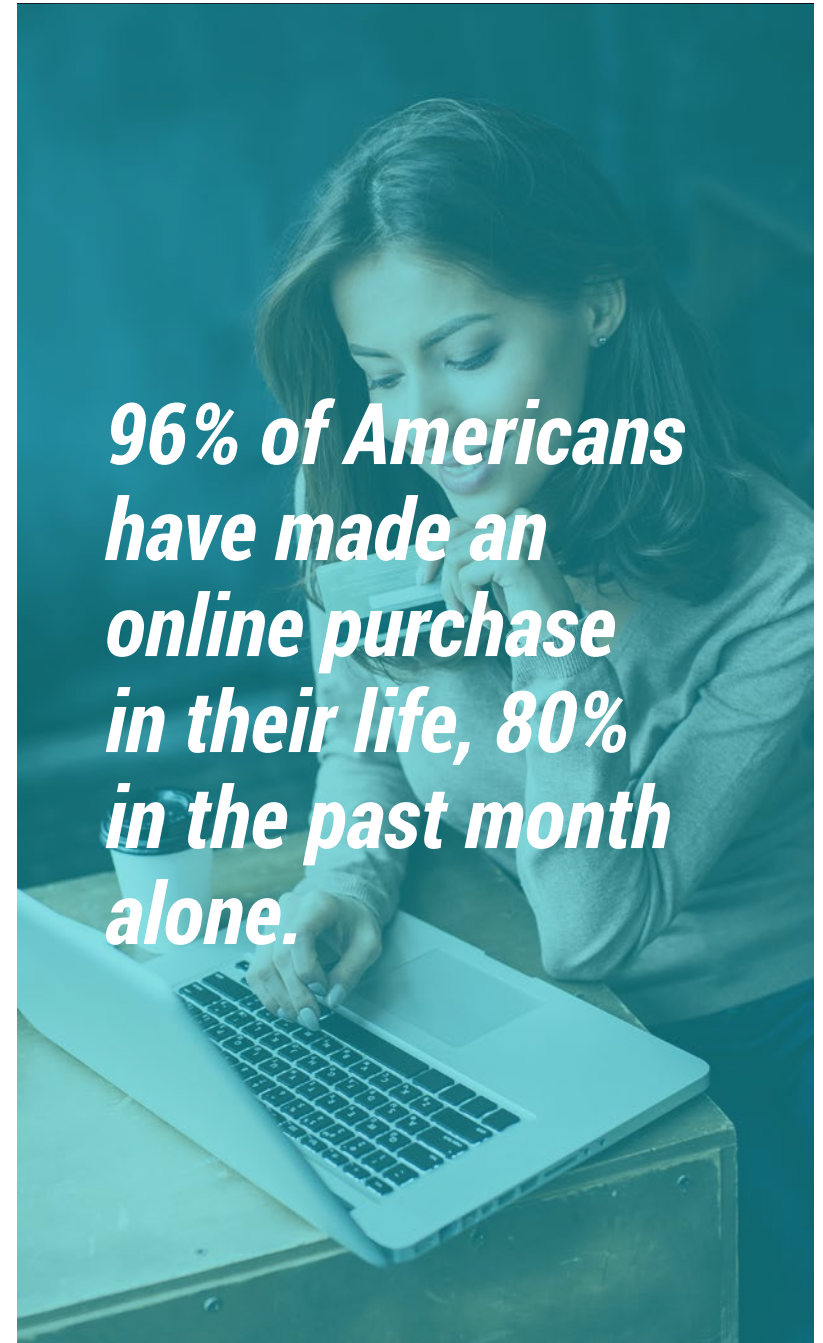EBOOK

CYBER MONDAY ECOMMERCE SURVIVAL GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Cyber Monday is just around the corner and 2017 is guaranteed to be the biggest year yet for ecommerce websites. The holiday sale season is a great way to appeal to your existing customers and new ones that will inevitably visit your site. Take the time optimize your ecommerce website and ensure a quality digital experience that will rake in a lot of revenue on November 27th and get users coming back for more.

96% of Americans have made an online purchase in their life, 80% in the past month alone.

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7 TIPS TO AVOID SHOPPING CART ABANDONMENT

Nearly 45 percent of consumers ditched their cart because of costs associated with shipping and handling.

