive advantage and savvy executives and IR professionals who recognize this reap the rewards.

## Mobile Internet: Assessing the IR Opportunity

The potential opportunities offered by the internet as accessed from mobiles -- in short, the "mobile internet" -- are enormous. There are already four mobiles to every PC in the world and a GSM Association study carried out in 2006 predicted that 1.3 billion people will be connected to the Internet through mobile devices by 2008. According the Nielsen Mobile, over 40% of North American mobile subscribers are already accessing the Internet via their mobile devices.

The technology and infrastructure required to deliver a compelling mobile website experience is already in place and widely available and includes:

- High-speed data connectivity over 3G networks
- 3G and data phones with high resolution screens
- Positive consumer experience of operators' on-portal sites



### The IR Community is Always 'Connected'

In the IR community, Internet-connected Smart Phones such as Blackberry, Windows Mobile, and Palm devices are more than just prevalent. They are critical tools of a trade in which all players must be connected to the most current information at all times. From executives and IR teams to investors and fund managers to the financial media, evidence suggests market penetration of Internet-enabled Smart Phones among them is upwards of 80%. In an always connected, always mobile era, you simply can't afford *not* to have a website that is accessible to them on a device that most users keep within 2 feet of themselves at all times.

### IR Problems Solved By Mobile

**Problem # 1:** However good the presenter, a verbal presentation alone has far less impact than one that is accompanied by a multimedia presentation. A solution is needed that let's your executives and IR team shine above the rest by delivering the powerful impact of a PowerPoint presentation via overhead projector, but through a pocket-sized solution that is available on-demand anytime, anywhere. Internet-enabled mobile phones are the answer.

**Problem #2:** Whether it's through word-of-mouth, media coverage, or your own IR/corporate communications, chances are strong that your target audience will hear about your story when they are away from their computers. Today, less than 25% of media is consumed in front of a computer. The peak of emotional interest in your story occurs the moment it is fresh in the minds of your target audience. You need a mobile website that conveys to your audience that more information about your company is available instantly via its mobile website. Relying on your target audience to remember to visit your website when they get back to their computers can reduce your chances of converting thought into action by 50% or more.

### Why is a Mobile Website Critical to IR Strategy?

**Mobile IR in Context:** Executives, IR professionals, and their respective target audiences are constantly consuming information via their mobile devices. The scenarios in which mobile can add great value are limitless, but the following are among the most common and important:

**1-on-1 Meetings:** Of all the reasons a mobile website is critical to a successful IR strategy, 1-on-1 meetings are perhaps the most important. It has been said that people don't invest in businesses, they invest in people. Imagine the conversations about business that take place in casual and social settings... in bars and restaurants, on the golf course, at conventions... Anywhere and everywhere imaginable, people are facilitating business through making personal, 1-on-1 connections. And in the battle for mindshare, those who convey the most engaging story will always win. To that end, there is nothing more memorable or impressive

than empowering your team to back up your company's story with supporting charts, images, videos, and other important company information. A mobile website is something your team can showcase on their own devices and share on the devices of anyone they may be talking to... a multi-media takeaway that won't get thrown away.



And beyond your own management and IR teams, consider all the people who are already engaged your story. Whether financially, figuratively, or both, they are already invested in your company's success. They represent an army of promotional agents who will gladly share your story and a mobile website is the ultimate, always-accessible tool for them to validate their talking points and back up their recommendations.

**Business cards:** You've given someone your business card. Instead of trying to remember to visit your website when they get back to the office, they notice your mobile URL and are engaged immediately by visiting your mobile website via their mobile device. Business cards are rarely memorable by themselves, but by including a mobile URL on your company's business cards, the cards become a gateway to instant, on-demand information about your company. And pointing out the mobile URL on your business cards will help your team stand out from the crowd.

**Press releases:** Without exception, your company's mobile website URL should be included in every press release. When the media covers your story, they don't read your press release word for word. Your story is presented in the context of the media's own coverage and you can't control the bite-sized sound bites the media will take from your press release. But by including a mobile URL in your press release you enable the media to direct their audience to your website or mobile website for further details. Now imagine all the places *other* than their desks where your target audience might be when they are exposed to media coverage about your story. Your mobile website will connect interested parties with your company instantly.

