

# Seven Deadly Mobile Myths

JOSH CLARK  
@GLOBALMOXIE





We're all anthropologists.  
Anyone who makes product/service is an anthropologist.

To provide solutions for users, have to understand  
their behaviors, problems, cultures.



As I've thought about the range of mobile cultures:  
realized that we too often have a simple,  
even condescending view of mobile....

That every mobile user or every mobile platform  
is same as the next.

We have some really stubborn myths about mobile users,  
really screwing up the way we provide mobile services.



LOTS of mobile mindsets. These break down:  
across platform,  
across demographic,  
across personal context.

We tend to oversimplify mobile needs,  
boil them down to really simple use cases,

In doing that we risk building dumbed-down apps  
that patronize our users more than help.

And worse, making our own work harder over long term.



So let's look at how we REALLY use mobile apps,  
to consider a better way to approach building them.

## MYTH #1

# Mobile users are rushed and distracted.



Myth: Distracted, in a rush, no attention span.

You hear: information snacking.

Design for little stunted 20 second interactions.

EXCEPT: Mobile not just on go: couch, kitchen, bed, 3-hour layover.

Or, y'know, in the little boys' or girls' room.

40% admit to using phones in bathroom.

Luke Wroblewski: 60% are liars.

We're not always in a rush on our phones.

But the assumption that we are leads to all kinds of bad decisions.

Leads to kneejerk assumption that mobile means lite version.

Here's the thing: 85% expect mobile to be AT LEAST AS GOOD as desktop. <http://j.mp/nzt5SP>

Our job is not to willy-nilly strip out useful features.

The painful experience of getting nudged to mobile website where they've removed exactly the feature or content we want. Have to do the miserable experince of going to "full desktop site"

We do everything on our phones now.

Anytime you say, somebody won't want that on mobile, that's not mobile content... you're wrong.



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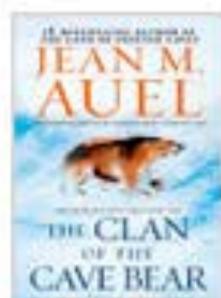
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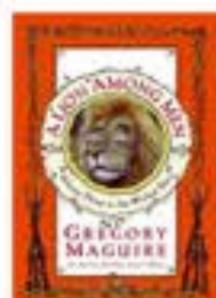
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Mobile



Alibris.com: No rare books section in mobile website.

Head of retail said: such a BIG PURCHASE requires more searching  
than people would want to do on mobile. Assume they wouldn't want to commit to the purchase on  
the go.See: <http://j.mp/eS9226>

eBay: 2000 cars every week in US alone.

Several Ferraris/month on their mobile apps.

Every time you assume someone won't want  
to do something on mobile, you're wrong.  
Don't arbitrarily remove content.

This is denying a purchase to mobile users.  
Not possible to buy a rare book on this site.

But who cares, right? Mobile's still a niche?  
Get the full site when they get back to desktop.  
No big deal, right?

# 28%

OF US MOBILE WEB USERS

**MOSTLY  
USE MOBILE WEB**

<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Smartphones/Section-2.aspx>

28% of mobile web users rarely or never use desktop.  
You do the math, that's around 11% of US adults overall,  
or 25 million people in the US alone.  
So if you care about reaching this huge swath of users,  
have to care about hitting them on mobile.

Because that's the ONLY way to reach them.  
That group DEFINITELY expects to do everything on mobile.

## MYTH #2

# Mobile = Less



Mobile is not less.  
As we begin to do everything on our phones,  
sometimes ONLY on our phones,  
  
mobile content and features should be AT LEAST  
at the same level as any other platform.

Mobile is not lite. Mobile is not less.



# Jakob Nielsen shared his advice for mobile

Jakob Nielsen's advice:

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/mobile-vs-full-sites.html>

He says: Build a separate mobile site. With less content. Cut features that are not core to the mobile use case.

For the “few” users who need more content, offer links to the “full site” and, y’know... let em muddle through.

