

**By Leeanna Kohn, Client Services – 08 August 2007**

# Speed Me Up Scotty

**BRIAN R RICHARDS LTD** LEVEL 2, 6 LEEK STREET  
NEWMARKET, AUCKLAND 1023, NEW ZEALAND

**PHN** +64 9 520 0014 **EML** brand@brrltd.com

**FAX** +64 9 522 2709 **WEB** www.brrltd.com

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## STREAMLINING THE WEB/MOBILE INTERFACE

In desperate pursuit to find new ways to contact consumers like me, advertisers and marketers are looking to expand their messaging from television to web and mobile handsets to encourage interaction with their brands. Currently, one in five online advertisers is already dabbling in mobile display ads – estimated to grow rapidly (from a small base) to reach \$224 million by 2011. **The mobile messaging market has contributed to an aggregate spend of \$1.4 billion in 2006. This is set to double over the next four years.**<sup>1</sup> This all sounds enterprising but how does it work in practice?

I'm not an instant gratification addict but when someone drops me a live invitation, for instance, I expect to give and get quick responses. So when my mobile buzzed recently and a text message invited me to a spring fashion review which sounded like fun, I was onto it. To RSVP all I needed to do was confirm on their website. I jumped online via my mobile and spent the next six minutes fidgeting impatiently as the slow connection attempted to download a swag of fancy (large) images and links.

Irrespective of whether we don't (cost), won't (lack of time) or can't (have no Wireless Application Protocol, or WAP) surf the internet via our mobiles, I think it's fair to say this particular technology has not advanced as fast as other consumer technologies. **However, we have been surfing the internet for a good 15 years already in the developed world. Now entering its 'mature' stage, new configurations need to evolve for it to maintain and further develop its usefulness.** Coupled with our increased mobility I think at least one of these should address the ease of access with which we can obtain information from the web.

The new Apple iPhone's Safari browser platform enables us to see web pages as they would appear on my computer screen, and the 'accelerometer' means I can tip the phone on its side (either way) for a more comfortable landscape view. However, depending on the content, the iPhone can still take 5 to 10 seconds to load a web page (sites with numerous images take longer). On my jet-streamed-enabled computer, downloading images first and content afterwards, is fine. However, with my slow mobile connection, these images should be sacrificed in favour of content. Text-only content would be even faster.

Finally! I trudge through stripped-down WAP pages with limited text and graphics, I check the link which enables me to RSVP to this Preview. Another interminable wait as the page downloads. I fill out my membership number, my name, check 'Plus 1' (hmm, who else would be interested in going?). I then had to select how I heard about this Preview from a drop-down box. There was no "go" button, because some JavaScript automatically advanced the page when I made my

selection from this drop-down box. Unfortunately, my mobile doesn't support that JavaScript command. I was left staring at the page, knowing I was only one step away from completing my RSVP, yet unable to reach it. I curse silently as I realise the inept functionality of this site via my mobile.

The iPhone's Safari does not support Flash and has limited Java and Javascript support. Hence even on this phone, there will be issues viewing web pages which open with Flash animations, or require JavaScript-based forms to be completed.

I'm okay with having "access anywhere" even though it doesn't mean "fast access anywhere." **The least any brand could ensure is that their user experiences are functional (streamlined would be even better!) via all access points.**

Access of mobile websites in the U.S is estimated to have grown three-fold in the past year. The increase moves the U.S. to the second-highest usage country, behind Great Britain. In April, the top five countries accessing mobile websites are the U.K. (27 percent); the U.S. (21 percent); South Africa (11 percent); India (9 percent); and Indonesia (3 percent).<sup>2</sup>

This access medium is now a very real consideration and a simplistic approach to the development of websites is required to enhance our experiences of your brand via our mobiles. This is not only for our viewing pleasure, but also based on access speed. **Marketers contemplating broadening their tactics to include targeting mobiles also need to consider how they can capitalise on their effectiveness.** Consider optimising your website and web services for mobiles. Develop web applications for us. This is not limited to mobile translation of websites, however. Consider sponsorship of mobile content offerings. Launch a smart SMS campaign that supports an in-market program with mobile reminders. Be original, but add value to your brand.

<sup>1</sup> Schatsky, David, "The Web's New Frontier", January 11, 2007, <http://www.brandweek.com>

<sup>2</sup> Burns, Enid, "Mobile Impressions and Messaging Uptake", June 7, 2007, <http://www.clickz.com>