

Mobile Friendly Email Design

Create emails that look
good on every device.
A guide by



Mobile friendly email design

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Mobile devices have taken the world by storm and they're here to stay. If you've ever opened an email on a mobile device you'd know they can look anything from terrible right through to terrific.

In this guide we'll look at why it's essential to optimise your emails for mobile devices. If you're already convinced check out how to design mobile friendly emails. Or jump ahead to responsive email design.

Plus there's plenty of inspirational examples along the way.



Why Design for Mobiles?

Mobile devices have changed the game for email marketers. Currently 51% of emails are opened on a mobile device¹. This means that mobile has overtaken both desktop and webmail to become the most popular way to open emails.

But this is just the average. Some brands are already seeing upwards of 70% of their emails opened on mobile devices. These brands need to embrace mobile friendly design techniques to create better experiences for their subscribers.

Mobile usage in Australia

There has been a mass adoption of smartphones in Australia. In fact around half of Australians now use one².



This means mobiles are transforming business and giving customers the opportunity to interact with your brand every waking moment of the day.

¹ Mobile opens hit 51%, Litmus, December 2013
² Smart Phone Adoption Worldwide, eMarketer, 2013

You Must Optimise for Mobiles

Customers expect reading your emails to be an enjoyable experience and if it isn't they'll simply move onto the next email.

You can't rely on your customers to mark emails that display poorly on mobiles for 'later reading', you only get one shot.

What happens if you don't optimise for mobile devices?

There are some scary statistics out there about what people do if your email isn't optimised for mobiles:

- 69% of mobile users delete emails that aren't optimised for mobile.
- 89% of email marketers are losing leads and opportunities because they're not optimising their emails.
- Only 11% of marketers have embraced responsive technology.¹

But it isn't all doom and gloom because the current mobile landscape provides a unique opportunity to optimise your customer's experience reading your emails and in doing so increase conversion rates.

Are you making these common mistakes?

80% of people find reading emails more difficult on mobiles. Some of the most common complaints include:

- Having to scroll across a page to read all the information (15%)
- Too much textual content (9%)
- Images not rendering correctly (8%)
- Failure for all info to download (7%)²

Unfortunately reading emails on mobile devices isn't always an enjoyable experience.

¹ How to Optimize Your Emails for Mobile Devices, Hubspot, 2013

² The future of mobile messaging, Edialog 2011

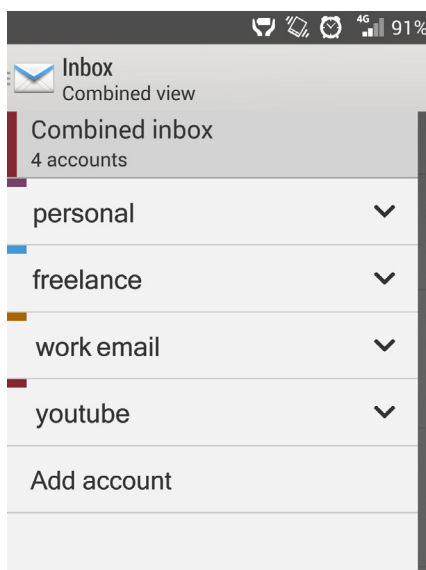
Mobile User's Behaviour

The way people interact with your emails has changed. People are no longer restrained to reading emails in front of their computer, sitting at a desk at work. They could just as easily be on the bus, waiting in line for lunch or relaxing in front of the TV.

There's now an even higher chance that people are going to be distracted. To overcome this we need to understand how people interact with mobile devices.

Unified Inbox

People often have multiple inboxes linked to their mobile phone.



Mobile users are no longer restricted to reading work emails from 9am-5pm in the office.

This is blurring the line about when is the best time to send a corporate email versus a personal email.



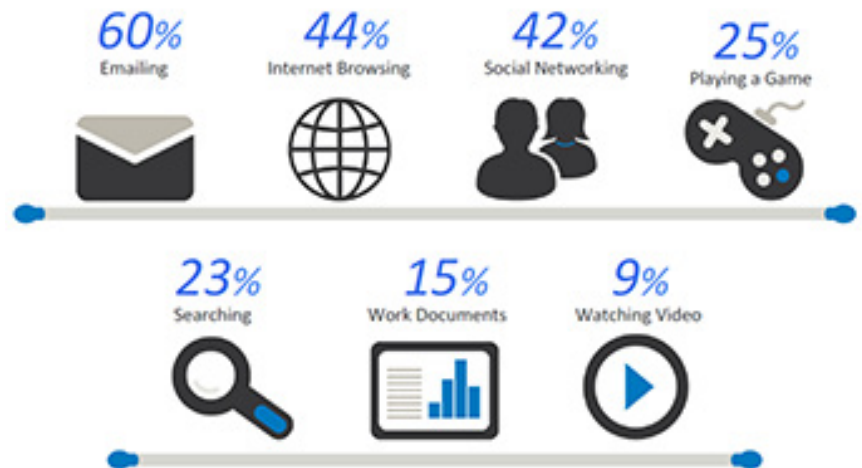
Increase in multi-device use

There has been a mass adoption of people using multiple devices such as computers, tablets and phones all at once.

