



Retailer's Definitive Guide to Mobile Search Strategy

by the Connexity
Search Team

Who is this for?

This comprehensive guide is perfect for executives, search managers and marketers who are interested in optimizing their online acquisition, organic traffic and mobile conversions for their e-Commerce or retail business.

Why is this guide important?

On April 21st 2015, Google implemented a major change in their search rankings. Their new algorithms are largely focused on a single factor: mobile-friendliness.

This shift is reflective of a much larger trend. The e-Commerce industry [recently hit a tipping point](#): last year mobile traffic became the primary source of traffic to retail websites for the first time.

In light of this revolution, it's important to evaluate whether your mobile search strategy is updated and optimized for maximum discovery, organic traffic and conversions. As other retailers turn their focus towards mobile, are you staying competitive?

This definitive guide will walk you through everything you need to know in order to build a cutting-edge, forward-thinking search strategy. You will not only rank in Google's new search results, but will increase your mobile traffic, app downloads and mobile ad clicks across devices and search engines.

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How to Rank in Mobile Search – Drive Discovery and Organic Traffic

Mobile optimization has been important for years, but the game is changing in a big way.

Even if your products currently rank well in desktop search, if your competitors sell the same (or similar) goods, your pages may rank lower than theirs on mobile devices. As more consumers begin their product searches in mobile, your search traffic may be disrupted immensely if you fail to optimize.

Want to avoid plummeting inbound traffic?

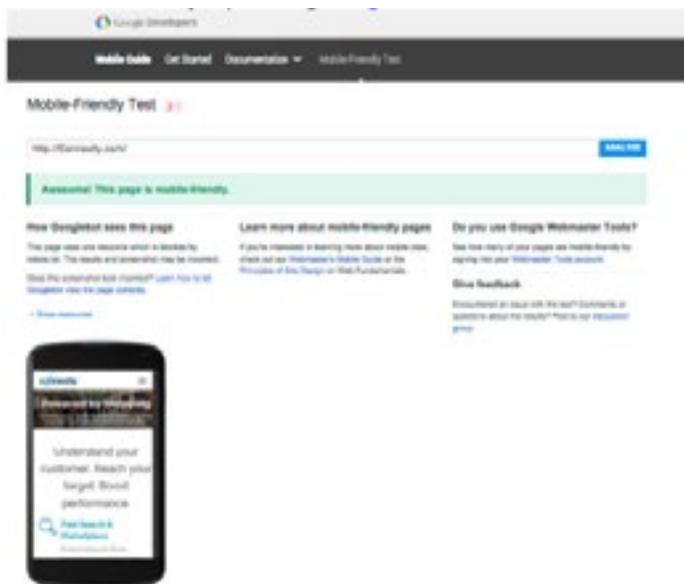
Let's get started with some easy steps for maintaining and enhancing your mobile search rankings.

Simple Tips for Ranking in Mobile Search

As we mentioned earlier, on April 21st 2015 Google launched their new **mobile friendly ranking signal**.

Luckily for you, Google has offered a variety of tools for testing the mobile friendliness of your current mobile website, as well as individual webpages:

- **Test specific pages:** Use the [Mobile-Friendly Test](#) tool to test whether or not Google registers a particular page as mobile-friendly.



- **Test your entire site:** You can generate a more comprehensive site-wide Mobile Usability Report through [Google Webmaster Tools](#).

TIP

Don't just focus on mobile damage control; take time to analyze opportunities in mobile. Use the [Google Keyword Tool](#) and filter terms and phrases by "Mobile Trends."

Look for opportunities and areas of lower competition.

Where can you rank better in mobile searches specifically?

The Importance of Apps in Search

While the vast majority of mobile search engine results lead to mobile websites, the fact remains **80% of mobile usage is still at the app level** (and this number appears to be [climbing](#)).

Apps are also associated with **higher conversions**, since payment is smoother and apps are more likely to have a credit card on file.

In e-Commerce, there appears to be an even more staggering upswing; **sessions in shopping apps increased by a jaw-dropping 174%** year-over-year—with a 220% increase for Androids.

So what do apps have to do with search? Apps are clearly amazing for fostering loyalty and engagement, but mobile search optimization is critical for facilitating the *discovery* of your app.

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How to Get your Apps to Rank

1. Deep Linking: Allow search engines to index your app by adding consistent deep links. A deep link is basically a way to send users from a mobile web experience to a specific, indexed piece of content *within* your mobile app.