For an ecommerce website, shopping cart abandonment is just a part of the game. Despite your best laid plans, your users visit your site, delve into the art of shopping, and soon close the tab to go do something else. Shopping cart abandonment might be the biggest obstacle to overcome during Black Friday-/Cyber Monday weekend. During 2016, the average global abandonment rate was 68.8 percent. Nearly four out of five shoppers were ditching their carts without purchasing anything. While it's impossible to mitigate this problem entirely, there are some steps worth taking and tips to follow to help push your customers to hit that 'checkout' button.

1. CHOOSE SHIPPING COSTS WISELY

The cost of shipping alone is enough to make a consumer ditch a purchase. Nearly 45 percent of consumers ditched their cart because of costs associated with shipping and handling. The best thing to do? Offer free shipping. This will help suppress the consumer's wonder about whether or not there are better deals elsewhere.

If you can't guarantee free shipping, don't try to sneak in and surprise the customer with shipping costs. Make all additional costs clear before customers see the product in their shopping cart. Add a calculator on your product page such as the WooCommerce Shipping Calculator that will calculate the shipping costs for the customer automatically.

2. MAKE THE CART ACCESSIBLE

The accessibility of the cart is essential for the user experience. Make sure the cart is easy to find on your dashboard and can be edited by the consumer. This goes along with the transparency during checkout phenomenon. A good idea is to include a cart in the upper corner that expands to show what's inside when hovered over.

It's also not uncommon to abandon the cart with the intention of coming back to it at a later date. Enable a "wish list" or "save for later" functionality on your website that is easy to come back to.

3. DON'T REQUIRE ACCOUNT CREATION

Let's be real. Creating an account every time you want to buy something is *annoying*. The beauty of online shopping is that it is fast and easy and creating an account is slow and tedious. Enable guest checkout to avoid customers getting frustrated with endless steps and leaving. Go even further and streamline the process by establishing a single-page, express checkout option.

Give the customer the option to create an account after the purchase is made. Consider the allow the visitor to sign up for an account via an existing social media account so users don't have to fiddle with filling out mundane questions.

4. OFFER CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Make sure your customers don't feel helpless; include an accessible customer support option during the shopping and checkout process. Having a question about the product or shipping process before, during, or after purchase is not uncommon. Incorporate an easily accessible live chat functionality so that customers don't become frustrated and abandon the cart.

5. ESTABLISH TRUST

Ordinary ecommerce shoppers are extremely weary of security. Around 18 percent of shopping cart abandonment instances are due to a lack of confidence in security. Including security badges during checkout to help give your customers peace of mind and reduce abandonment.

6. UTILIZE SCARCITY

Give your customers the push they need to buy now by motivating via scarcity. Display how much of the certain product is left so the customers understand that if they abandon their cart, the product might not be available. Alternatively, include a countdown clock so urgency is established.

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7. OFFER MULTIPLE PAYMENT OPTIONS