Smartphones are the most frequent second device being used when someone is using more than one device.¹

And the number one activity people undertake while using multiple devices at once, is emailing.

Activities undertaken while using multiple devices



What do the changes mean?

The best way to address the above challenges is to design emails for busy readers.

Here are a couple of pointers to think about when designing emails for a distracted reader.

1. **Keep your message simple and direct - don't over complicate things**
2. **Be clear about what you want your reader to do in your Call To Action**
3. **Be brutal with your editing. Always ask if there is a better or shorter way to say the same thing**

Although our readers are busy and distracted, we can still engage them with relevant and interesting emails.



Interacting with Emails on Mobile

Readers look at emails in sections. They then make the decision to either continue reading or exit at each stage.

Knowing and planning for these stages can make a big difference in whether a reader will open your email.

1. From Name: Use the from name to tell the reader exactly who you are. A generic 'admin/staff' name can result in losing readers at this crucial point. Whereas a recognised brand name can inspire readers to open the email.

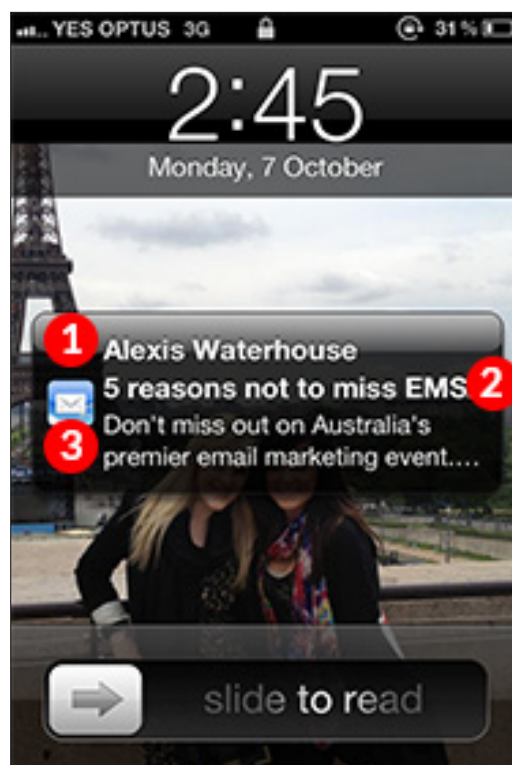
2. Subject Line: 38% of people cite an interesting subject line as the most important reason for opening an email on mobile devices.¹ Use email subject line testing to optimise your open rates.

3. Pre-header Text: The inbox, whether mobile or desktop, will display the first HTML text it finds inside your email. Make the most of this space to engage your readers and boost your chances of an open. Too often this space is wasted on 'unsubscribe' links.

The From Name, Subject Line and Pre-header Text all also appear in the push notification on reader's devices, which means it's well worth your time to perfect them.

Push Notifications

Many mobile users have push notifications switched on for emails. This means when they receive your email on their phone they receive a direct call to action instructing them to open the email.



¹ The ultimate mobile email statistic overview, email Monday, May 2014

Mobile Friendly Email Design Tips

There are some easy design improvements you can make to ensure your email looks good on smaller screens.

Using the following tips you can establish a visual framework that displays nicely on mobile screens without using any HTML code or creating a responsive email.

Portmans showcases design techniques

One column layout: Accommodates smaller screens. This is the easiest to read format as a single column ensures no content is lost outside of the viewport when zoomed in.

Tip: Layouts that are less than 640pixels wide will generally degrade gracefully on smaller screens.

Use bold images: Tell your story with eye catching images that attract your reader's attention.

Tip: While images aren't blocked by default in iOS, many desktop and web mail email clients do block them, so make the most of your alt text.

Reduce copy for small screens: Studies have found people look at their phones an average of 150 times per day.¹ These interactions are brief, they certainly aren't reading text heavy emails!

Tip: Focus on getting your point across quickly. Always ask yourself if there is a shorter way to say something.



¹ How often do you check your phone? Daily Mail, Oct 2013

Lorna Jane mobile friendly design techniques

Generous padding: This ensures there is room for clumsy fingers to touch links and buttons.

Tip: Include plenty of whitespace in the email for maximum legibility.

Mobile friendly calls to action: It's great to use buttons instead of text links as they are more touch friendly.

Tip: Don't forget to update any calls to action that include 'Click here'!

Increased font size for easier legibility: The heading, 'Show Mum the Love' has a large font size which is easy to read on a mobile device.

