

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

## How Google's new algorithm could kill your business

September 20, 2021



Christa Martin

By **Christa Martin**

Unless you are a supervillain, or hiding from the authorities, a cloak of invisibility is not necessarily a good thing. When you are in business, and you are looking to use your digital presence to drive customers and revenue, invisibility is not a good thing.

But if you cannot remember the last time you updated your Web site or if the pictures and text look super-teeny-tiny on your mobile device you may very well be invisible. That is because, in March 2020, Google the search engine, Internet-of-everything behemoth announced it was changing the way that Web sites are indexed into its search engine.

Mobile first indexing for the whole Web

Though we will get deeper into the weeds in a moment, the key distinction is this: If your Web site is not built with a mobile-first posture, it now and likely, into the future will be overlooked by Google's indexing algorithm.

Yes, you will be virtually invisible, while your more tech-savvy competition will likely have risen to the first couple of pages of Google's search results, the Holy Grail for companies, and the measuring stick for digital marketers.

The good news? As of August, **Google was still in the process of migrating sites to Mobile First**, though it expected to be finished by the end of 2021.

So why is this happening now? Well, Google has always considered itself the trendsetter rather than the trend-follower.

With the mobile-first mandate, Google is continuing a process it started in 2015, when the company required Web sites to be "mobile friendly" to earn higher organic search visibility.

Fast forward to today: **Nearly 55 percent of Web sites** across the globe are now accessed on mobile devices, up from just 31 percent when Google issued that first mobile-centric edict in 2015.

Looking under the hood of Google's latest mobile salvo, we can better understand what they have done.

Since a majority of users now access Google Search with a mobile device, the Googlebot is now calibrated to crawl and index mobile pages by default

and index mobile pages by default.

Though Google said that this policy applied to new Web sites, experts have observed that even legacy Web sites are being measured by the mobile-first mandate.

An earlier phase of Google's march to mobile focused on loading speeds for Web sites on mobile.

In fact, the latest Mobile First program is shining a spotlight on something called the **Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) Project**, which seeks to further increase mobile loading speeds by preloading some components into the device. If you have ever seen the initials AMP in the URL when clicking on a link, you have likely noticed this faster loading speed.

How to use mobile-first indexing to your advantage

How can companies ensure that their digital endeavors are always in compliance with Google's mobile-centric posture?

Here are some tips I recommend to my clients.

Make sure your site elements are appropriately sized on mobile. Consider the text size, tap target and padding. Visible to Google is one thing, visible to the public is another.

Another way to get your Web site ready for mobile is to streamline your checkout to be omnichannel.

In other words, make sure you have "cart portability" so that the process is passed seamlessly between devices.

A shocking 85 percent of customers start a purchase on one device and finish it on another.

On a similar note, do not make your customers start over.

Make sure that you save options, such as wish lists, which can help returning customers easily see what they looked at while on another device.

Pop-ups are another good way to trigger the buying impulse in your customer, and an easy way to ask for an email for a newsletter or discount codes to bring them back to your site again.

Use pop-ups on mobile when customers arrive to show specials, when they leave without purchasing, or when they abandon a cart.

Use accordion and drop-down menus appropriately, and never use Flash. Google has a long history of ignoring Flash-built content.

These are the best pop-ups for the mobile experience:

- Floating pop-up: These appear at the top or bottom of the page as a simple bar, and promote discounts, offers, free shipping or other perks.
- Slidebox pop-up: Slidebox pop-ups for mobile appear in the corner of the screen, larger than floating pop-ups but leaving space for the main content to be visible. Good for reading more options.
- Featured pop-up: These pop-ups are displayed in the middle of the screen above the main content. Although they are not full-screen pop-ups, they should appear after the user has shown an interest by navigating away from the landing page.

FINALLY, KNOW THAT Google is not looking to make millions of Web sites fall into obscurity, but simply to nudge you to get with its program.

For more tips and tricks on how to comply with Mobile First, Google offers a deep well of content that can be incredibly helpful [here](#).

The message is simple: If your Web site was built in Ruby on Rails in 2007, it probably was already obsolete before Google came along and told you so.

Look to refresh your Web site with new messaging and new approaches at least every two years.

The back end of a Web site can become a maze of plugins that need refreshing and coordination. Use this news from Google as a wake-up call, before it is too late.

Adapt mobile-first best practices today, or risk fading into the landscape.

© 2018 The Digital Marketing Agency. All rights reserved. | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

*Christa Martin is San Diego, CA-based chief marketing officer with [Chief Outsiders](#). Reach her at [cmartin@chiefoutsiders.com](mailto:cmartin@chiefoutsiders.com).*

---

#### MOST POPULAR

1. [Brands should incentivize consumers to go green](#)
2. [Retailers expanding pickup options, facing staff shortages this holiday season: report](#)
3. [Owning the customer experience in an Amazon-disrupted market](#)
4. [Shifts in retail sales of women's designer bags](#)
5. [Macy's trademark decision confirms importance of surveys](#)
6. [Year of the Rooster luxury items: Hit or miss with Chinese consumers?](#)
7. [How luxury is the millennial's unlikely weapon to fight social inequality](#)
8. [Luxury brands need to change their marketing strategy for India](#)
9. [Green is the new black: Backing the Fashion Pact](#)
10. [How resale, rental and flex payments can put luxury within reach – especially now](#)

© 2021 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

American Marketer is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.