Best Practices For Cross Screen And Mobile Adaptation

The Huffington Post, which is owned by AOL, has seen native mobile app traffic grow 10 fold in the past two years. Those are impressive numbers, especially at a time when all the buzz is about the perils of media fragmentation. It's important to remember, though, that *fragmentation* doesn't mean *disengagement*.

Media is an ever-changing form, with mobile at the current forefront. With millions of users everyday, The Huffington Post has some fascinating insights about when people log on, how they engage with content and how to improve cross-screen engagement. In this Q&A, Otto Toth, CTO at The Huffington Post, explains how the brand approaches showcasing Huffington Post content across many different screens and devices.

How do your consumers interact differently across different platforms?
The Huffington Post noticed that mobile web users typically check out the one link they came for and leave. Desktop users view about 4.5 pages per visit and app users saw about 13 pages per visit.

Mobile user are also mindful of pre roll ads. 30 seconds on a mobile device is a long time to wait for a video to start. 15 seconds is a lot more appropriate for mobile.

Is responsive design enough?
It seems like a no-brainer, but The Huffington Post treats desktop versus mobile design differently. Responsive design is not the magic bullet for mobile. More often than not, the two interfaces need to be different.

The Huffington Post has about 75 different sections, which raises design challenges on smaller screens. On mobile, the Huffington Post design is nothing like what web users see -- it's a mosaic of images as opposed to a tabloid. Navigation is also different. Mobile users choose from large buckets of topics, such as News, Entertainment, etc. and can find more specifics topics like World or TV, under those headers.

The Huffington Post also features different sections on different products. The mobile app has a designated video page on mobile, with The Huff Post Live's vast archive, that is easy to navigate and not found on the web version.

How do you decide which platforms to develop without burning out your resources?
It doesn't always pay to be an early adopter, but you need to be where your audience is. When your analytics are showing growth in an area, that's the point ot allocate resources. We get very little traffic from Blackberries and Windows 8, so it's not a priority for us right now. iOS traffic

is twice as much as Android but the page view/visits are the same on both platform. The user behavior and engagement is similar.

But with the platforms you are on, make sure you stay up-to-date.
When Apple upgraded to iOs 7 in 2013, The Huffington Post made sure its apps were compliant the day the system went live. Because of this, the Apple store highlighted the News app. They picked up one million new users because of it, 225,000 of those were on the first day.

Pro tip: Update your CMS: With different versions for different screens becoming the norm these days, it's important that editors and other staff have the right tools to program for it. Updating your CMS so that it shows what desktop and mobile versions will look like should be standard.

How does programming change with mobile?
It's important to adjust because different devices have different peak times. The Huffington Post has seen highest engagement on the weekends. Mobile usage is highest on weekends. Tablet and phone use soar while desktop drops dramatically.

Other trends:
Tablet: Users have a daily spike around 6:00 a.m. that stay steady until about 10:00 a.m. (Think morning commute.) It spikes again between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. (Programming)

*Phone***:** Usage is steady throughout the day but drops off in the early evening, usually when tablet use picks up.

*Desktop***:** Peak times are 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and remains flat during the day. It's also very low on the weekends.