Here are some guidelines:

- Add deep links to relevant mobile webpages and/or your sitemap for enhanced navigation.
- Include deep link support (i.e. [intent filters](#) in your app) to define how to reach specific content within the app.
- Get started with this step-by-step [Google guide to adding deep links](#).
- Remember: users can only get the native deep link experience from Google search if they are on an Android device. However, if users hit your mobile website from search, you can always deep link them to an in-app experience from there.

TIP

Leverage Google's [deep link testing tool](#) to make sure your deep links work smoothly.

2. Verify your app's official website on [Google Play Console](#)

(this only applies for Android Apps).

3. Check for errors using [Google Webmaster Tools](#), and correct them immediately in order to avoid being penalized in search.

App vs. Mobile Web - Where Should I Focus?

These days, most large retail businesses opt to support both mobile web and app experiences, because they are hesitant to hedge their bets in one place. However, there is no silver bullet when it comes to prioritizing between the two.

Depending on your current objectives, as well as the products you sell and the customers you serve, you may decide to allocate your resources differently than another business. Here are some factors and questions to consider:

Size Matters: While there are exceptions, there is a rough size threshold in order to justify building a mobile app on top of a mobile website. Building an app is a costly investment, and may not garner as much traffic or engagement if your customer base or annual revenue is too small.

Physical Presence: Do you have a physical retail presence? [Statistics show](#) that a whopping 82% of shoppers use search engines for browsing product information while in-store, and another 41% use mobile apps while shopping. Users who use [mobile apps](#) in-store also [spend more money](#) than those who don't.

Repeat Purchase: Is your product commonly repurchased or refilled? Checkout and automation is easier through an app, so it can be extremely useful for initiating repeat purchase amongst loyal customers.

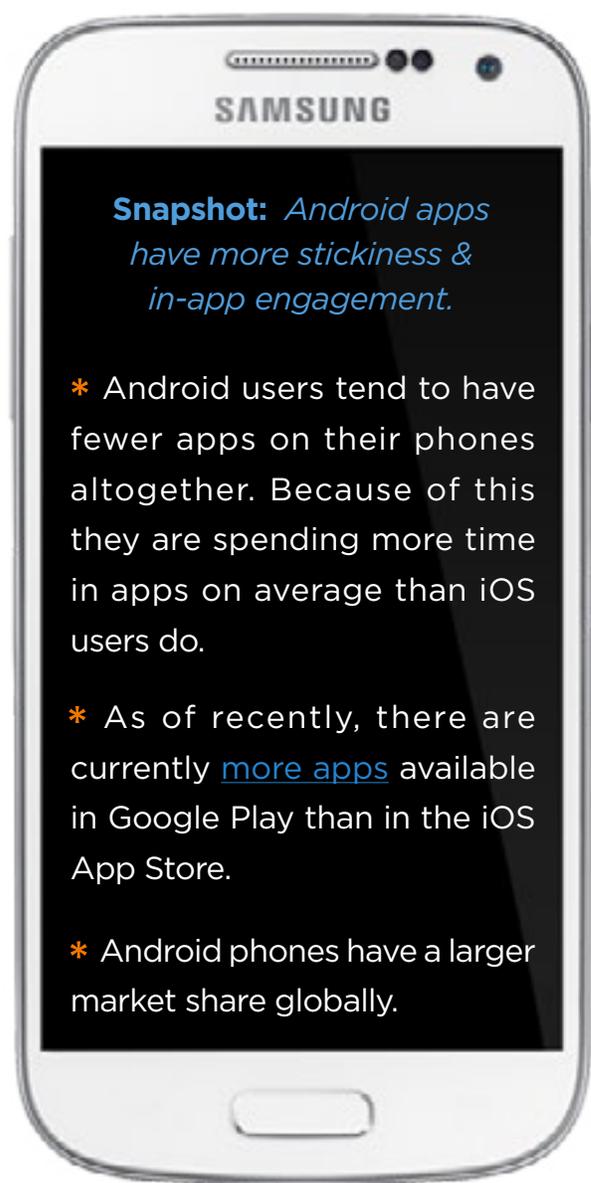
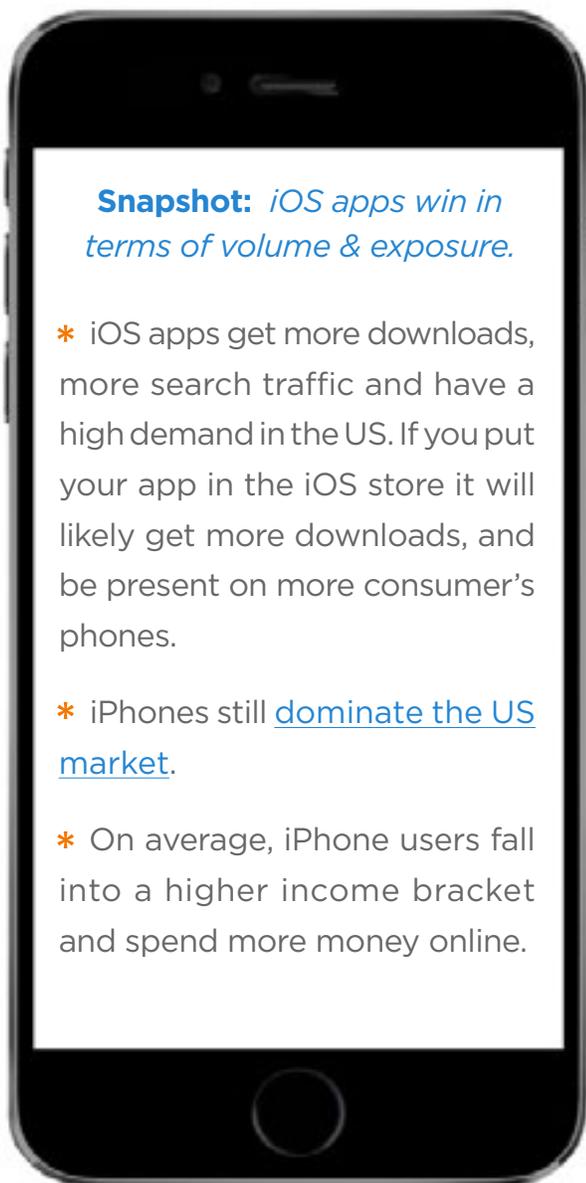
You can also use an app for offering discounts through push notifications, and recommending supporting products as an easy add-on.

