

## Introduction

Designing news products for mobile devices should be a key business objective for the newspaper industry in 2009. Printed news products still have value, but these are now suited best for evergreen content and perspective post-event. Print papers will still find readers when the audience has time to focus and a physical environment conducive to reading printed matter. Website-based news products continue to gain readership when audiences are in front of their personal computer. At any other time during the audience's day, the mobile device wins.

The time to commit to the mobile platform is already upon us. More than any other technology used by man, the mobile phone reigns supreme in terms of worldwide readers.

Technology	Years Available	Readers Worldwide
Automobiles	100	800 million
Personal Computer	30	850 million
Landline Phone	110	1.3 billion
Television	60	1.5 billion
Mobile Phones	35	2.5 billion

*Tomi Ahonen's Putting 2.7 Billion in Context: Mobile Phone Readers ([http://communities-dominate.blogs.com/brands/2007/01/putting\\_27\\_bill.html](http://communities-dominate.blogs.com/brands/2007/01/putting_27_bill.html))*

### ***The future is mobile, technology-driven, reader-aware, news and opinion.***

This report is focused on rebuilding the current news product for mobile devices. Understanding the limitations and opportunities of mobile news presentation and reader engagement is critical to success. Designing for mobile news is more than making a "newspaper for a phone." It requires a fundamental shift in the mentality of the editorial staff, and an understanding of the Internet connected conversation cycle that is attached to every single news event.

## Mobile Devices

There are many mobile devices on the market today. The future is trending toward touch screen devices with the form factor of the iPhone and G1 (Google Phone). Reader adoption rates indicate these platforms will be dominant in the future with Windows Mobile OS and BlackBerry OS trending further behind. This report recommends three news delivery solutions for mobile devices: Mobile-Optimized Presentation, Mobile Device Style Sheets and RSS.

### **Delivery Option #1: Mobile-Optimized Presentation vs Full-Site Presentation on Mobile (Preferred Method)**

Mobile devices such as the iPhone can deliver a rich, full-browser experience for readers. Under optimal conditions, readers have full attention and two hands available to manipulate the device. With two hands available to hold the phone horizontally, a reader can use accelerometers which detect the phone's orientation relative to the reader and display the browser window in a horizontal presentation. This added width affords the reader the opportunity to zoom into a column of text and read it at a comfortable size. This also assumes that the reader has good eyesight, and has two hands available to hold the phone and double-tap or gesture to zoom in on the column of text. (It is important to note that often a reader's focus on one column of text eliminates anywhere from 60 to 100% of the on-screen banner advertising.)

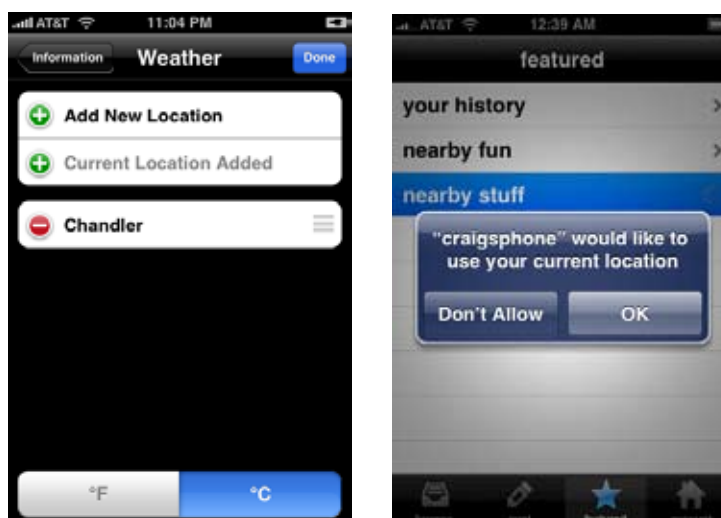
Many traditional news websites are designed with heavy graphics, flash-based presentations and other media not optimized for mobile delivery. This means slower download times over 3G or slower data networks. Forcing a reader to sit and wait for a product that they must pinch and rotate and squint to extract value out of is not a good solution.

The easiest information to acquire and read will be the information that is consumed. Your news product's value is no longer just the information itself but also in the ease of acquisition and the fun in consumption. Even though full-browser viewing is possible with optimal reader surroundings and ample 3G bandwidth, it's far inferior to a mobile optimized browsing experience. If a reader is forced to choose between the same information in two formats, one optimized for the mobile device and one that is not, which would they choose?



USAToday's iPhone Application removes a majority of navigation and extraneous information provided on the USAToday.com website. The application provides easy to find news sections in a sliding top navigation bar and delivers its signature 'infographics' to a new platform.

An additional plus to mobile-optimized content, if it takes the form of a web application - is that it can access all the contextually aware capabilities of the mobile device. GPS can allow the site to display news in proximity to the reader. There are similar advertising and classified listing advantages.



USAToday's iPhone Application utilizes GPS to locate the audience and deliver localized weather. The Craigsphone app shows nearby classified listings.

## Delivery Option #2: Use Mobile Device Stylesheets for Non-Optimized Solutions

With as little as one additional stylesheet you can present a page of information optimized for the mobile platform. The reader is presented with a single web address that will display information in a uniquely styled layout for the device.