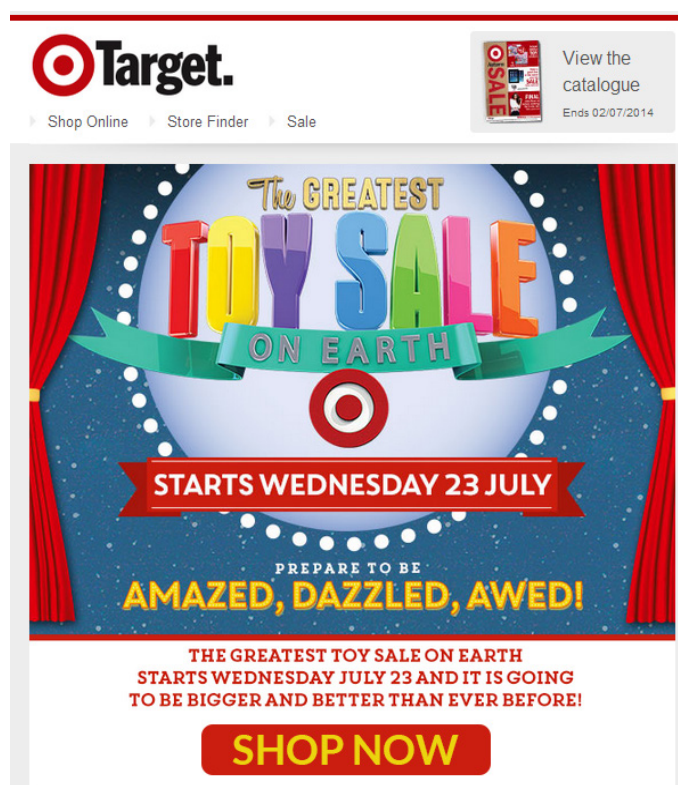
Tip: To ensure your email is easy to read make all text 14px or larger.



More mobile friendly examples

Here are a couple more examples from Help Scout and Target that are single column, have generous padding and use bold imagery.

More and more companies use this style of design because regardless of whether the email is read on a desktop or a mobile it's easy to read and interact with.



The downside of mobile friendly emails

If you decide to only use design techniques to improve how your emails appear on mobiles there are risks. You're leaving it entirely up to the email client to decide what to do with your email.

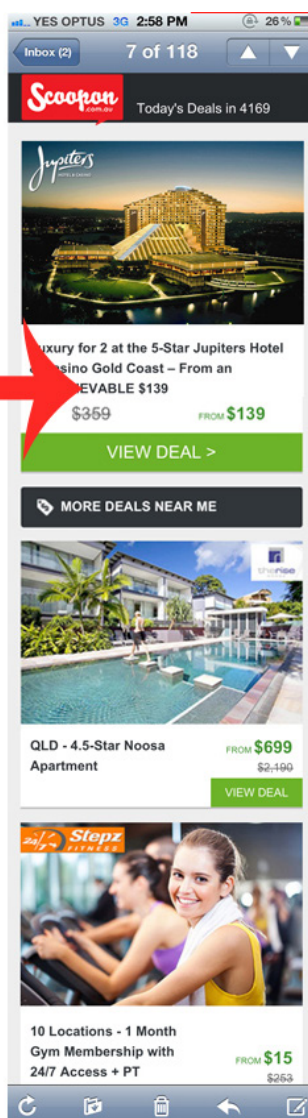
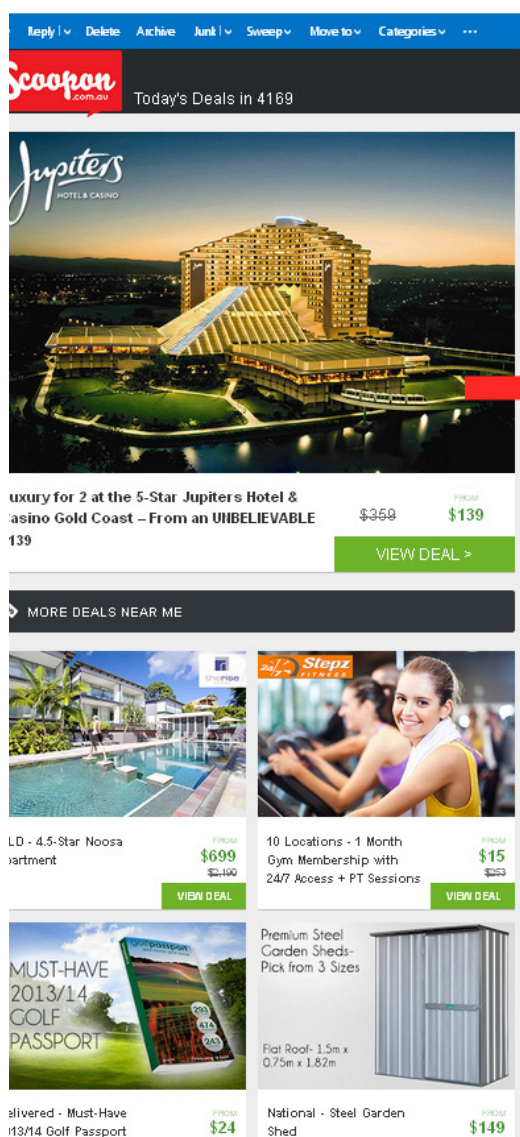
The way your email resizes may not suit the design you had in mind. Or the font size might shrink making it difficult to read. Unfortunately **you have no control over this as you've left it up to the email client's rendering engine.**

If you're looking for an approach that you have more control over, consider using responsive templates.

