

COLUMNS

Designing a mobile presence

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By [Jen O'Brien](#)

This is the second article in a series geared toward decision-makers who are currently exploring or are in the midst of developing a mobile presence. The goal is to provide best practices in designing and developing a successful mobile presence, focusing on the how of this endeavor – the process to use and decisions to make along the way.

Following these guidelines will help you build a successful mobile business solution by asking smart questions and making strategic choices.

[Recap of article 1: Envisioning a mobile presence](#)

In the [previous article](#), we covered identifying key goals and objectives, defining your audience and their needs, determining how you will measure success, and agreeing upon business requirements and achievement timeline.

End goals

At the end of the design phase, you should be able to answer:

- What key features and functions are required to lay the foundation?
- What interaction will most resonate with my audience?

- What content and supporting strategy is needed?
- What drivers inform creative and brand presence?

Features and functionality foundation

If your business is building a mobile application, you clearly want to accomplish business goals with it.

Features and functions are the elements within your mobile presence that help you achieve business goals.

A process to define foundational features and functions includes:

- List all needed features and functionality
- Order the list in terms of the chronological order you want to develop; consider:
 - o Developing according to priority – highest priority and/or most critical functions first
 - o Developing according to complexity – either high or low complexity first
 - o Developing according to dependency – features and functions that are dependencies to support other components may need to be in place first
 - o Often, a blended approach for development is used that takes into account priority, complexity and dependency
- Consider gestures – actions users will take with their mobile device when interacting with your mobile presence, which are directly related to touch interfaces
- Document at the level needed so that your team understands the steps they need to take

Interaction design

Interaction design is a critical component of any digital experience.

In a nutshell, interaction design is the translation between your business requirements and the way your audience will use – or interact – with them.

After you have designed the primary interactions, you will then test them with representative users to ensure that they are easy to understand. These are the core elements of user-centered design.

With traditional interaction design, you can sometimes separate screen sequence and flow when designing.

With mobile interaction design, it is more important to show screen designs within the context of other screens, fully revealing screen flow.

When designing for touch, consider what is discoverable – for example, through tutorials, versus the experience's ease of use.

Balance these approaches to account for the level of sophistication your audience

possesses. This technique is known as incrementally scaffolding the experience to address learning curve.

Content strategy

Content is critical to a meaningful mobile experience. It is the lifeblood of your experience.

If business requirements establish your goals and interaction design defines how they will be used, content strategy determines what you will be pumping through it.

As part of the content strategy, you must define the level of information to include, as well as the points at which you will expose information.

It is important to identify content needed for the experience and the way it will be organized at the outset, because this informs the navigational system and structure.

Other content considerations include whether dynamic content – changes based on time and place accessed – is needed, and also whether geo-targeted content related to your user's location would improve the user's experience.

Brand and creative considerations

It is always important for users to clearly identify with your brand.

Continuity is crucial across touch points so your audience can experience consistent brand “queues” no matter how or where they interact with you.

When bringing mobile into the mix, for instance, decisions should be made regarding how closely your mobile presence matches a desktop presence and physical presence.

If brand queues will change from one platform to the next, just define why the deviation is needed so that your creative team can design the experience you desire and your audience can intuitively understand the differences.

Next steps

Once you have determined required features and functions, designed the interaction experience, articulated your content strategy, and provided guidance for and designed the brand and creative experience, you are ready to move on to the next part – developing and deploying your mobile presence.

Watch for the next installment in this series, where I will guide you through process and decision points that will help make you successful when developing and deploying with mobile in mind.

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