So what does this look like in practice?

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/mobile-ux-guidelines.html>

Nielsen says: The feature set should be much smaller for a mobile site than for a desktop site,/ A company’s full site typically includes PR information and investor relations sections... but this info should be eliminated from the mobile site.

Mobile users NEVER care about PR information or investor relations???

I Everything about Nielsen’s guidelines are wrong and damaging.

I don’t argue his research which suggests that you shouldn’t overwhelm mobile users, but I do argue his conclusions which is that you should just cut the content entirely.

# Don't confuse context with intent.



We make too many assumptions from screen size.  
You can't confuse device context w/intent.

Don't limit functionality based on screen size alone.  
Using small screen ≠ wanting to do less.  
Like saying that because paperbacks have smaller pages,  
you have to remove entire chapters.

Mobile websites/apps should have full content/tools  
May be displayed differently, hierarchy may change.

Some devices better suited to some tasks than others.  
So EMPHASIZE diff content on diff devices.

But don't arbitrarily give me LESS.  
That goes not only for individual sites but for families of sites.

## MYTH #3

# Complexity is a dirty word



Complexity is awesome, gives life and apps texture.  
We as designers have to embrace complexity to allow our users to complete difficult tasks and make sense of complex info.

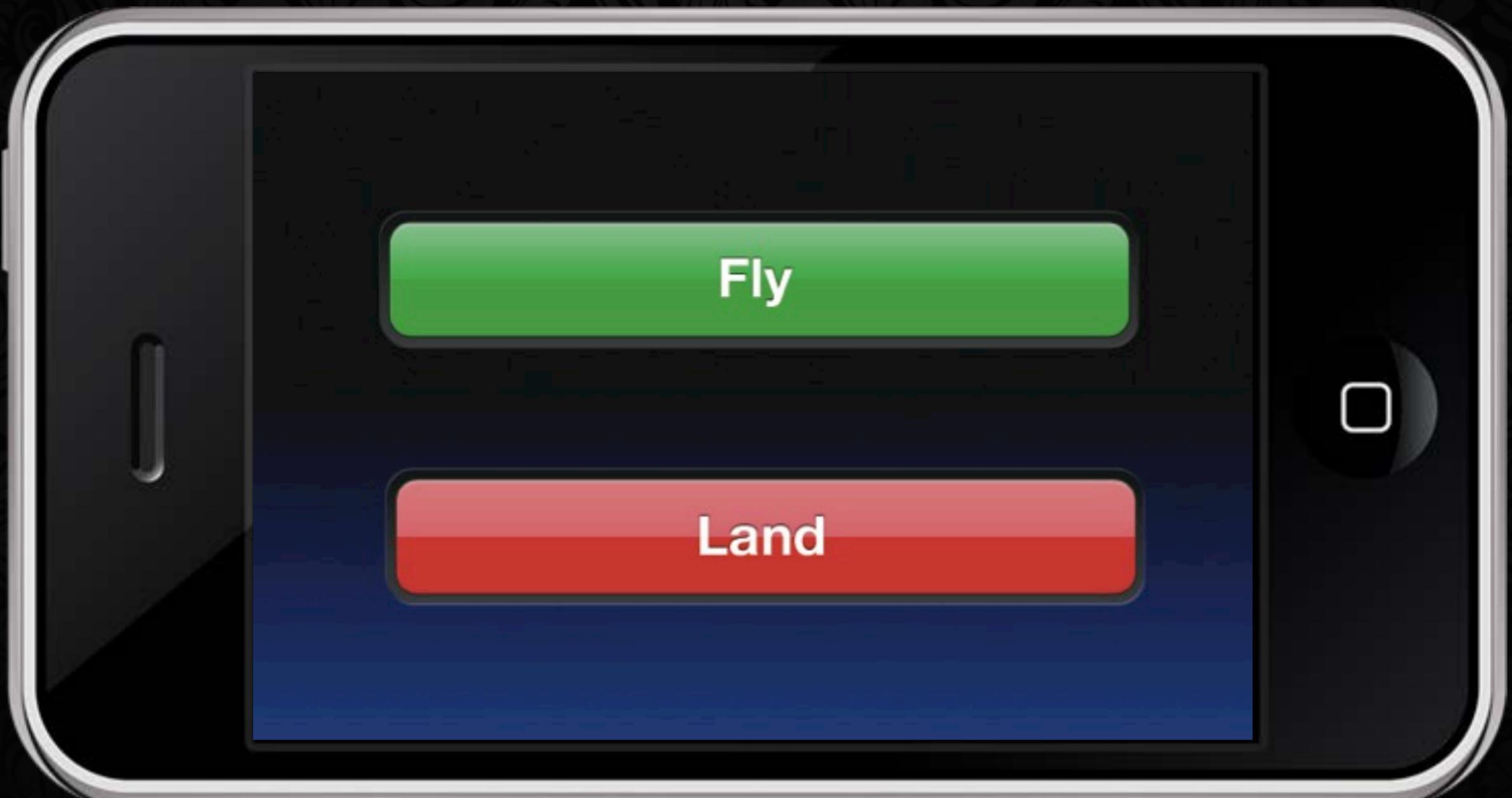
People don't want dumbed down apps,  
they want uncomplicated apps.  
The trick is to make complexity uncomplicated.  
There's a difference.