Responsive Email Design

Responsive basically means **the email will automatically fit whatever screen it is displayed on**. Special code, called media queries, is added to responsive emails to alter their content automatically depending on the screen size and resolution.

Media queries are a special set of CSS code that act like dynamic rules. They detect the screen size of a device and then 'turn on' different sets of rules depending on that screen size. These rules can be simple or quite complex.



Resized images

Large, easy to touch Call to Action

Vertically stacked components

Responsive email templates

Responsive emails are becoming common practice. Vision6 offers free responsive templates for emails.

With the help of responsive design, you can alter the content and design of your email making it easier to read and interact with on the small screens of mobile devices.

Responsive email design can offer benefits such as increased usability and higher read rates. It can also lead to better performance and click-through rates.

But remember responsive design won't solve bad email design, but it will bring a well designed email to life on the small screen.

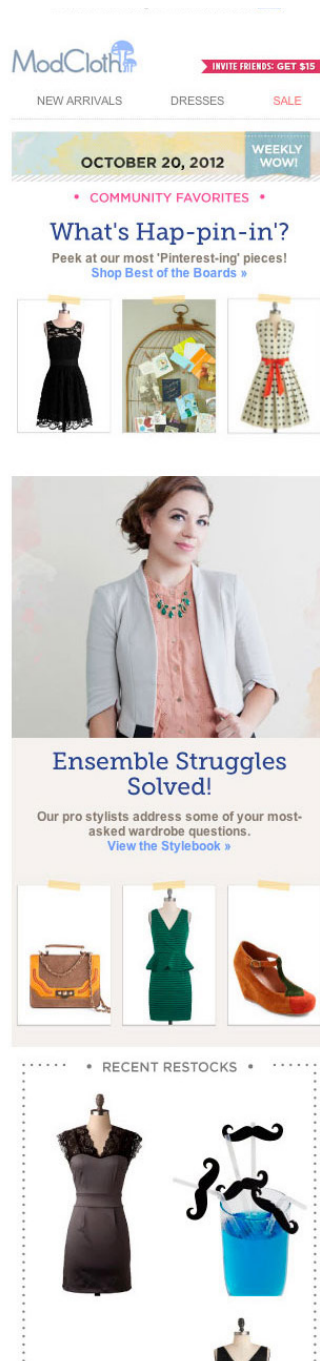
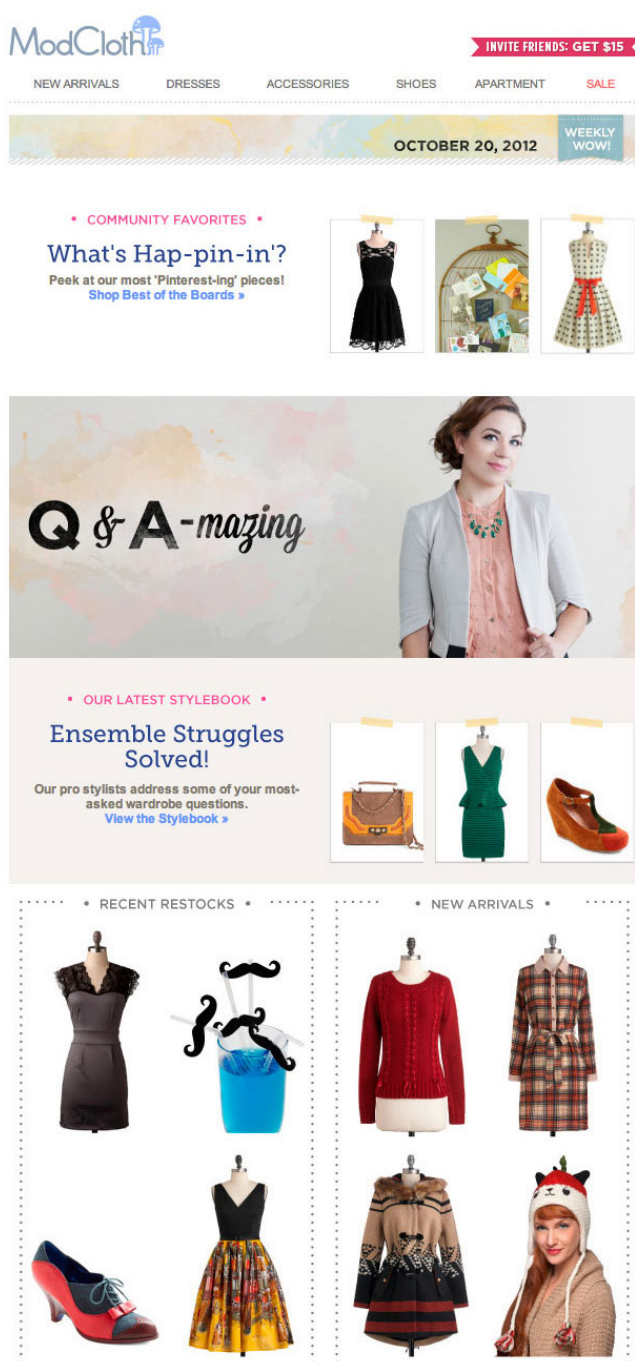