Entering credit card information on the internet is always a sensitive issue. Even if you guarantee security at checkout, customers may leave because of inconvenience. Be sure that your site offers payment options that fit everyone's needs. Some options to definitely include are: Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Discover and PayPal. Some people prefer to use pre saved services so be sure to include options like Google Wallet and MasterPass.
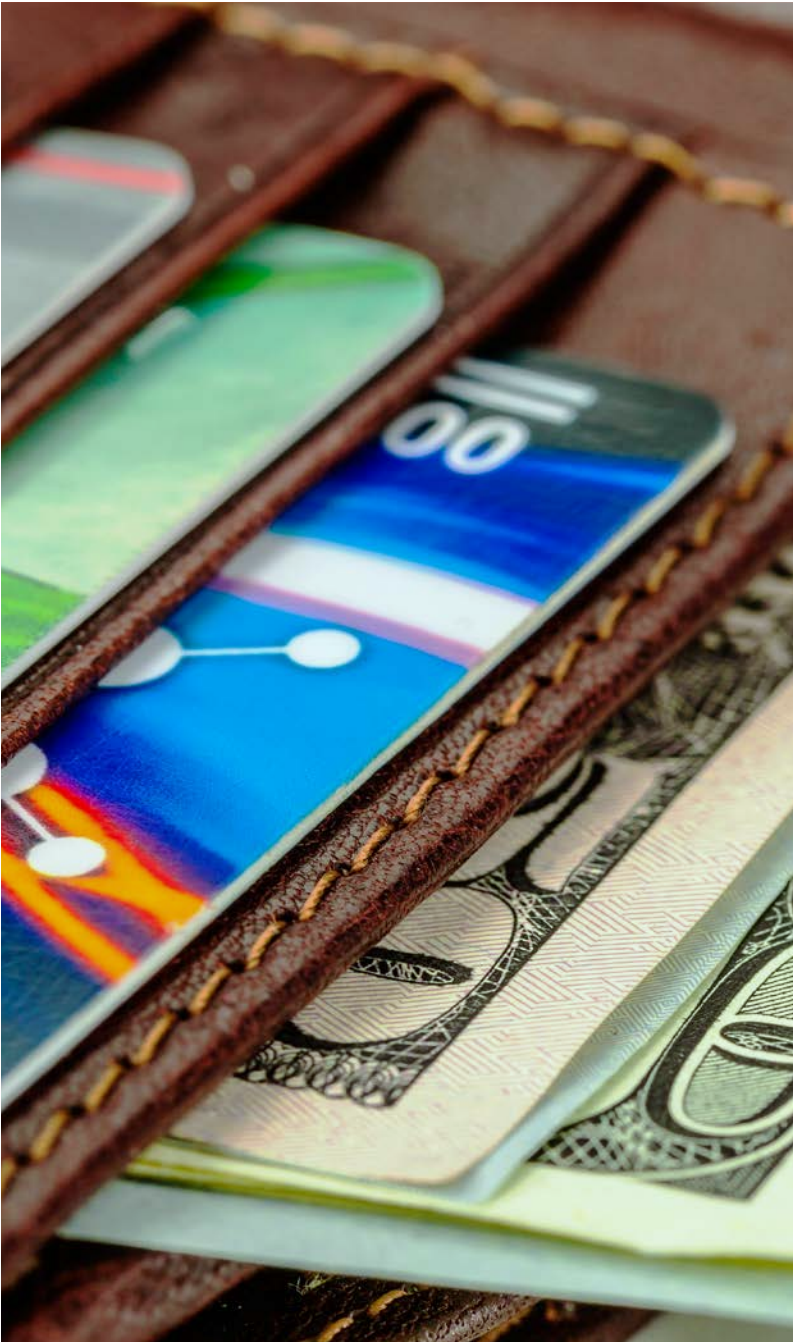
CHAPTER 2

STEPS FOR CLEANING UP YOUR SITE

Adding the immense traffic of Cyber Monday to an already cluttered site could likely mean downtime or frustration during the most important ecommerce day of the year. Take some time before Nov. 27 to clean the crevices of your site and ensure a smooth-running machine.

BACK IT UP

Before you even begin to clean things up, make sure you don't make a mistake that can't be undone. If you don't want to take the time to do it manually, free or premium plugins like Updraft Plus, which backup into the cloud directly via Dropbox, Google Drive, Amazon S3. WP Engine can also provide a backup.
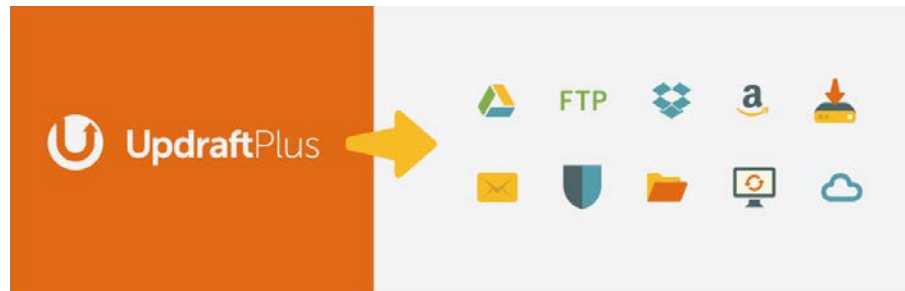
DELETE WHAT ISN'T NEEDED

Delete any unwanted/unused themes or plugins you might have on your site. Everyone gets curious and downloads a plugin they end up not using. This extra clutter adds weight to your site and you'll want to sweep it out.

DELETE REVISIONS

Whenever you click 'Save' on a WordPress post, a revision is made and saved in your WordPress database. It's useful to limit the amount of revisions possible and/or use a plugin such as WP Optimize to remove these unnecessary post revisions and free up space.

REMOVE OLD PAGE AND POST DRAFTS

If you run a multi-author site, you probably have several drafts laying around, doing nothing, and taking up space. Find them and delete them to help unclog your site.

GET RID OF UNUSED IMAGES

Chances are you have unused images or image references in the media library. Use the WordPress Media Cleaner plugin to delete media that isn't actively being used.