So, bucking the myth of the distracted user means figuring out how to create complex yet comprehensible interfaces.



Uncomplicating complexity is hard to do.  
It starts with figuring out what the user doesn't want/need to be exposed to.

So, if you're designing an app to fly an airplane, you might start here...



...when your customers really want this.  
What's their goal? Help them get there as fast as they can.



Umbrella: The Simplest Weather Forecast

"Will I need an umbrella today?"

I'm the perfect audience for this app.

But look: for some, maybe most, pic of umbrella won't cut it.

Weather hugely complex.

Stepfather Ken want to be exposed to all its complexity.

For him, papering over that complexity is a fail.

He would find this condescending.

Managing complexity doesn't always or even usually mean stripping out features until the project is toothless.

Mobile doesn't mean less, it doesn't mean lite.



Facebook iPhone app v1 started with too few features and users hated it.  
Without a minimum level of features and complexity, it just wasn't facebook.

So how do you do pack more complexity into the small screen?



This is the Accuweather.com iPad app,  
but I'm not sure that it manages complexity in the right way.  
First of all, scary.

But more important, jammed with information.  
More than you need at any given time.  
Don't make me scan all this data for what I'm looking for.  
Instead, let me ask for it as I need it.

Manage complexity not by presenting it all at once,  
but by managing it through give and take.



Accuweather.com.  
Actually does a better job with complex information  
in small screen of iPhone app instead of iPad app.

Dense info for the current moment  
Nice start, but how to provide all of the day's detailed info?



Swipe at current conditions to move into future. [next]

Detailed conditions for 7am, and temps for later.  
I ask app about 10am... by touching 10am!  
Only when I ask for that info does it give it to me.  
Question, answer. Ask, receive.

Requires more taps than just dumping all the data on you directly.  
But each screen more digestible.

In a mobile interface, clarity trumps density.

And that gives the lie to the fourth myth.

## MYTH #4

# Extra taps and clicks are evil



The web has given us a squeamishness about extra clicks.

In mobile: tap quality far important than tap quantity.

As long as each tap delivers satisfaction (example),  
extra taps are ok. ARE GOOD.