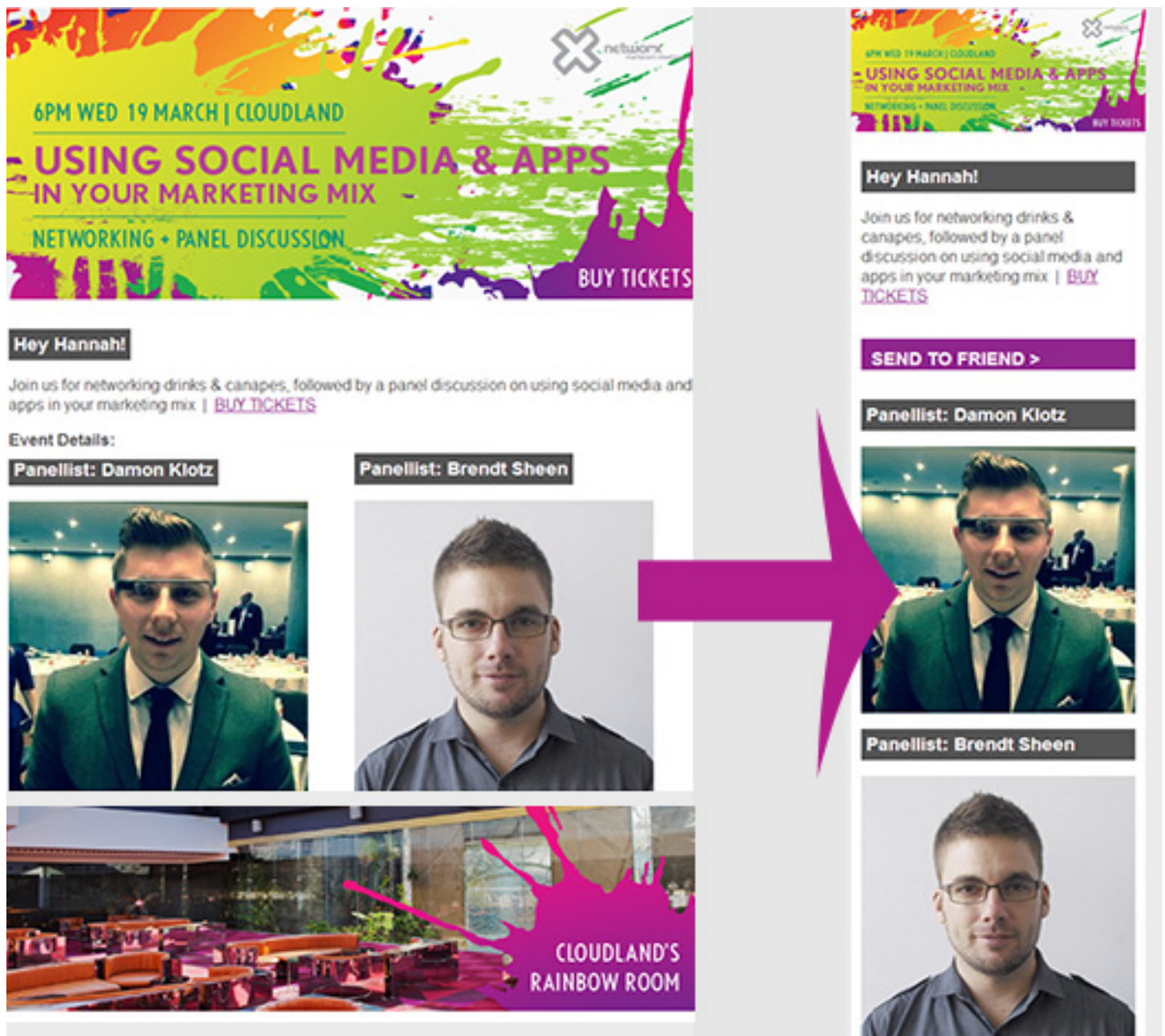
Image source: Learning by example, Marketing Land, 2013

