

## Google's 'mobilegeddon': ways you can respond to the algorithm shake-up

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Small businesses are likely to be hit hardest by Google's decision to prioritise mobile optimised websites. Paul Armstrong explains how to embrace the change.



The algorithm change only affects results on mobile devices so check to see how much of your traffic comes through mobile searches.

Photograph: Boris Roessler/Epa

Google is shaking up its algorithm today and small businesses are likely to be hit hardest because of the resources required to respond to the changes. While the formula change won't affect desktop and tablet searches, mobile traffic will likely take a dive if your site isn't mobile friendly.

Dubbed "mobilegeddon" by many, the coming changes are a move by Google to further understand the shift in consumer usage when searching on mobile devices (specifically smartphones). In essence, Google wants to rank all content the best way possible, which means understanding app content and deep links within apps to content. It wouldn't make sense to treat desktop searches in the same way as a smartphone search, or change the main algorithm to include mobile results, as this breaks the user experience (and may also slow Google down).

### So how do you respond?

First, you may not need to do anything: your site may already be optimised. Click [here](#) to find out. If you use Squarespace or Weebly you're probably covered.

If you aren't, don't panic. Look at your analytics – if the majority of your searches are via desktop you are likely to have a bit more time than most; Google says around 50% of traffic to sites is through mobile (hence this move being bold and swift) so you are one of the luckier ones.

You then have three ways to "pass" the Google test: offer a responsive design (when your website changes as the window size changes – Google's recommended option); have a dynamic served website (different devices get served a different version); or create an alternate mobile page (where you send users to a separate url if they are on a mobile). It's a good idea to read Google's own [Mobile SEO handbook](#), too, for simple pointers and easy-to-implement advice.

Once you've decided (and take a bit of time as there are benefits and drawbacks with each) go back to your analytics and study them. Do you know exactly where your traffic is coming from? How



about your [customers' purchase journey](#)? The answer will invariably be “no” because of changing consumer trends, [dark social](#), and spikes, among other things. Understanding and seeing trends in this data will help you move forward.

Start to think like a publisher. Create a calendar for content – perhaps content created by you (blog posts, articles, images), or perhaps curated by you (“Top10 articles on ...”). Either way, think about adding value to the community and not only getting people to your content, but about the content you get placed on other sites (with links back to yours).

#### **In short:**

- Don't panic.
- Check if your site is mobile-friendly.
- Create a mobile-friendly site if it isn't already.
- Understand where your traffic comes from.
- Review your customer purchase cycle.

Google is heavily focused on understanding mobile traffic and content, so you'd be wise to heed this initial change as an indicator of more changes to come. Ultimately these will benefit you, your customers and everyone else, as mobile continues to change the way we search, buy goods and go about our daily lives.

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