

## Stake Your Claim on the Mobile Web

By [Ross Dunn](#), CEO, [StepForth Search Engine Placement Inc.](#)

With the Internet growing so rapidly do you ever wonder if you are missing a new trend or technology that could boost your bottom line? Well, there just happens to be a piece of the Internet that I bet you haven't made the leap to yet and it is going to be BIG. This new space is mobile search and mobile Internet surfing.

I know, I know, mobile Internet use has been around for a while, but even now it is very much in the infancy phase of development. After all, it was only over the past year that a [W3C working draft](#) appeared that allows web designers to create mobile sites compatible with the many mobile phone browsers. I have tried to use the search and navigation abilities on mobile phones and I have not been impressed; clunky is a nice way to put it. That said, there is no question in my mind this is a market that will explode over the next couple of years. To back up my lofty claim here are just a few of the notable headlines on the build-up to mobile search and advertising published over the last 30 days:

- [Vodafone and Yahoo to Launch Advertising on Mobile Devices](#) (Yahoo Blog)  
Mobile technology is way ahead in Europe and Vodafone is currently "the largest mobile telecommunications network company in the world by turnover and has a market value of about £86 billion (November 2006)" ([according to Wikipedia](#)). Yahoo has signed a deal which will provide Vodafone users with carefully targeted advertising in exchange for cheaper phone options.
- [Google Testing Mobile Ads in Eight More Countries](#) (MarketWatch)  
"The ads apparently will appear whenever someone in those countries use a cell phone's Internet capability to access a site or to search via Google's engine." The article also states that Google is "... also going after the \$11 billion that advertisers are expected to spend on mobile marketing by 2011, according to a recent report by the telecom division of Informa Group."
- [Google and Microsoft in Mobile Search Race](#) (Financial Times)  
This article notes that "Google announced a deal to put its search function on 3mobile's handsets", and "Sprint Nextel, the US carrier, said it would place Microsoft's search engine on its mobile phones."

So we know from the articles above that the mobile web is poised to really take off. However, did you know that it already has to some degree? For example:

- Google Mobile has an option that will only provide results from sites that were created mobile-friendly. ([link](#))
- On November 28, 2006 the Webby's, which are labeled the "Oscars of the Internet" by the New York Times, added a new category specifically for the mobile web: "[Webby Awards Join With dotmobi To Launch Webby Mobile Awards.](#)"

In short, there is a huge amount of positive growth in the mobile marketplace and I recommend taking a slice of it before your competition does. So what do you need to do? Get a dotmobi domain, build a mobile version of your website and promote it by adding it to various mobile directories and sites.

### 1. **Get a .Mobi Mobile Domain**

Just this year a consortium of major players including Google, Microsoft, Vodafone, Samsung, Ericsson and Nokia sponsored a new domain meant specifically for a new mobile web: [.mobi](#). Opened for general registration as of September 26, 2006, the .mobi top level domain "is the first and only top level domain dedicated to delivering the Internet to mobile devices" says the official "[What is dotmobi?](#)" page).

The idea of the .mobi domain is to create a mobile version of your website so that users can simply type in your .mobi



address and be assured of a streamlined viewing of your company website on their mobile device. It really is quite brilliant in my opinion and it has a good chance of becoming a popular address with such monsters as Google and Microsoft on the list of supporters.

If you wish to register your dotmobi domain [here is a list of registrars](#) provided by the dotmobi website. From what I can tell, however, [GoDaddy](#) is providing the best annual .mobi registration price of \$15 per domain (min. 2 yrs).

## 2. **Build Your Mobile Web Site**

Designing for mobiles is not exactly new but as it is still new to me I cannot provide a great deal of first hand knowledge. That said, StepForth will be creating our own mobile site in-house so I know my Senior Designer and I have a learning curve ahead. Fortunately, to this end, a little research and patience led me to some great resources that I recommend. The following sites will take you in the right direction:

- [MobiSiteGalore.com](#): if you are looking for a simple cookie cutter approach to creating your mobile website you can develop it for free using this website's mobile compliant website builder. I watched the demo movie on how a website is created and I must say I am very impressed with its functionality.
- [Official .mobi Development Standards](#): If you would like to custom design your mobile website so that it stands out from the rest then this is the site for you. Develop a mobile website to meet .mobi guidelines at the [.mobi development website](#). The .mobi development site appears to be designed to make the move to mobile as easy as possible – thankfully! The development site even offers a free course to put your designer through so that he/she can understand the needs of a properly designed mobile website. In short, I am very impressed with this website and I expect it to provide all that StepForth needs to get our own mobile website online (it will be stepforth.mobi when it is complete).

### **Additional Mobile Resources**

Here are some sites that provide some great additional information but they would likely be a bit too technical for the average site owner. These are, however, great for your designer to check out:

- [Mobile FAQ](#): a mixture of general and specific questions for understanding the mobile phenomenon and designing a mobile site.
- [W3C Mobile Web Best Practices Working Group](#): this is not light reading but your designer may find it interesting.

### **Check Your Final Product**

Once your mobile website is complete you need to verify that it is completely mobile compliant. The .mobi development site provides a ["MobiReady Report"](#) which will check your site for compliance. This is a great way to be sure that your designer has done a good job and that your website will be as compliant as possible across the wide range of mobile products available.

## 3. **Optimize Your Mobile Site**

Optimizing a mobile site is only slightly different than the average website. The basics of optimization remain true; be sure to create great Title Tags, Description Tags, headings, navigation, and focus your content to match page targets. The only difference is you will have less screen real estate to work with so try to keep your optimized content concise – no one wants to read useless information on his or her mobiles. After all, you can be reasonably sure that the time a visitor is willing to spend on a mobile site to find information will be significantly less than their standard visit from their home computer; thus the word 'mobile'. In short, you will have very little time to convince a visitor to stay at your website.

**Google Optimization Note:** create a Google Mobile Sitemap so Google can ensure your mobile content is properly



noted and categorized as mobile friendly. Will this help traffic? I would think so, here is Google's message verbatim, 'by using Mobile Sitemaps to inform and direct our crawlers, we hope to expand our coverage of the mobile web and speed up the discovery and addition of pages to our mobile index.' ([link](#))

#### 4. **Promote Your Mobile Web Site**

The mobile Internet is composed of a growing exclusive group at the moment so it is important that your new website get as much visibility as possible. Here are some great tips and resources to help you do that:

- [Submit your mobile site to Yahoo! Mobile for free](#):
- Use [PRWeb.com](#) to send out a press release about your new .mobi website. Show the world that your company is cutting edge and strives to provide multiple solutions for accessing your products/services.
- Publish your mobile address on your website, business cards, and any other promotional materials. If you don't tell your target market that you have a mobile site they won't know to use it.
- [Tell dotmobi about your site](#) and it might just get some free publicity by being featured or becoming a case study.

#### **In Summary**

I think the .mobi domain is a fantastic way to provide a unique presence specifically designed for the mobile world. The fact that mobile phones are ubiquitous simply reinforces the need for the informed website owner to get their own mobile site setup ASAP. At the very least I would recommend picking up a .mobi domain of your own so that it is not snatched up when the inevitable rush to the mobile web becomes a reality.

#### **Other Excellent Mobile Content**

The following are some sites that I came across throughout the creation of this article. I found them very interesting and well worth noting:

- [WAPReview.com](#) "It's all about the mobile web": this site is well written and includes some great tips and stories that you may find revealing – I know I did. Here is a particularly good posting that attracted my attention: "[Mobile Web \(un\)Usability](#)"
- [Open Gardens](#): a blog that discusses the latest innovations in wireless mobility.