Vision6 Responsive Templates

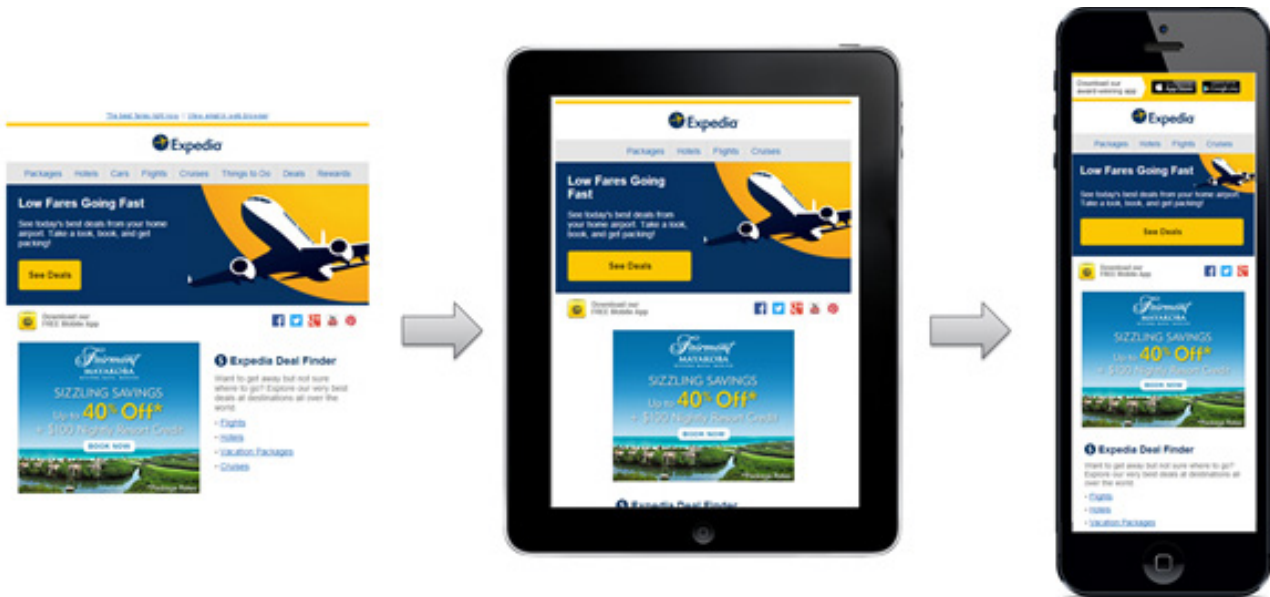
The following will all take place automatically if you use a responsive template in Vision6, depending on the size of the screen your email is viewed on:

- Width of email will gracefully fit to the device
- Larger images will be resized
- Components will be stacked for easy scrolling
- Logos and text in the header component will be centred

Additionally you can now convert old emails created in Vision6 to be responsive with the click of a button.



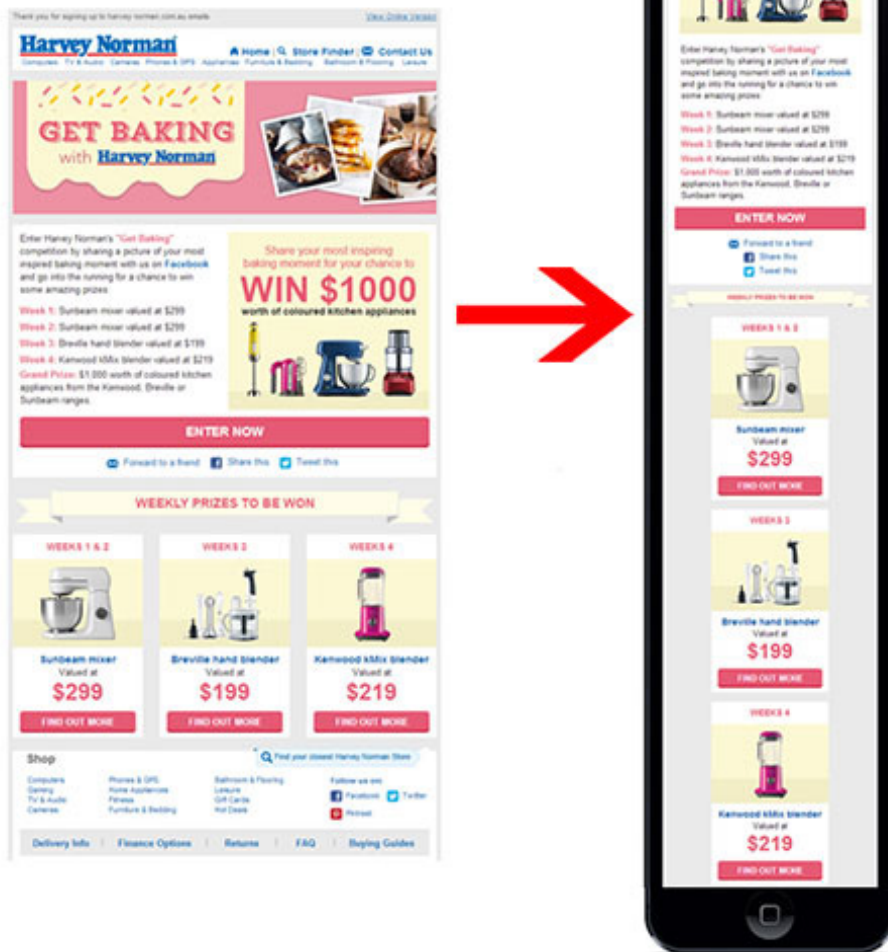
Advanced Coding Options



If you're looking to take a dive into some deeper HTML coding the above is a great example from Expedia that uses advanced media queries:

- They increased text size for mobile version.
- Components of the email such as text paragraphs, images, social media links can be hidden. In this example Expedia hid the top two links that went to their website and to view email in a web browser.
- In this example Expedia replaced the original 8 tabbed navigation bar to include only flights, hotels, packages, and cruises. They cut back to ensure each link was big enough to touch.
- Expedia resized airplane imagery, so that the text is able to scale the width of the email.
- Often images are resized to be smaller but in this example the size of the Call To Action button image was increased to make it easier to tap.