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CHAPTER 3

PLAN IT OUT

You're going to want to roll out a plan to get the word out about your holiday sales and promotions as soon as possible. People start looking for holiday gifts as soon as August and the majority of people are buying more than half of their gifts online so it's important to roll out promotional material to alert the masses. Get organized and notify your team so your approach is strategic and effective. If you have a limited bandwidth, focus on doing a few things well. Here's a few tips to get started:

CREATE A PROMOTIONAL CALENDAR

Outline the steps you need to execute your campaigns. A promotional calendar will include dates and times you will you update the graphics and banners on your site, dates and times of your promotional email deployment and dates your start and stop advertising for each promotion.

GET TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Use tools like Facebook Audience Insights to get a better idea of the information of your target audience. You'll acquire information about consumer geography, demographics and purchase behavior which will help inform your marketing campaign strategy.

DECIDE WHICH AVENUE TO PROMOTE

Once you have information about your audience, you'll be better able to decide which platforms to get your message out. Here's a few options to consider:

- Social media
- Blogs
- Video
- Graphics
- Giveaways
- Email
- Landing pages
- Print ads
- Digital ads (Facebook, Google, etc.)

TIGHTEN YOUR SITE'S SECURITY

Despite the feelings of joy and warmth associated with the holiday season, scrooges in the form of security threats can come to light. In fact, the number of attacks rise during November and December. Taking precautions to establish some barriers from invasions is essential for an optimally running site when it matters.

INSTALL A WORDPRESS SECURITY PLUGIN

A WordPress security plugin will help protect your site from any vulnerabilities. Some ways this could protect you includes malware scanning andblacklist monitoring. Some security plugins we suggest include Securi Security, iThemes Security, and Bulletproof Security.

ENFORCE STRONG USERNAMES AND PASSWORDS

Using a self-explanatory password and/or username is possibly the most preventable security mistake you can make. Easy passwords and usernames make it easier for hackers to crack the code using brute force automated scripts. Make sure not just you, but everyone user of your site has a strong password.

USE SSL CERTIFICATES

SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) encrypts all information sent to and from your site. That way, if users on the site share private information, the information stays private. The secure tunnel SSL creates is especially important with sensitive information, like credit card numbers, usernames, and passwords. Obtain a free SSL as a WP Engine customer via Let's Encrypt.

USE 2-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION

Using 2-factor identification, forces the user to provide login details for two different components. .It can be in the form of a preselected question, secret code, or more. Use the Google Authenticator plugin to help establish two-factor authentication on your site.

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UTILIZE ANALYTICS BEFORE AND AFTER THE BIG DAY

Your site will be put to the test in many ways on Nov. 27; the site itself will be bombarded with traffic, customers are going to be making a lot of purchases, and unique users are going to be visiting your site.

If you aren't making use of analytical testing before Cyber Monday, your site might not perform to the level it needs and you'll lose potential revenue. Similarly, if you aren't making use of analytics after Cyber Monday, you'll lose valuable information that can help you make money in the future.

RUN A SPEED TEST

If your site is running slowly, you can say bye-bye to revenue. The hard truth is that customers have a number of ecommerce outlets to find what they want during the holidays and won't bother waiting for a slow site.

Use WP Engine's Speed Tool to simply and quickly analyze how fast your WordPress site loads and renders. We will then recommend ways to improve speed and performance before it's too late.

ENSURE SCALABILITY

Before a big event, it's smart to perform a load test to understand how your site will scale when your site is exposed to heavy traffic. Utilize free software like LoadStorm to see how much traffic your site can take.

If you find that your site can't scale to the level you'd like, it might be necessary to adjust your infrastructure and/or hosting. WP Engine offers infrastructure made to scale up to handle a heavy traffic load and down to control costs facilitating a delicate balance and a optimal digital experience.

DIAGNOSE YOUR PROBLEMS WITH A/B TESTING

A/B Testing is essential to maximizing your ecommerce potential. Prior to Cyber Monday, utilize plugins like Neilo AB Testing which works with WooCommerce to test alternative names, featured images, and product descriptions to ensure that products are getting max exposure.

No two sites require identical fixes to perform optimally; one site might perform better by featuring their top-selling products while another might do better by displaying their most recent products. Find solutions to reduce your cart abandonment rates, strategically display products and more!