Intimacy with Products: Is there an intimate connection between your customer and your product? Do customers use your product regularly, or have a personal/emotional relationship to it? An app that contains product usage tips, bluetooth capabilities or how to's can help facilitate continued use and loyalty.

Customer Demographics: This one may be obvious but it bears mentioning; depending on the target demographics of your business, your audience may not be as mobile-forward or as likely to engage with your app. Remember to tailor your mobile strategy based on your customers' behavior.

The iOS vs. Android Question

Ah yes, the eternal question: should you create both Android and iOS apps? The short answer is “yes” (if you can afford it). There are several strong benefits to both, which may help you decide which to concentrate your efforts.



Don't Forget App Store SEO

Ranking well in the app store is an important part of being discoverable, both within the app store and in general search (since iTunes, for example, creates webpages for each of its apps).

Here are a few tips for boosting your app store ranking:

1. Keyword optimization

- Do keyword research ahead of time to see what users are searching for ([here's a helpful guide](#) to finding long-tail keywords).
- Use relevant keywords in your description and your app title.

2. Promote your app

- Make a push to get your app on review sites ([here's a list](#) to get you started).
- Experiment with targeted advertising on Facebook or through display ads.
- Offer a discount code for first-time users to encourage downloads.

3. Ratings and reviews

- Encourage happy customers to rate

and review your app.

- Address negative reviews through product updates. Do not game reviews (meaning, pay for fake reviews). App stores are good at rooting this out.

4. A/B test your app icon

- Your app icon is essential for attracting downloads. Test your different icons with focus groups before going live.

5. Media

- Your app screenshots and product videos should be of extremely high quality.
- Make sure screenshots meet the exact required size dimensions to avoid stretching.
- Upload the maximum number of screenshots, and caption each one with enticing copy.

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Enhancing Your Shopping Experience for Greater Conversions

In the retail space, most purchases still occur in-store or on a desktop. While mobile traffic has grown considerably, mobile conversions remain a looming challenge.

The difficulty of driving mobile revenue is undoubtedly due (at least in part) to the relative newness of mobile experience as compared to desktop computers. In short, we're still figuring out how to make shopping and purchase processes smoother on a mobile device.

In spite of challenges, mobile revenue continues to climb for [many retailers](#), and [predictions](#) show this trend will continue. How can you optimize for greater mobile conversions?

8 GOLDEN RULES for Optimizing Your Mobile Experience:

Great mobile sites not only pass Google’s new ranking requirements, they improve the performance of your search campaigns, reduce bounce rates and [convert better](#).