Clients and investors may already be subscribing to services that deliver your news releases to them via email. In many instances, they may be receiving emails directly on their mobile devices. For press releases viewed via mobile phone, a mobile URL contained in the release enables the reader to link directly to your mobile site for more details.

**Company Advertisements:** Without a mobile URL, any investment in print, TV, radio, or other traditional media advertisement is largely wasted. Consider the context when your target audience is consuming any of these types of media. Almost without exception, your target audience is not in front of a computer when they are consuming it. Knowing that people keep their Internet-connected mobile devices with them at all times, a mobile URL in your ad creates an opportunity to turn a single ad impression into a long-term relationship by engaging your audience at the moment of interest in your story. It costs nothing to include your mobile URL alongside your



desktop URL wherever it is published and doing so will yield stronger results from your media investments.

**Presentations:** Scan the audience at any seminar or corporate presentation and you'll see it time and time again... Members of the audience are constantly using their mobile devices to check and send emails, send text messages, and surf the web. Why not use this to your advantage by giving your audience what they want?... A way to access information about your company right from their mobile devices. By including your mobile URL at the end of your PowerPoint presentations and letting them interact with your mobile website on their own terms, you will engage your audience in a way that extends far beyond the end of your presentation. Doing so empowers your audience and creates opportunities for them to connect with your company on their own terms.

**Marketing Materials:** Brochures, posters, trade show displays, business cards, corporate letterhead & fax cover sheets *all* need to display your mobile website URL. Adding your mobile URL everywhere that you publish your desktop URL will maximize the value and returns on your investment in a mobile website.

**Send mobile URLs to Phones:** A mobile URL creates a great opportunity for following up with someone you've met. If you have the person's mobile phone number, you can send them your mobile URL via SMS (text message). Most Smart Phones will recognize the URL as an active link that the user can click on. Doing so will automatically launch the user's mobile web browser taking them to your mobile website. If you know your contact's email is forwarded to their Smart Phone, you can also send them your mobile URL as a link in an email, which will launch a mobile browser in the same manner on most Smart Phones.

**Viral Marketing:** Mobile URLs are easily forwarded via SMS and email so sending a mobile URL to a mobile phone per above can have a strong viral effect. Consider a scenario where you know you are not talking to the right person in an organization, but you also know that individual has the ear of the person you *want* to be talking to - including his/her email and mobile phone number. By sending your mobile URL to your contact's mobile phone, you can invite him/her to pass it along without creating an awkward situation around the disclosure of personal contact details. Even more importantly, consider someone you *don't even know* learning about your company through word-of-mouth or the media and forwarding your mobile URL to their contacts. Mobile is instant, viral, and powerful.

To recap, *all* IR and corporate communications should include a company's mobile website URL in a format such as the following:

*For more information, please visit our website at:*

[www.companyname.com](http://www.companyname.com) | [mobile.companyname.com](http://mobile.companyname.com)

## Best Practices: Mobile URL Formats

A mobile website URL should be added to all corporate and IR communications wherever the company's standard desktop URL is published. Failure to publish a mobile URL misses an enormous opportunity to connect with a target market that is always connected and constantly using their mobile devices to consume information away from their computers. However, fragmentation in the way mobile URLs are formatted has led to confusion among consumers. Choosing the right URL format for publication is critical to maximizing the value you will get out of your mobile website.

### Recommended URL Format For Publication:

**mobile.companyname.com**

The word 'mobile' at the beginning of the URL clearly conveys that a mobile experience is available on Internet-enabled mobile phones, Smart Phones, and PDAs. No further explanation is necessary. The URL can be entered as above in any Internet-enabled phone.

Note: If you are disseminating your mobile URL via a medium that may arrive directly on a user's mobile phone (ex. **via SMS or email**), remember to add 'http://' to the beginning of the URL. For example:

http://mobile.companyname.com

Though it is not *necessary* to include the 'http://', doing so increases the chance that the user's phone will recognize the link as an *active and 'click-able'* link (as opposed to an inactive link that forces the interested user to type in the URL into their browser). Since many press releases are forwarded directly to Smart Phones, it is a good idea to use this format when listing your mobile URL in any press release.