Image source: Responsive email design, eConsultancy, 2013



The code described on the previous page and used in the above example is a little advanced for this guide.

But if you'd like to really sink your teeth into responsive design here are some helpful resources to get started with:

- <http://blog.teamtreehouse.com/beginners-guide-to-responsive-web-design>
- <http://stylecampaign.com/blog/2013/03/responsive-email-design-red/>
- <http://zurb.com/article/1075/taking-our-email-campaigns-to-a-responsiv>
- <http://www.abookapart.com/products/responsive-web-design>

Image source: Top Ten Responsive Email Designs, The Website Marketing Group, 2013

Planning for Responsive Design

Emails are written in HTML and restrained in tables. It's important to understand HTML is written the same as English, left to right, top to bottom.

This means that responsive emails will adjust accordingly with the component on the left placed on top of any components on the right.










As you can see from this example you need to prioritise content left to right as well as top to bottom to accommodate this.

Responsive Email Support

It's a common misconception that media queries and responsive email support is based on the device or operating system used. In fact, it's the application used to view the email that determines support.

In other words, it's possible to view the same email in two different apps on the same phone, each with different support for responsive design. It's the same as if you opened an email with different apps on a desktop such as Hotmail or Gmail. It doesn't matter if you are using a PC or Mac, what matters is the email client.

Unfortunately **responsive emails aren't supported by all email clients.**

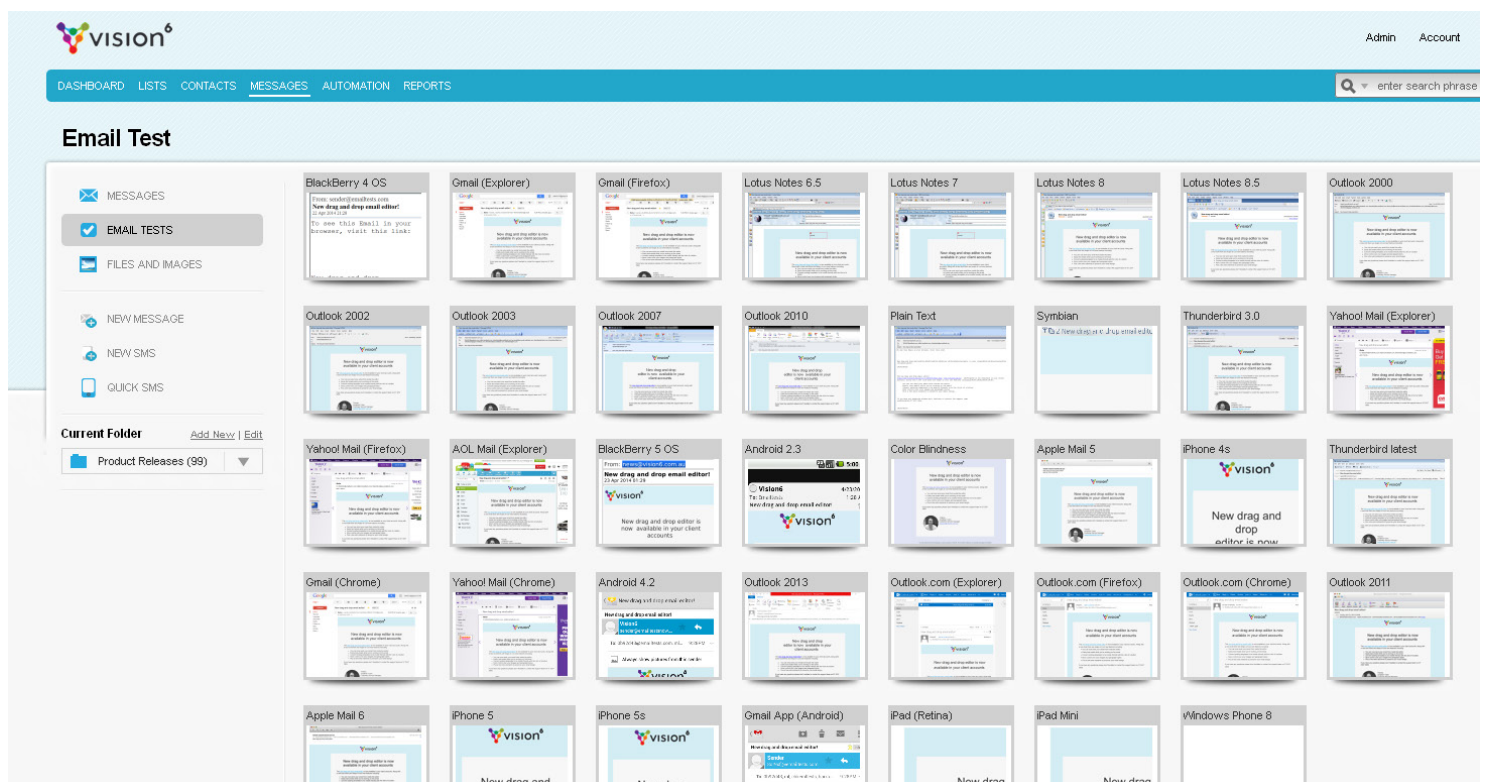
Supports responsive emails	Doesn't support responsive emails
 IOS Mail app	 Gmail Mobile App (all platforms)
 Android 2.2+	 Yahoo! Mobile App (all platforms)
 Windows Phone 7.5	 Microsoft Outlook 3rd Party App
 Blackberry OS 6+	 Blackberry OS5
 Blackberry Playbook	 Windows Mobile 6.1
 Sparrow Mail App	 Windows Phone 7
 Mailbox	 Windows Phone 8
 Palmweb OS 4.5	
 Amazon Kindle Fire	