OPTIMIZE YOUR MOBILE ECOMMERCE WEBSITE

An important tidbit to remember when building an ecommerce holiday strategy: the amount of mobile users now exceeds the amount of desktop users. If you aren't optimizing your content on a variety of platforms, you aren't attracting and retaining the amount of content that you could.

IMPLEMENT A MOBILE VERSION OF YOUR SITE

If you're starting from the beginning, the very first step is to get your site to adapt to a variety of screens (what we call responsive design). Utilizing a responsive theme allows brand consistency and convenience for the consumer. For the most part, modern themes in the WordPress directory are mobile-friendly.

Responsive themes allow for optimal customization but if you mobile-version is going to be attracting a lot of traffic, you might be consider making a mobile app for your site using the WP REST API.

USE MOBILE FRIENDLY PLUGINS

Plugins are our allies in customization on WordPress but it is often the case that what works on the front-end of your desktop site, is not optimized for mobile. Do your research on a plugin before you install.

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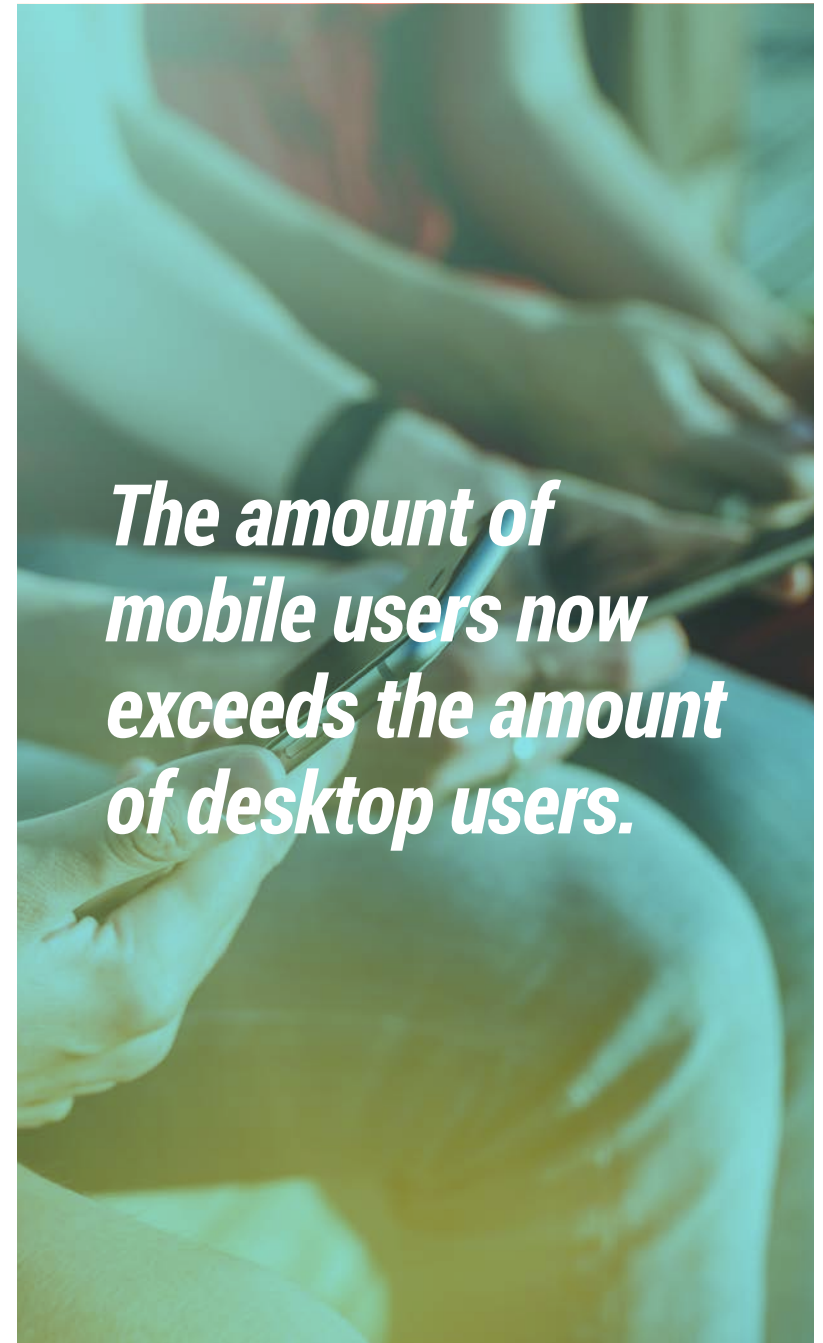
Here's some basic, essential plugins that are guaranteed to work with mobile:
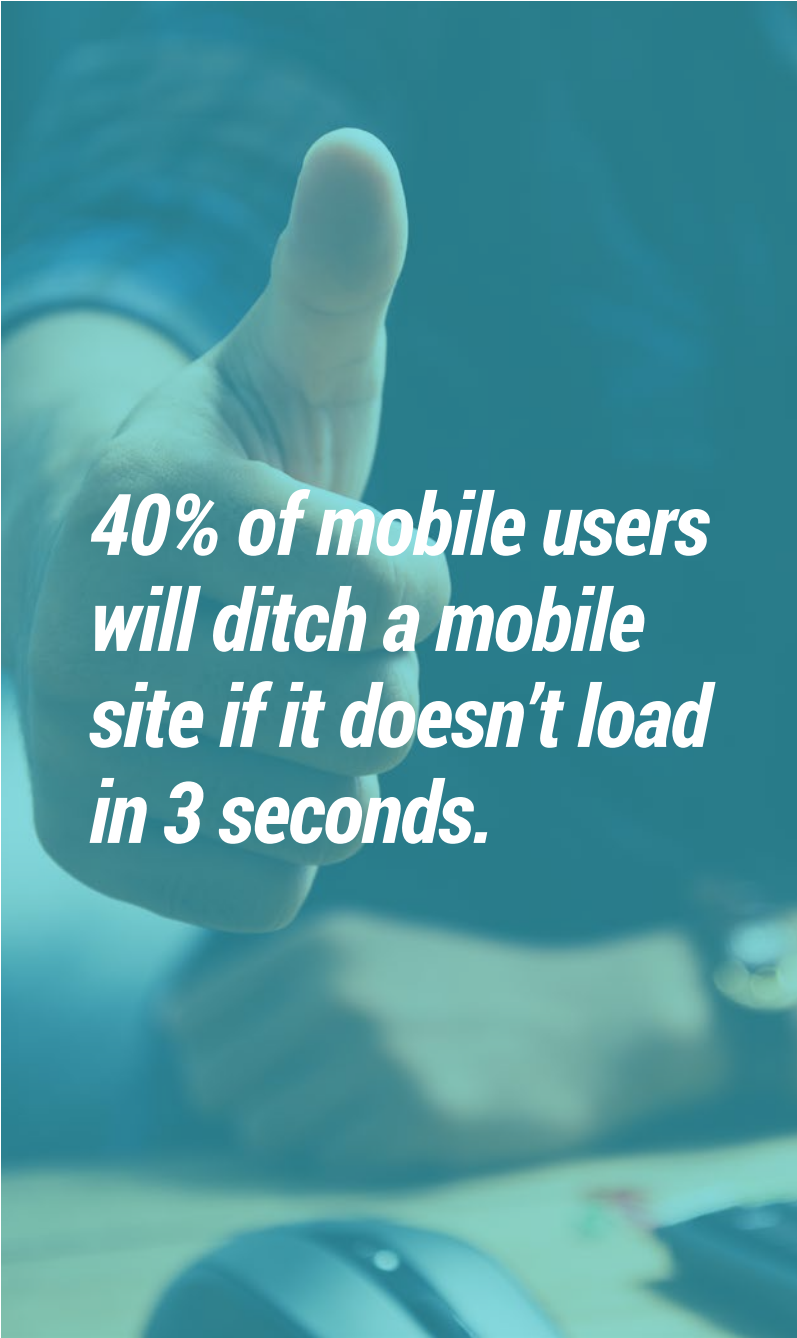
Responsive Menu
Gravity Forms
Contact Form 7
Responsive sliders

The amount of mobile users now exceeds the amount of desktop users.

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40% of mobile users will ditch a mobile site if it doesn't load in 3 seconds.

Other than that, all premium plugins are optimized for mobile. Check out these premium plugins worth spending money on.

OPTIMIZE IMAGES

The latest WordPress automatically serve up the smallest possible image to users, depending on their screen size, using the srscet HTML attribute. However, you must take extra care to tend to the images that appear on your mobile site.

Before uploading, save the images in Photoshop as 'Save for web' to create the smallest possible image. Otherwise, use Tiny PNG to compress your JPEG and PNG files. Alternatively WP Smush or EWWW Image Optimizer are great plugins for image optimization.