Here are 8 Golden Rules for improving any mobile e-Commerce experience:

1. Less Content

Content may look pretty on website carousels and widgets, but it also takes up precious real estate. Squeezing more content onto a mobile page forces people to pinch, zoom or scroll to find what they’re looking for, which leads to higher bounce rates. Eliminate all unnecessary content—A/B test your way down to fewer words, fewer widgets and only the most essential navigation options.

2. Rethink the Search Box

While the search bar is obviously a staple of any mobile homepage, remember that users are less likely to type in mobile, and more likely to scroll down or keep clicking. Rather than emphasizing the search bar, consider highlighting your navigational tabs or filtering options. To make search easier and reduce typing, offer “suggested search” and make sure to leave shoppers’ most recent search term in the search bar as they navigate so they can easily refine their query.

The Secret to Mobile Success: Experiential Apps

Retail apps are convenient, but they usually don’t add enough to shopping experience to compel consumers to download.

Consider how you can help shoppers imagine and virtually place your products in their lives; leverage mobile technology to provide them with an *experience*. Here are some great examples:

- **IKEA Catalog:** Virtually add Ikea furniture to your home.
- **Lens Crafters myLook:** Test how different eyeglasses look on you, and compare different options side by side.
- **Makeup Genius by L’Oréal** Virtually “try on” different makeup items, then purchase directly through the app.

3. Focus on Images

People tend to read less in mobile, so a good mobile experience will increase the proportionate size of images compared to their desktop experience. This is especially relevant to product pages; consider adding a swipeable image gallery or at least a tap-to-zoom feature.

4. Larger Font

Another no-brainer, but still a common mistake. Aim for less copy and large font that is easy to read on a small device.

5. More Spacing

Break up your scrolling to reduce stray clicks. Users get frustrated when they are trying to scroll but instead click something accidentally.

6. Encourage Interaction Through Discovery

Since typing is harder and the back button isn't as accessible in mobile, encourage browsing by creating an experience focused on discovery and recommendation. Keep users moving forward.

7. The Importance of Local

For obvious reasons, locational information is more useful on mobile devices. For example, if a mobile shopper is browsing products that are available in a nearby store, providing them with this information may lead to an in-person sale. Help shoppers find local stores, and help them browse and compare item information and reviews to enhance their in-store experience.

8. Simplify Checkout

Mobile checkout remains a common place for abandonment. It's a clumsy process, so be sure to reduce the amount of steps and consider offering options for people who don't want to checkout in mobile. For example, allow shoppers to add items to a wish list or to email their cart to themselves so they can go through a simple checkout later.

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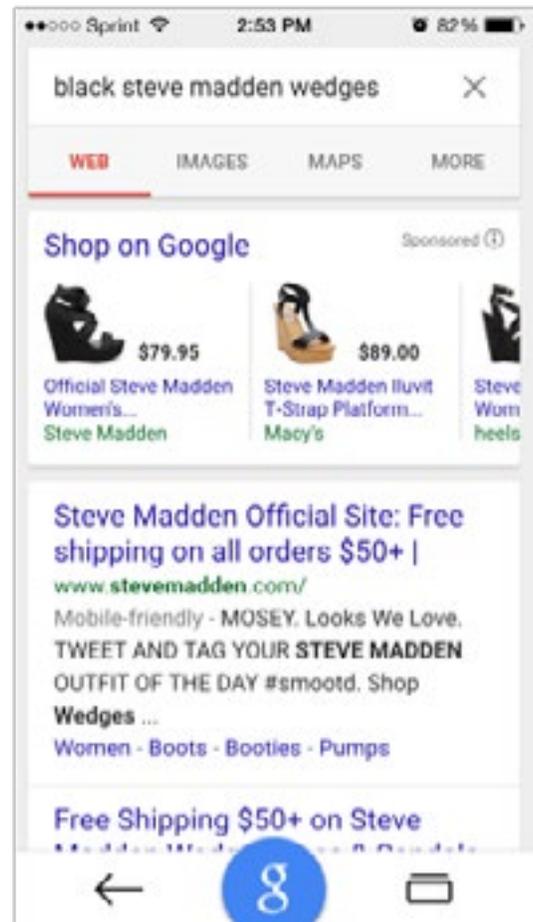
Optimizing Your Search Marketing for Mobile

Before you optimize your SEM campaigns for mobile, make sure you follow the advice in the first 2 chapters of this book. An optimized mobile experience is required for your search campaigns to be effective.

