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SEO: Why Be Mobile-Friendly and Google's Answer Box

BY KIM KELLEY, FRBMA

You need to make sure your website is mobile friendly. If it's not, your rankings in Google could drop, resulting in a loss of traffic and business. Here's why:

- Today, more people search on mobile phones (almost 60 percent) than on computers.
- People are five times more likely to leave a mobile site that isn't mobile-friendly.
- Nearly half of all visitors will leave a mobile site if the pages don't load within three seconds.
- Nine out of 10 people say that they use multiple screens for such tasks as booking a flight online or managing their personal finances.¹

"In November 2016, Google announced plans to move to what they called "mobile-first" indexing, continuing a trend of increasingly emphasizing the mobile user experience. Depending on exactly what they mean by this, it could have serious impacts on mobile and desktop performance, even on businesses that don't have large amounts of mobile traffic, and who may have so far deprioritized mobile site friendliness.

You may be affected if you have:

1. A mobile site with reduced content on each page, different internal linking structure, or fewer pages—whether served on separate URLs or dynamically-served on the same URLs as the desktop site; and/or

2. No mobile site and a desktop site that is not responsive, and hence is flagged as not mobile friendly by Google.

In either of these situations, you are at risk of losing not only mobile search traffic, but desktop search traffic as well, and should take emergency measures to address this risk.²

Action point: How to check for mobile friendliness

Go to <https://testmysite.thinkwithgoogle.com/>, type in your web address, and hit enter. If your scores are in the yellows and greens, you are good to go.

You can do better than #1 in Google. Rank 0.

Google's "Instant Answers" has created an answer box that shows above position one, making it the first thing a searcher sees—spot zero. This spot can be even more valuable than position one. And Instant Answers are showing atop more and more search phrases every day.

What is the Instant Answers box?

The answer box is what you see when you do a search for something like "what is an MRI." The first result isn't the standard link to a website that we're used to seeing.



Instead, it is either a paragraph, list, or table that tries to answer the question right then and there. Pull up your browser, go to Google, and give this a try to see the result.

Why this is important

Each answer box gives a link to the source website it used to create the answer. People often follow those links to get more information than the answer box gives.

The answer box is not always created from the first-ranking website for the search. That means you can rank lower on the page and still get in the answer box if you have the best answer. And it means you're on the search results page more than once, dramatically increasing your chances that the searcher will end up on your website.

How to get in the answer box

Take look at this [great video](#) on the topic by SEO's leader Rand Fishkin. The answer below is an excerpt: <https://moz.com/blog/how-to-appear-in-googles-answer-boxes-whiteboard-friday>

1. Identify queries in keyword research that, implicitly or explicitly, ask a question.


The question needs to be slightly broader than what Google can deliver directly out of Knowledge Graph.

2. Seek out queries that already use the answer box. If the competition's doing a poor job, these are often easy to grab.

If they are in there and someone else already owns it, you can usually leapfrog them by providing a better-formatted, more accurate, more complete, or higher-ranking answer.

3. Format and language are essential!

The language means the language used. Google really, really seems to like if I search for "strengthen lower back," to show me an article called "strengthen lower back," not "back strengthening for newbies." The answer can be in the title of your web page, but it can also be in the caption of an image, the label of a section, or a section header.

There you go. Two more SEO tips that can help push your website to the top of Google's search engine results that you can begin working on now. Look for more SEO tips in upcoming issues of the RBMA Bulletin. 

REFERENCES

1. <http://searchengineland.com/report-nearly-60-percent-searches-now-mobile-devices-255025>
2. What Executives Need to Know About Google's Mobile-First Index By Will Critchlow. Published December 16, 2016



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