The Drawbackwards website automatically detects a mobile reader and serves up a separately styled site that focuses on the mobile experience.  
Read: <http://www.drawbackwards.com/designing-websites-for-the-iphone/>

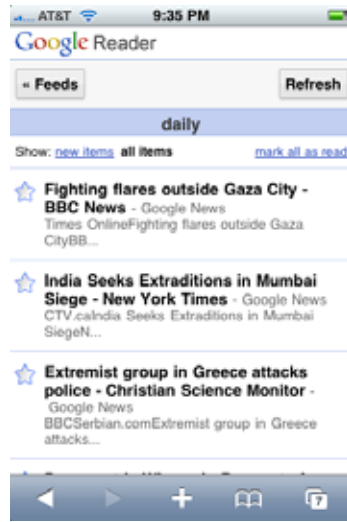
This is merely an aesthetic fix that cannot take advantage of the Phone's contextual capability but it can at least set the content at the right size and usability for mobile readers. The interface can be laid out for a single-thumb navigation and place buttons away from areas of common on screen scrolling and interaction. Mobile Device stylesheets can eliminate the need for readers to squint, pinch or double-tab to get access to the content available.



The Drawbackwards website brings the same blog entries found in a full-site presentation down to a mobile presentation elegantly, by simply restyling the blog article detail page. The navigation has been simplified, allowing the reader to easily return to the articles list with a single thumb press. The blog button, located at the top of the screen, is placed away from browser navigation at the bottom, and the usual scroll gesture space along the right side.

### Delivery Option #3: RSS

RSS (short for Really Simple Syndication) delivers regularly-updated news content and notifications. Output files are referred to as RSS feeds, and can be consumed using feed-readers like Google Reader on a mobile device. This option is the easiest to deliver. Your news website probably already provides RSS.



*An RSS reader like Google Reader can display any newsfeed in a mobile optimized presentation.*

### Editorial Thought and The Three News Cycles of Any Event

A smaller physical canvas to present news and information on forces editors to select only the best of the best information. This information should be the most current your organization can provide and the most relevant to the individual reader (See The Power of Local below). This information should not be fed in from an AP news feed that can be found elsewhere nor be the headlines from the print edition of the paper printed hours earlier. To have a viable product, present your biggest, most unique ideas and information first. For example, if there's an important meeting at city hall, do you have (1) pre-meeting, (2) during meeting and (3) post-meeting analysis, commentary and perspective available? We believe every single news event has these 3 cycles, and you should have an editorial strategy to provide insight and be relevant at each cycle.

### The Power of Local

New mobile devices pack the power of GPS and are further assisted by phone towers that help triangulate precise positioning of the device relative to geography. This presents an incredible opportunity to leverage information that local news media are in a unique position to provide. By trending the news product to local, you provide a unique product that only you can deliver. Place your unique product front and center on the interface, use your hyper-local information and stories to build a loyal, trusted readership.

The Power of Local can also be leveraged to gather news. By encouraging your readers to contribute to the story, sending text messages, twitter posts, cameraphone images and mobile video streams, you can create a new platform where news consumption and creation merges into one interface under your news brand.

## News as Nuggets

Instead of a write-up of a sporting event after the fact, what about 140 characters of insight each minute: before, during and after the game? There may be a place for the formal summary and insight, but what many people want is a conversation when they are thinking about it. Do you want to be part of this conversation, or just sum up what everyone else already knows and can get elsewhere? News insight and reporting, broken down into nuggets of wisdom, provide more value more frequently and gives you a voice in a real conversation. The days of “the newspaper” telling people what happened is over. Now your news organization can take advantage of journalists’ insight moment by moment, and then provide the formal insight after the fact. How many more people will read the final column if they had a conversation with and know the columnist personally?

## Video Delivery

Traditional television is similar to traditional newspapers. These products are one-way conversations with an audience. As your writers take on an active conversation with readers and as insights are broken down into moment by moment insights, be prepared to take your show to video. Shooting on-site video during a report, or receiving video from your audience, will require video editing and news package organization and storytelling skills.

## Infrastructure and Social Media

Don’t believe you have to own the entire delivery channel. Become a part of other channels and create your outposts there. Establish your channels on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Be where the conversation is. Be relevant and insightful in those conversations and once that trust (which comes from your participation) has taken root, begin to link back to your product offerings and editorial insights. Bloggers are a threat to ‘traditional’ news outlets because they are active participants in online social conversations and networks. News reporters and organizations must play an active role in these networks. They are real communities, just like the neighborhoods beat reporters are supposed to understand. Reporters will gain story ideas, insights and contacts faster using social networks than almost any other way.

## The One-Handed Design Challenge

If your mobile news site cannot be consumed with a single hand, your interface has failed. What does this mean? It means you need an interface that can be entirely manipulated by a reader’s thumb while they hold their drink, steering wheel, briefcase, hand rail, baby, purse or box with the other hand.

## What About Advertising and Revenue?

GPS-enabled devices can serve classified ads where the location of the transaction is nearby. This means courting a different type of advertiser. Consider the game developer who has developed a game that, with one click, the reader can purchase and download to their phone? Consider designing your own apps to give your audience. The 20th century comic strip and crossword puzzle might now be a \$4.99 value add and new revenue stream for your company.

***“Although 79 percent of consumers find the idea of mobile ads annoying, early efforts at mobile marketing have revealed that consumers will happily engage in campaigns as long as marketers deliver valuable information or content.... To combat preconditioned skepticism, marketers must recognize that mobile marketing is about offering value, not interrupting consumers with unmoving and irrelevant ads.”***

—2006 Forrester Research