Introduction

According to Movable Ink’s “U.S. Consumer Device Preference Report: Q1 2014,” 66 percent of brand marketing emails were opened on a mobile device (smartphones and tablets) during the first quarter. This represents a huge leap from just four years ago, when only 9 percent of email opens took place on mobile.¹

It is clear that mobile devices are now the predominant vehicles for consumer engagement with email marketing communications, yet so many marketers still seem to struggle with – or maybe not even care about – optimizing their campaigns for mobile. A recent study from Yesmail found that only 1 percent of email marketers always use responsive design, and 31 percent never use it at all.² And that’s just looking at things from the design perspective – not the end-to-end mobile email marketing and shopping experience.

In this guide, we’ll share how the email marketing landscape has rapidly shifted from a desktop-dominated one, to a mobile-dominated one, and share examples and best practices for surviving in the age of the mobile takeover.

²Yesmail, “Q1 Benchmarks Overview: The Responsive Design Effect,” May 2014
# Table of Contents

- The Evolving Landscape ........................................ 1
- But Mobile Users Don’t Convert! .......................... 4
- Mobile Takeover Survival Strategies ..................... 7
It’s hard to believe that only 4 years ago, more than 90 percent of email was opened on desktop computers. Today, a mere third of email opens take place on desktops. Smartphones now account for nearly half of all email opens, and tablets – which were first introduced midway through 2010 – are already approaching 20 percent.
A lot has changed even just within the past year:

- In Q1 2014, more email was opened on iPhones (38%) than all desktops combined (34%).

- In Q2 2013, the U.S. was pretty evenly split in terms of smartphone vs. desktop domination, with desktops being the primary devices used to open email in 24 states. That number dropped to 14 by Q1 2014.

- While smartphone opens have steadied and desktop opens declined, tablets showed the strongest growth rate at 31 percent year-over-year, and appear poised to overtake desktops as the household PC of record.
No matter how you look at it, one thing is clear: mobile has taken over, and has fundamentally transformed the way that consumers interact with email. As such, it’s imperative to abandon “desktop first” thinking and adopt a new approach to email marketing that prioritizes the mobile experience first.
A common refrain from marketers who are stuck in a “desktop first” mentality is that “mobile users click, but don’t convert.” Thus, optimizing for mobile is a waste of time and resources. Those marketers, however, are mistaken.
Early insights derived from Movable Ink’s new conversion tracking analytics prove that users are, in fact, converting on mobile devices, and that opens on mobile devices often result in sales on other devices.

Marketers can expect to find nearly half of conversions occurring in direct response to an email open on a smartphone or tablet. But that doesn’t tell the full story: Many consumers will open email on one device, and then convert on another. First impressions are important, and can make the difference between getting that second open and conversion, or being deleted or forgotten about.
Lastly, the data indicate that consumers who open email on a smartphone, and then convert on a desktop, are more lucrative shoppers than people who open email and then convert on a desktop alone. Smartphone openers spend, on average, 14 percent more than their desktop-only counterparts.
By now, hopefully you are convinced that not only is the mobile takeover real, but that it’s also worth responding to with new strategies for email marketing success. Designing for multiple screen sizes is just the beginning. Our tips here are designed to help you contemplate the holistic mobile email experience, and to help you optimize your “tap-through rates” (yes, it’s time to start saying goodbye to your long-time friend, the click-through rate).
Recommendation #1:
Design with Multiple Screens in Mind

Whether you use responsive design, device targeting, or a combination of both, making sure that your email looks good and is actionable on all the devices your customers are using is vital. Text on the small screen should be large enough to read, and images, buttons, and other calls-to-action should be easy to tap on without making mistakes.

Here’s an example from J Brand that leverages real-time device detection to serve up optimal versions of a template across all devices. This is the same email being displayed simultaneously on a desktop and a smartphone.
Recommendation #2: Deep Link to Your Mobile App

Deep linking removes friction from the mobile email experience by enabling consumers to launch installed mobile apps and specific pages within apps. This makes it easier to complete actions — and transactions — on mobile devices.

Here’s an example from eBay where one tap on an image of a sandal in an email leads to firing up the eBay mobile app and the product that the user wants to see. With one more tap the item can be added to the users shopping cart and one tap later, purchased and shipped since the user’s billing information and address are already stored securely within the app.
Recommendation #3:
Let Users Tap-to-Call

Users who are on the go and have questions about your products or services that might be easier to answer over the phone than via a mobile app or m-site can be given the option to tap-to-call.

Leveraging Movable Ink’s real-time device targeting capabilities, you can insert a tap-to-call banner to the smartphone version of your email template, which will only display when users open on their smartphones.

Here’s an example from The Knot showing the smartphone version with the tap-to-call banner at the top of the message.
Recommendation #4:
Let Users Scan Your Email at the Register

Just as some users might prefer to tap-to-call rather than purchase on their smartphones, others might want to redeem your offers at brick and mortar locations. By using a single column layout when emails are opened on smartphones, and including barcodes that span the width of the screen, you’ll make it easy for recipient’s to “buy now.” Here’s an example from Express.
Recommendation #5:
Get Users Social

Sometimes your most desired next tap might be getting users to spread the love about your brand or products on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other popular social networking apps, which account for some of the most widely downloaded apps in the world and can be counted on to be installed on their smartphones and tablets even when your own app isn’t.

Deep linking technology can be used to launch third-party applications, and you can even include a pre-populated message for users to share. Here’s an example from Comedy Central that got thousands of its subscribers tweeting to promote a new show — and it only took two taps for them to do so.
Mobile email opens keep rising as a percentage of total opens each quarter, and aren’t showing any signs of relenting. The time to optimize email campaigns for mobile consumption is now, spanning everything from design to the end-to-end mobile experience.

Movable Ink’s agileEMAIL platform offers the most powerful tools in the industry for not only surviving the mobile takeover – but using it to achieve even greater email marketing results in an era when email is attached to our hips, always on, and on the go.

To learn more, please visit movableink.com and click on “Request Demo.”
What happens in the moment influences how we act, and how we remember it. Shouldn’t marketing do the same thing? Movable Ink enables brands to market in the moment with real-time digital content delivered at scale in email. Hundreds of innovative brands such as American Eagle Outfitters, Time Inc., Lilly Pulitzer, and Finish Line have increased engagement, conversions, and ROI by using Movable Ink’s agile marketing solution to plan, create, and execute campaigns that adapt to each individual consumer the instant they engage. The company is headquartered in New York, New York with an office in London, England. For more information, please visit http://www.movableink.com.

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