### NON-Recommended URL formats

- **companyname.com** : Device recognition technology enables you to identify users trying to access your website via mobile phones and automatically direct them your mobile optimized website, but without publishing a mobile-specific URL, your target market is not made aware that your mobile website even exists. Instead, take the opportunity to tell the world that you have a mobile presence by publishing your *mobile-specific* URL alongside your *desktop* URL wherever it is published.
- **companyname.mobi** : The .mobi Top Level Domain (TLD) was specifically designed to designate a mobile website, but .mobi domains haven't had the impact that was anticipated. Studies suggest many consumers are still unfamiliar with .mobi domains and don't recognize .mobi as denoting a mobile-specific website. Critics accuse the .mobi TLD of causing unnecessary fragmentation and cyber-squatters have already bought many .mobi URLs in hopes of reselling them at a premium.





If your company's .mobi domain name is still available, it *is* recommended you purchase it and point it to your *published* mobile URL. However, it is not a recommended format for publication.

- **Companyname.com/pda** : PDA is an acronym for Personal Digital Assistant, which has many and conflicting meanings in the minds of consumers. Some recognize the term as a device used by business people that is separate from their mobile phones. Others recognize it as a Smart Phone, which suggests the URL won't work on standard Internet-enabled mobile phones.
- **wap.companyname.com** : WAP is an acronym for Wireless Access Protocol and, while technically accurate for describing your mobile website, the term 'WAP' is meaningless to consumers who are unfamiliar with the acronym, and has distinctly negative connotations among many consumers who have experienced WAP sites on the mobile Internet via mobile phones of 2 to 4 years ago. They found the experience slow, clunky, and hard to navigate. Today's phones and mobile networks are far faster and provide a much better user experience than what comes to mind with the term WAP.
- **m.companyname.com** : In a world where typing URLs into mobile devices can be difficult, brevity is best so this URL format should win top prize. However, to the uninitiated consumer the 'm' could mean anything. Many would guess that 'm' represents the word 'mobile', but there are those who might not make the connection and you can't afford to lose or confuse them.
- **companyname.com/mobile** : This format can be confusing because it is often used as a desktop webpage that describes the *availability* of a company's mobile website offering at another mobile-specific URL such as mobile.companyname.com. When viewing a desktop website, this is immediately obvious to the consumer. But when published in marketing, corporate, or media communications, it can lead to confusion.

While it is not recommended that you publish your mobile URL in any of the above noted formats, it *is* highly recommended that you *point* each of these URLs to your mobile website at your published URL. As consumers become more and more accustomed to mobile URLs, many will try to guess your company's mobile website URL by simply typing a mobile variation of your desktop URL into their mobile browsers, per one of the above URL formats. Pointing all commonly used mobile URL formats will ensure all mobile users get the proper mobile experience, even if they guessed what your mobile URL might be.

You should also add a device recognition system to your desktop website so that users trying to access your company's desktop website URL from a mobile device are automatically redirected to a mobile website optimized for their device.

### Mobile Websites: **ONLY** Use an Experienced *Mobile Developer*

**What you don't know CAN hurt you...** Having a mobile website designed by a team that does not specialize in *mobile* website design is a mistake that can have disastrous and costly consequences. *Desktop* website design and *mobile* website design operate on many of the same principles, but they are very different animals and you need a mobile specialist to create a mobile website that works properly.

**Must be Optimized for 5000+ Handsets:** At issue is the fact that your mobile website needs to function on each of over 5000 unique mobile phone models, each with its own unique user-interface, screen size, programming language, and mobile network. If you don't have a team that specializes in mobile website development, you might think your mobile website is working because it works on your own mobile phone and then find out months later that it doesn't work on hundreds – even thousands – of mobile phone models being used by your target audience.

**Keep Your Existing Web Designer for your Desktop Website:** Your desktop web development team provides a valuable service by specializing in the design of websites that are consumed via desktop computers. You will always need your desktop website. Some desktop website developers may feel concerned about losing you as a client when it comes to the development of your *mobile* website so take the opportunity to assure them they are not being replaced. A professional developer will understand the complementary, yet mutually exclusive nature of the desktop and mobile web development roles. Your *desktop* website includes many of the stylistic elements that your mobile website development team will utilize in your *mobile* website. This will ensure visual continuity between your desktop and mobile websites.