Test Your Responsive Emails

As some responsive layouts aren't supported on some mobile platforms it's even more important than normal to conduct extensive testing across devices.

By doing a simple test ([Vision6 offers Litmus testing in system](#)) you can find out how your layouts adapts to different devices and check how your email looks in clients that don't support responsive emails.

Differences in devices, manufacturers, applications and screen sizes can all impact how your email will appear. That's a lot of variables, so it's worth taking the time to thoroughly test your email.



Use Design and Responsive Templates

Taking the time to create a mobile optimised template versus the time required to create a responsive template varies.

But the best case scenario is to use both approaches together.

That way if media queries aren't supported in a specific client, your email will still look great.

Mobile devices aren't going away - do something about it

It's worth investing the time now whether that means optimising your email templates or going responsive, so that you can immediately start reaping the benefits.

Regardless of if you have 5%, 10%, 15% of opens occurring on mobile devices it's safe to say that number will continue to grow.

It makes sense to bite the bullet now so that existing mobile users can interact with your emails with ease. And it will mean you're prepared for the future.

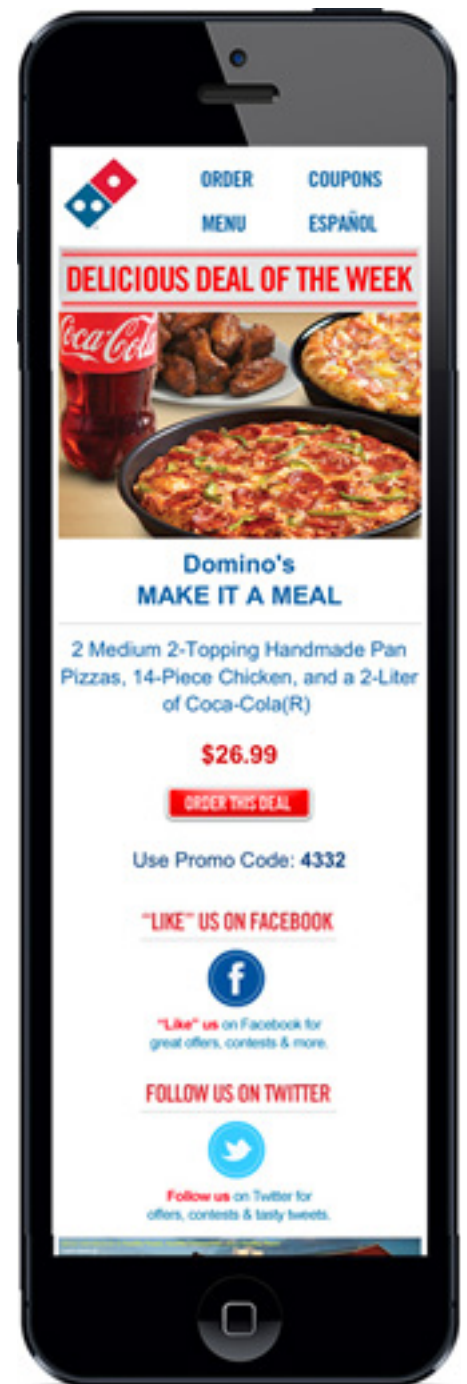


Image source: Responsive email design, eConsultancy, 2013

Start Sending Responsive Emails

Vision6 offers a range of responsive templates and we've recently introduced an option to convert old emails to be responsive. This means it's now easier than ever to send mobile friendly emails. Not a customer? Sign up for a free trial and start sending responsive emails today.

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We'd love to stay in touch with you! Find us:



Get more from your email marketing

Design, create and send awesome ^{mobile friendly} emails in minutes
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