COLUMNS

# HTML5, Apple and the mobile boom: Is your brand ready?

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By Jason Weaver

For marketers interested in mobile, the buzz about HTML5 is promising.

This new HTML5 standard essentially makes the juicy, interactive features that made Flash so attractive – video, audio, animation – now achievable within the browser, no downloads or plug-ins required.

It is also a way to sidestep the blackout of Flash content on Apple's operating system iOS, which runs on iPhones and iPads.

Unlike Flash, HTML5 is compatible with all Apple products, as it is with BlackBerry and Android.

The benefits to end-users are immediately noticeable.

Content is viewable on any tablet, phone, or computer automatically. This also makes it big news for marketers, who cannot afford to lose interaction because of iOS incompatibility – and cannot afford to squander resources on making content compatible on an endless number of browsers.

High five

HTML5 is one new technology companies should not wait to explore. Here are two big reasons why.

First, consumers are accessing the social Web on their mobile devices at a jaw-dropping rate – and many of those devices are Apple's.

Mobile usage is growing – fast. Faster wireless connection speeds, greater Wi-Fi access, growing choices in streaming content, and social networking are all contributing factors to the growth.

Mobile commerce is growing: Half of retailers say mobile is imperative to strategic growth, up from 23 percent in 2010.

Facebook sees the trend, too: Its new mobile site focuses on HTML5 and takes precedence over Facebook application development.

Add to that the popularity of Apple devices:

- One hundred and sixty million iOS devices have been sold as of March 2011.

- The market share of iOS has more than doubled over the past 10 months.

- Eighty-eight percent of the Fortune 500 are testing iPhone for business use, and 75 percent are testing the iPad, according to AppleInsider.

- IPhone sales increased 113 percent year-over-year.

It is becoming critical for marketers to be cognizant of the effect that Flash has on customers using iOS.

Accessing Facebook Pages, Facebook wall posts that contain interactive apps, and blogs and Web sites that use Flash, can stop Apple device owners in their tracks. Mitigating this could prevent an untold number of lost conversions.

Next, HTML5 is making it easier to get more leverage out of your videos.

HTML5 will have a greater impact on video and can help marketers' investments in video content go further.

First, compatibility. There are issues with iOS viewing, but because HTML5 is native to the browser, all users bypass frustrating Flash plug-in updates.

Second, SEO. Unlike Flash, which is not SEO-friendly, HTML5 includes <video> tags that make content more easily indexed by search engines.

Boosting the chances consumers will find your videos make your dollar go further.

Using HTML5 has additional benefits for SEO overall.

*Compatible and searchable*

What are the next steps to make your content more compatible and searchable with HTML5?

Investigate how many people are accessing your content through iOS. Web analytics platforms such as Google Analytics tell you how much traffic is coming from iPad and iPhone.

Chances are, you are getting more traffic from these sources every day. Tracking this data in social media seems to becoming simpler, too.

Facebook recently rolled out updates to its API to include the ability to see which likes and comments come from mobile devices.

Do a Flash inventory. Get a sense for what is still in Flash and what Apple users could be missing. Check embeds on your blog and Web site.

Also check older Facebook tabs that were created before the switch to iFrames in March. These could include Flash elements that are not compatible.

Current iFrames that include Flash elements are not viewable on iPad, for example.

Evaluate what it will take to make your content iOS-ready, both in terms of video compatibility and SEO. Some embeddable elements auto-detect what operating system viewers are using and serve either Flash or HTML5 content to them, ensuring automatic compatibility.

Work with your in-house SEO, agency or Web developer to assess what steps are needed to update.

IN A RECENT article by Mobile Marketer, Dan Butcher wrote: "[HTML5] will do for mobile what Flash did for online."

If this is true, it will be fascinating to see it shapes the Web – and to see the impact for marketers who embrace the changes.

*Jason Weaver is CEO of Shoutlet, Madison, WI. Reach him at jason@shoutlet.com.*