**The Mobile Browsing Experience:** If your mobile website is going to be a success, users need to have a good browsing experience, regardless of the content being viewed. The best approach is to recognize the unique characteristics of the mobile device, both in terms of the size of screen available and the users' expectation of content and context, and create a version of content adapted specifically to work on it. **For an IR target audience, this approach works best.**

**Desktop-Grade Graphics Aren't for Mobile:** Like it or not, when it comes to building a mobile website, you need to design for the lowest common denominator because the majority of Internet-enabled phones on the market do not support a sophisticated browsing experience. While it is certainly *possible* to build a mobile website to rival the look and functionality of the most cutting edge desktop websites, it simply won't

*"You need an experienced mobile website developer, or your mobile website may not work properly on your target audience's phones."*







work on 75%+ of the mobile phones on the market today. If the goal in building your mobile website is reaching the widest possible audience, it is imperative that the graphic design elements follow best practices for mobile website design, which is another way of saying: keep it simple. An experienced mobile website designer will be able to walk you through the specific possibilities and limitations.

If you have the extra budget for it, and insist on offering a premium experience for those mobile phones that *can* support it, consider creating device-specific versions of your mobile website for the specific premium devices you want to target. For example, many brands will opt to create a special iPhone version of their websites that takes advantage of the device's large screen and superior graphics capabilities. If you've created special versions of your mobile website for specific devices, your developer should be able to use device recognition technology to direct requesting devices to the appropriate version of your site.

#### **Finding a Qualified Mobile Website Developer:**

**Finding the Right Team:** In selecting the right team to build your mobile website, a good analogy is to think of your desktop and mobile website developers like a family doctor and neurosurgeon, respectively. A desktop website developer must ensure your desktop website works for a mass market audience via Macs and PCs, and using a handful of different web browsers/operating system combinations. A mobile website developer must be able to deliver a website that leverages a complex combination of device recognition technology and dynamic site rendering to deliver a properly sized and functioning mobile website on any of over 5000 unique handset models that may be trying to access your mobile website. In short, you need a mobile *specialist*.

**Make Sure They Actually *Specialize* in Mobile Websites:** The first thing you need to find out from any firm you are considering is whether they actually *specialize* in mobile development. The learning curve with mobile website development is steep and you don't want your company's mobile website to be anyone's guinea pig. If mobile website design represents less than 50% of their current business, they are not specialists.

**Make Sure They Support *Mobile Streaming Video*:** When individuals who have seen a company's mobile website are asked what element impressed them the most, the most common answer *by far* is streaming video. If you have corporate videos or news clips, you will want to feature them on your mobile website for maximum impact. However, mobile streaming video is extraordinarily complex to deploy and requires specialized streaming video servers. Make sure your mobile web development team supports *mobile streaming video* and demand to see a working demo on your own mobile phone.

**Check References:** Ask for references from satisfied clients and demand to see working demos of mobile websites that the firm has created. Be sure to view the mobile website demos on multiple phones to ensure the site is rendering properly on different screen sizes.

**Don't Bargain Hunt:** When it comes to mobile website design, you get what you pay for. Experienced and qualified mobile developers are in short supply so their talents command a premium. Rates of \$75 to \$150 an hour are typical plus monthly hosting/maintenance fees. Keep in mind you are paying for more than just design services. Constantly updating and maintaining a platform that will reliably deliver a properly sized and functioning mobile site on every new device that hits the market is a costly and time consuming service to provide. Before embarking on a totally customized solution, ask your mobile developer if they have any fixed-fee packages designed for your industry sector.

## Presenting Your Mobile Website

**1-on-1 meetings:** You recognize your mobile website as a great investment, but to get the most value out of it, remember to also invest some time showing your IR and management teams how to demo the site on their own mobile devices. If it's going to be used as an IR tool, they need to be familiar with it so that demos are as seamless as they are impressive. A few tips to share with your team:

- Enter your company's mobile URL into your mobile device's mobile browser once, and then save it to your bookmarks. That way you won't have to fumble entering the URL in front of our audience every time you want to give a demo
- Mobile browsers can take a few seconds to load and connect to the Internet. If you know you'll be giving a demo, launch your device's mobile browser and use your bookmark to connect to you site *before* you're actually ready to give the demo. Even in Internet mode, you will still be able to receive calls on the device, and you can keep it in your pocket until you're ready to give the demo. This is another way to avoid an awkward pause.
- Every device handles a mobile website differently so test your mobile website on your own device. Get familiar with the navigation and the location of elements that you'll use as part of your talking points. If your device doesn't support streaming video, or your carrier network blocks it (some do), you'll want to either want to upgrade your phone or make a point of not demonstrating site features that are not supported on your device.