Once you've optimized your mobile site, how do you turn that into profit?

The State of Mobile Search: Why Retailers Struggle to Convert

In the e-Commerce space, search campaigns continue to skew more towards image-based ads. In mobile search results, PLAs appear above the fold, and take up a larger percentage of the screen than desktop (see example on the right).



In spite of this exciting advertising opportunity, mobile conversions still tend to be lower than desktop. The lack of meaningful returns in mobile search campaigns is especially troubling for physical products, since they have slimmer margins.

However, in some cases this perception of mobile search marketing as “ineffective” is due to technical hurdles, misinterpretations of data and sometimes even a lack of creativity.

Firstly, it’s important to remember that **mobile search may (and often does) lead to offline or desktop purchase**. Many consumers start their search on a phone, but wait to purchase when they don’t have to deal with mobile checkout.

Mobile SEM campaigns also tend to **garner higher click-through rates**. That being said, your volume of mobile traffic from SEM will still be relatively slimmer than desktop.

Most importantly, because mobile shopping is increasing at a dramatic rate, retailers are experimenting more and **leveraging unique data points to optimize on their mobile search revenue**—and many of them are succeeding. You cannot afford to be left in the dust.

Let’s talk about how to become more creative about optimizing your mobile search campaigns.

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Examine How & When Consumers Buy on Mobile

If you treat mobile search campaigns the same as the SEM campaigns you've always optimized for the desktop experience, your conversions will inevitably falter.

Take a closer look at the times of day that shoppers buy online via mobile devices. You may be able to optimize your campaign strategy around different times of day, based on your observations about consumers' tendency to buy or browse on mobile during specific times.

As we discussed earlier, many shoppers use mobile devices in-store to research and browse products. How can you leverage the immediacy of mobile to assist in a conversion or store visit (a metric which is now actually [trackable through AdWords](#))?

Consider the fact that many shoppers use mobile phones to search for coupons and deals that they can redeem at the counter. How can you support real-time delivery of discounts that boost overall conversions?

Exploring Click-to-Call Ads

Many marketers can increase click-through rates by including a phone number in their ads. But do click-to-call ads really convert into sales?

The answer is complicated.

While click-throughs are higher on these ads, actual conversions may be more difficult over the phone. That being said, click-to-call ads may be an excellent option for retailers with expensive products, a physical presence, high support demands or even those willing to take a more original approach.

Getting Started

1. First, select an existing search ad (or create a new search ad) that you think would be well supported with a phone number.
2. Within that search campaign, create a bid modifier for click-to-call ads. The ad will only show up if the device is able to support phone calls.
3. Track your results with the Google Conversion Tracker and Google Analytics.

Targeting and Tracking Success

- Keep in mind that any time a user clicks to make a phone call it's **counted as a "conversion."**
- Click-to-call ads tend to have a lower "cost per click" because actual purchases over the phone tend to be lower. However for **retail businesses with higher-end products** — for example, hotel equipment — these ads may be the ideal medium for conversion.
- In order to better support the specific needs of the consumer, consider supplying **unique numbers or extensions based on different search queries.** The shopper may be seeking product information, promotional deals or support—make sure they can reach the best person to assist them. This change is done at the campaign level.
- If you have a physical presence, take advantage of **mobile immediacy and geo-targeting by providing local numbers** for specific retail locations.

App-Install Ads

Earlier in the book we discussed the importance of mobile apps for fostering loyalty, engagement and repeat purchase. When a shopper downloads your app, the potential lifetime value of that customer increases exponentially. Each download also improves your app store ranking, which can encourage even more downloads.

If mobile apps are a high priority for your business, then app-install campaigns should be an important part of marketing mix.

Google AdWords has recently increased their support of app-install ads campaigns, and offers the most versatility. If you set up a separate app-install campaign, it will be designed to show only on relevant devices (mobile and tablets). You can also select mobile-only.

Learn more about how to optimize your app-install advertisements on [Google's support page here](#).

Next Steps

This definitive guide includes a lot of steps, many of which require dedicated teams. To go beyond the basics of mobile optimization and be truly competitive, most retailers seek help from experts.

Here at Connexity, our search team has managed countless search campaigns and optimization initiatives for major retailers. We leverage unique, first-party shopping data to optimize our search campaigns, and this leads to incredible results.

If you'd like a [free consultation, click here](#) to reach out.

If you're not ready, [take a look at our case studies](#) to learn more about how our unique platform and technology-driven approach can help you.