

# CONTENT STRATEGY IN A MOBILE WORLD



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**Providing content to your audience** (either internal or external) via the iPad has become an essential business tool. Whether people are killing time between meetings or settling in for a good read with a cup of coffee, there is a good chance that their iPad is their companion. There is no question you should leverage the iPad in your business communications. How do you do so successfully and in a sustainable manner?

## The Evolution of Content Strategy

Content strategy is not new; it has long since become recognized as an essential aspect of marketing and communications efforts. Content is king. You probably already understand that one of the keys to engaging prospects, earning a position of thought leadership and gaining the edge on the competition is providing educational, engaging and sometimes promotional content to your target market. You know that it's important to publish information and you probably already have a strategy in place to share it. The challenge facing you today is to successfully share that content in an ever-growing mobile world. While the concept is not new, what is constantly in flux is how information is distributed, consumed and updated.

Content has evolved from printed pages distributed in person or via 'snail mail' to email communications to real-time tweets, posts and blog entries. We have gone from a time of publishing something and crossing our fingers that everything stays current until our next print run to a time when continuous updates are not only possible but are expected from our content consumers. This near-constant barrage of updates poses interesting challenges to businesses of all types—challenges that have spurred technical innovations to help businesses stay ahead of the curve.

Email improved on direct mail. Social media has improved on email. Websites have essentially replaced company brochures. Now, as mobile applications offer major advances in interactivity and dynamic content presentation over static websites, many a MarCom department is left to figure out how to sustainably manage that content without starting from scratch each time.

The answer lies in thinking beyond one-off applications and looking at how your business can utilize mobile apps to gain strategic advantage over your competition and engage in a whole new way with your audience.

The questions and resulting challenges facing mobile communications today run parallel to those of the earlier days of websites. While maintaining and updating content on a website advanced leaps and bounds beyond a printed company brochure it was still a manual process in the beginning stages. Need an update made to your website? That process included these steps:

- Meet with your web developer
- Hash out the changes
- Wait for it to fit in their production schedule
- Implement changes
- Receive relatively hefty invoice for said changes.

Enter the modern-day content management systems (CMS) that have revolutionized the process. Today, if you are managing a well thought out website that was set up correctly from the beginning and you have an update to make you can log in to the admin site, make the update and move on with your day, without needing a computer science degree.

Now, as we're faced with mobile content that goes beyond merely offering your website in a mobile-friendly view and entering an era of mobile apps that provide a truly custom, interactive experience, it's essential to understand the challenges of mobile content presentation. It's time to work to-

wards solutions that mirror that of the web CMS to similarly revolutionize how apps are managed to offer truly sustainable solutions.

## Hurdles for mobile content delivery

Before taking the next step, it is important to understand the challenges to mobile content delivery and presentation.

The most common hurdle facing mobile content strategy for businesses is version control of materials. In other words, how do you ensure that people are accessing the most up-to-date material available? With a website you can control what people view each time they visit. With content loaded directly onto an iPad it can get a bit trickier. To be sure, there are numerous off-the-shelf apps for sharing and distributing content but while they may allow for good document sharing they fall short in automatically syncing documents whenever updates are made. This may work when you are collaborating with a limited group who takes control over ensuring proper versions are being reviewed but it can snowball quickly with a wider audience. Imagine that you've released a presentation and your 200-person sales team has downloaded it to their iPads. They are all on the road and you've just acquired a new product. Do you want to wait to roll this out? No. Instead, you want to find a solution that provides you ways to rapidly modify content and then automatically sync that data to all app users. This is where mobile app technology is headed.

Or, consider that your need is to complete forms and sync data between your mobile workforce and office staff. Sure, you could create a PDF form, enter data, send it to the office and have it uploaded to the main system. But wouldn't it make so much more sense to use a mobile app that automatically syncs data from the field directly to the office?

How can you incorporate a solution that provides this control and offers a long-term method to providing engaging and interactive mobile content? Take the time and utilize the resources on the front end to ensure you have a system that will grow and change with you and your content needs.

## Mobile technology for sustainable content—Where to go from here.

The mobile app landscape has boomed. More specifically, for businesses, it has provided a new area of growth. In order to capitalize on this growth potential you don't want to find yourself in a similar pattern of updates that can only be made by a professional developer and having a great solution that works once, but only once. Mobile apps should be created with the long-term in mind. Much like effective websites offer sustainable growth and maintenance, mobile apps should be well thought out and considered so that you control the content and are empowered to make changes.

In order to successfully take your content mobile it is clear that you need a sustainable way to manage and distribute that content. You don't want to find yourself re-creating the wheel every time—not only is that a drain on resources (both time and money) but it can create inconsistencies in your messaging strategy. So how do you successfully achieve this?

Create a mobile content program that takes the big picture into consideration. Do not just focus on one task that needs to be accomplished but look at all of your organization's needs and find (or custom create) a solution that integrates with the whole of your needs and not just small pieces. Work with developers who understand how to sync information automatically to alleviate versioning issues and data inconsistencies. Most importantly, don't shy away from the initial investment of resources for a long-term solution in favor of a quick fix. Taking the time to find a true solution to your mobile content needs will payoff in spades in the long run.



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