**On your audience's phone:** The process of launching a mobile browser and entering a mobile website URL by hand can take someone 30 seconds or longer. And even with today's faster 3G networks, load times can be slow. Fortunately, most end-users already know this about their mobile devices so the delays are much less of an issue when end-users seek out



your mobile website themselves. And if they receive an active link to your mobile URL via email or SMS, they will be able to simply click on it and have your site launch through their mobile browser automatically.

**Note:** It is not advisable to try to demonstrate your mobile website on someone else's phone unless you are 100% familiar with their device. Fumbling with a phone for which you are unfamiliar with the user interface can end up leaving a bad impression. If you want to demo your site on someone else's phone, send them an active link to your mobile website via SMS or email and let *them* click on it to explore your mobile site.

**Reliability - The 95% Rule:** No matter how sophisticated or current your mobile website platform, there will always be a few mobile phones on which your mobile website does not work properly. With 5000+ unique mobile phone models on the market, each with their own unique user interface, programming language, operating system, and carrier network, finding the occasional bug is to be expected. When identified, they are usually fixable. However, it is nearly impossible to provide a perfect experience on every device. With the right platform and team, you should expect your mobile website will work on about 95% of mobile devices used to access it.

## Consequences of Putting it Off for Another Year

If you're thinking it's OK to wait a year or so to create your mobile website until they have become more commonplace in your industry, you could be doing an enormous disservice to your company. In challenging economic times, you owe it to your IR and management teams to give them every possible advantage at industry trade shows, in the field, and during 1-on-1 meetings. The cost to build and maintain a mobile website is a drop in the bucket of most IR budgets and the potential return on investment is staggering.



A mobile website is a potential silver bullet that can make your team and your company shine above the competition. If you've been entrusted with managing your company's IR strategy, you owe it to your team to consider fast-tracking the development of your company's mobile website for upcoming meetings and trade shows. The inclusion of mobile website URLs on business cards and in IR communications such as press releases will become more and more common - and even expected. However, the use of mobile websites by IR and management teams is *already* happening over dinners, at trade shows, and almost anywhere else imaginable. If IR is your job, you need to be ahead of the curve on this and your IR and management teams will thank you for it.

## Conclusion



If you agree a company's website is among the most critical elements of any successful IR strategy, then a mobile website must be considered of equal importance. Your company needs a mobile website because:

- Desktop websites don't work on mobile phones
- A mobile website turns mobile phones into powerful presentation devices that management and IR teams can use to share your company's story and close deals.
- Only 25% of media is consumed in front of a computer
- 40% of consumers and 80%+ of investors and corporate decision makers consume media via their mobile phones
- Whether informed through promotional materials, word-of-mouth, or the media, a mobile URL enables you to engage your target audience at the peak of emotional interest in your story anytime, anywhere.

Today, those companies with mobile websites will have a significant competitive edge. In the very near future, those companies *without* a mobile website will risk becoming irrelevant in an always-mobile, always-connected world. Like a desktop website a decade ago, a mobile website is today's IR imperative.

**About the Author:** Nigel Malkin is President of Brand2hand Media - A convergent mobile marketing solutions provider that specializes in planning, building, and operating mobile websites and SMS solutions for public companies through its IR division, **Brand2hand Investor Relations**. The company works with in-house IR teams and IR firms to make companies accessible to a mobile IR target audience. Brand2hand's client list includes Comcast, Time Warner, New Balance, ExerciseTV, and Diet.com. To learn more about how to put the power of SMS and mobile websites to work for you and your clients, view case studies, or request more information, please visit the company's website at [www.brand2handmedia.com](http://www.brand2handmedia.com) or contact Nigel Malkin via email: [nmalkin@brand2handmedia.com](mailto:nmalkin@brand2handmedia.com)