Using responsive web design, Plusnet doubles smartphone and tablet traffic and sees a tenfold increase in sales on these devices.

About Plusnet
- Provider of broadband and phone services
- Head office in Sheffield
- www.plus.net

Goals
- Facilitate site conversions on all devices
- Improve user experience and customer journey

Approach
- Built website using responsive web design (RWD)
- Increased investment in mobile search marketing

Results
- New site converts smartphone and tablet users at higher rate than old site converted overall
- Time to convert metric on smartphones and tablets has decreased 40%
- Duration and number of pages viewed per smartphone and tablet visit have increased
- Online sales via smartphone and tablet devices have grown tenfold year on year

"We felt responsive web design was the best solution for developing content that will work across all devices on one platform rather than on multiple sites, making it as future-proof as possible given today's technology."
— Ben Fretwell, Online Marketing Manager, Plusnet

As a provider of broadband and phone services, Plusnet is an agile, dynamic company with a focus on emerging technology. When it saw that the number of users accessing the Plusnet website through smartphones and tablets was growing significantly – by a percentage point every six months – it decided to put a multi-screen strategy in place.

Connecting the dots

Plusnet's Online Marketing Manager Ben Fretwell explains how the company's product offering uniquely contributes to the need to cater to mobile customers. "When you move to a new property, you need to sort out your utilities including broadband. If you can't do this on your work computer in your lunch hour, you're going to try to do this on your mobile phone. And we want to make it as easy as possible – not just to get that sale, but also to make sure it's a good experience for the customer."

Plusnet began prototyping the new site with a view to building it entirely in-house via its web development team. "We decided to make sure smartphones and tablets were key considerations," Ben says. "And by doing that, we decided to use responsive web design. It really galvanised the team."

Building for the future

Responsive web design (RWD) uses HTML5 and CSS3 features to optimise a site experience across all screen sizes, resulting in a device-independent solution that caters for all. In this approach, there's no need for Plusnet to maintain separate websites for different devices, which represents a saving in both time and resource.

"We felt RWD was the best solution for developing content that will work across multiple devices on one platform rather than on multiple sites," Ben says. "And it's also as future-proof as is possible at this time. It ensures that when we're doing any content updates or promotions, everyone is now in the mindset of 'How will this work on mobile?' There's been a real culture shift and acceptance of mobile."

The creation of the new site entailed a complete overhaul of the content. "On a screen that's small, what you don't want is a page that's as long as your arm," Ben says. "It's a much cleaner design than previously." The team took a red pen to content and streamlined it as far as possible, and the sign-up journey for new customers now has considerably fewer steps too. Navigation and key offers move depending on screen size, while navigation collapses to ensure the most important content takes priority. As a result, a customer can complete the entire purchase of an ISP or phone package on the site with ease, no matter the size of his or her screen.

Making the most of mobile

Before the release of the RWD site, Plusnet did not have a mobile optimised site or strategy, and therefore had invested only minimally in mobile marketing. But with newfound confidence that smartphone users would get a great experience from its site, Plusnet turned its attention to the platform's opportunities in paid search. The company has increased its mobile AdWords spend since launch and has used sitelinks and click-to-call functionality in ads too. "As part of the overall marketing strategy, mobile is not in a silo," Ben explains. "In every touch point, it's now a key consideration."
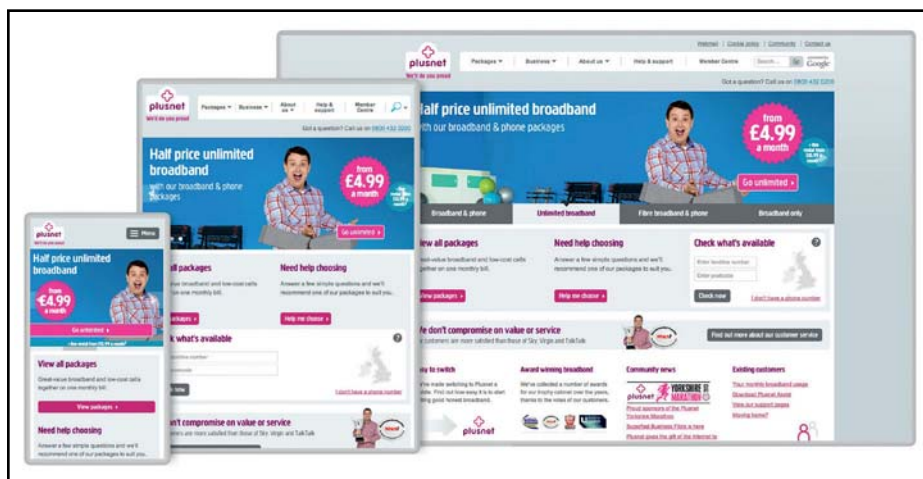
As a device-independent solution, the Plusnet RWD site automatically caters to any size of screen.

Measures of success

Since the launch of the RWD site, Plusnet's smartphone and tablet traffic has more than doubled, and performance and usability have increased too. "What we've found is that on smartphone and tablet our site is converting at a higher rate than our previous site was on all devices," Ben says. In fact, online sales via smartphones and tablets have grown tenfold year on year. Both visitor duration and the number of pages viewed per visit by users on smartphone and tablet devices have increased, but the time to complete a conversion on these devices has diminished by 40%.

All this adds up to a bright future for Plusnet – and one in which multi-device marketing plays a key role. "Pre-responsive design we never properly invested in mobile marketing, because there was no point, whereas now we are exploring numerous projects related to driving sales and traffic through mobile devices," Ben says. Ideas currently on the drawing board include researching how to link multi-device users, an app to provide troubleshooting for broadband customers, and the implementation of AdWords enhanced campaigns, all supported by A/B and multi-variate testing to pave the way for further optimisations.