MAKE IT FAST ON MOBILE

Nothing is more annoying than for an ecommerce site, a place we are spending money, to drain our data plan. 40% of mobile users will ditch a mobile site if it doesn't load in 3 seconds.

Use Google PageSpeed Insights to get insight on your mobile pagespeed via Google. Use Pingdom and GTmetrix to get better ideas on how to speed up your site.

Consider looking into Accelerated Mobile Pages. They are a special kind of HTML markup that makes your pages quick to load in Google's search results. Use the the official AMP plugin to install it on your WordPress site.

DON'T USE FULL SCREEN POP UPS

Don't annoy your user and create a terrible user experience by using pop-ups that cover all your content and and frustrate the touch-screen user. Users are guaranteed to ditch your site before buying anything.

Instead, use banners, text links and CTAs inside the content. Classic signup forms in the right places still work, too.
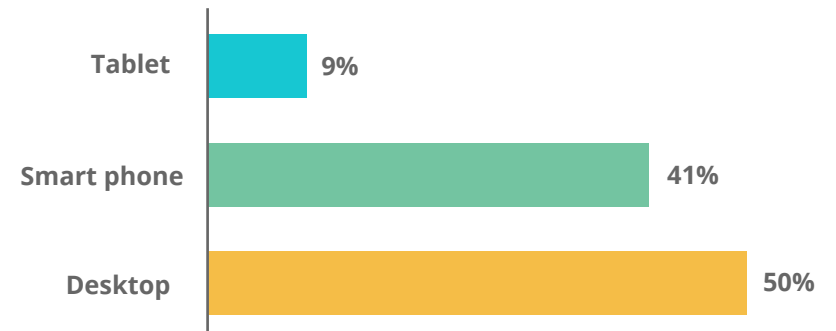
TAKE THE MOBILE FRIENDLY TEST

How are users experiencing your site? What is right and what is simply taking up space? Simply input your URL into Google's mobile friendliness testing tool and get vital information about your site's mobile optimization.

Use the Google Search Console to learn things like whether your site elements are too close together, your font is too small, your theme is mobile-friendly etc.

$$ Spent on Cyber Monday in Billions

2016	est. in 2017	Mobile-only 2016	Mobile-only est. 2017
$3.45	$3.81	$1.07	$1.24
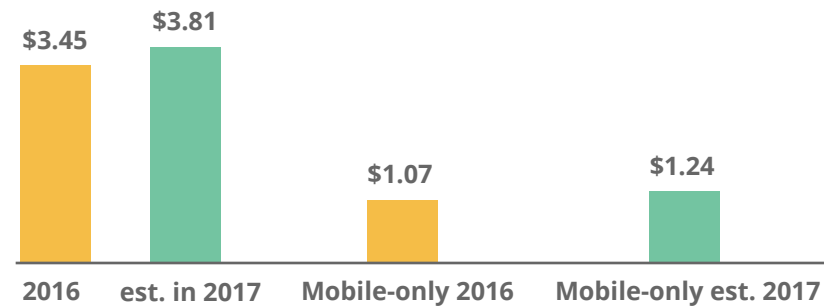
% Visitors Site Visitors During 2016 Holiday Season

Tablet	9%
Smart phone	41%
Desktop	50%

Source: http://www.cmo.com/adobe-digital-insights/articles/2016/11/8/2016-holiday-shopping-up-to-the-minute-data-from-adi.html#gs.a1_egR4

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About Torque

Torque is a news site featuring all things WordPress. We are dedicated to informing new and advanced WordPress professionals, users, and enthusiasts about the industry. Torque focuses primarily on WordPress News, Business, and Development, but also covers topics relating to open source and breakthrough technology. Torque made its debut in July 2013, at WordCamp San Francisco, and has since produced valuable content that reflects the evolution of WordPress, both as a platform and a community. Torque is a WP Engine publication, though maintains complete editorial independence. torquemag.io

About WP Engine

WP Engine powers amazing digital experiences for websites and applications built on WordPress. The company's premium managed hosting platform provides the performance, reliability and security required by the biggest brands in the world, while remaining affordable and intuitive enough for smaller businesses and individuals. Companies of all sizes rely on WP Engine's award-winning customer service team to quickly solve technical problems and create a world-class customer experience. Founded in 2010, WP Engine is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in Limerick, Ireland, San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas, and London, England. wpengine.com

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