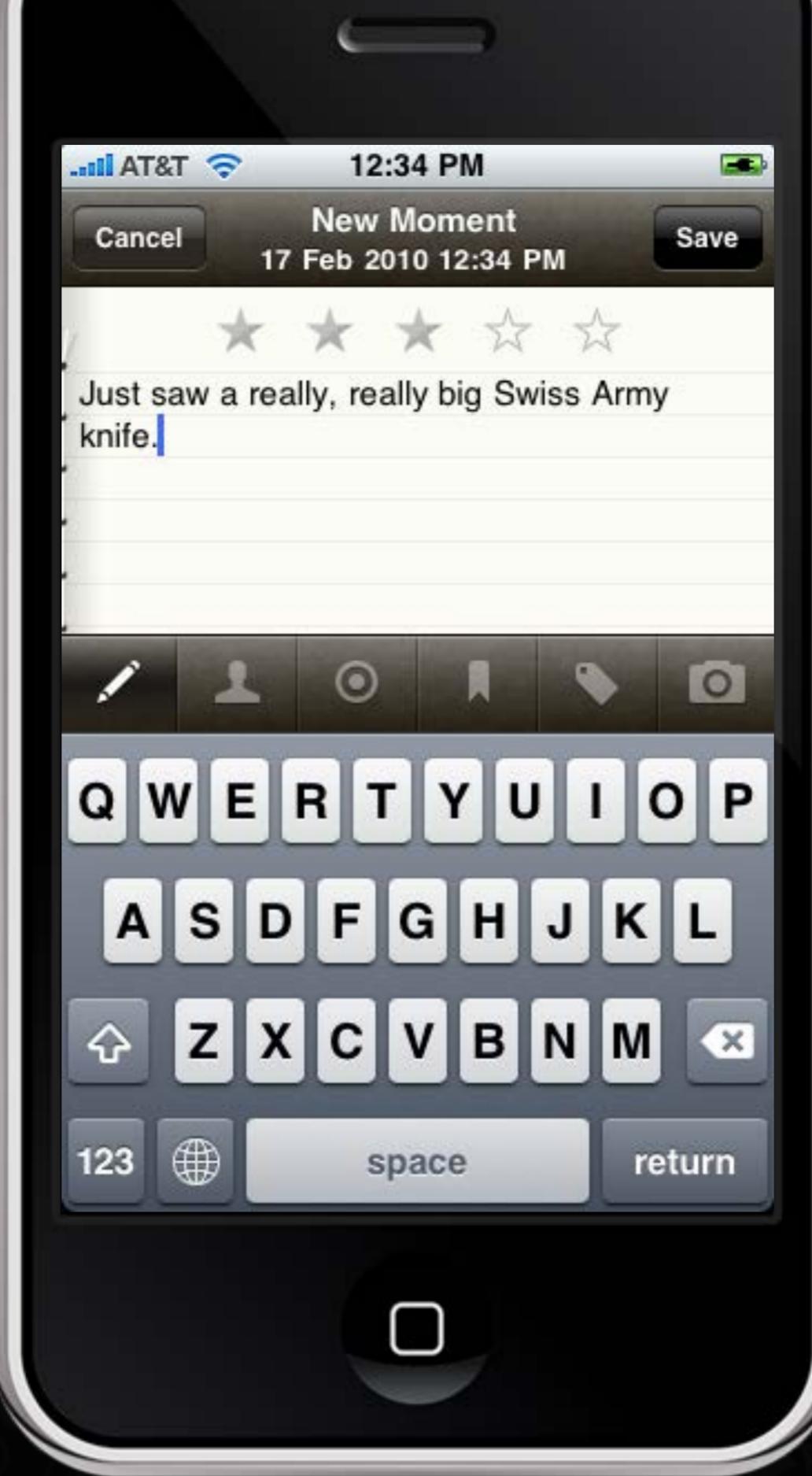
It invites conversation,  
give and take that you can get at and explore.

# Progressive disclosure



Progressive disclosure. A little bit at a time, as people need it or ask for it.

Progressive disclosure helps you uncomplicate complexity.



Momento:  
Great micro-journal, record moments of the day.  
Twittering to yourself.

Can attach things to your moment  
Icon for each.  
But doesn't leave much room for your moment!

Main event is content but crowded out.  
Small buttons, hard on eyes and fingers.  
Common problem for many Twitter apps



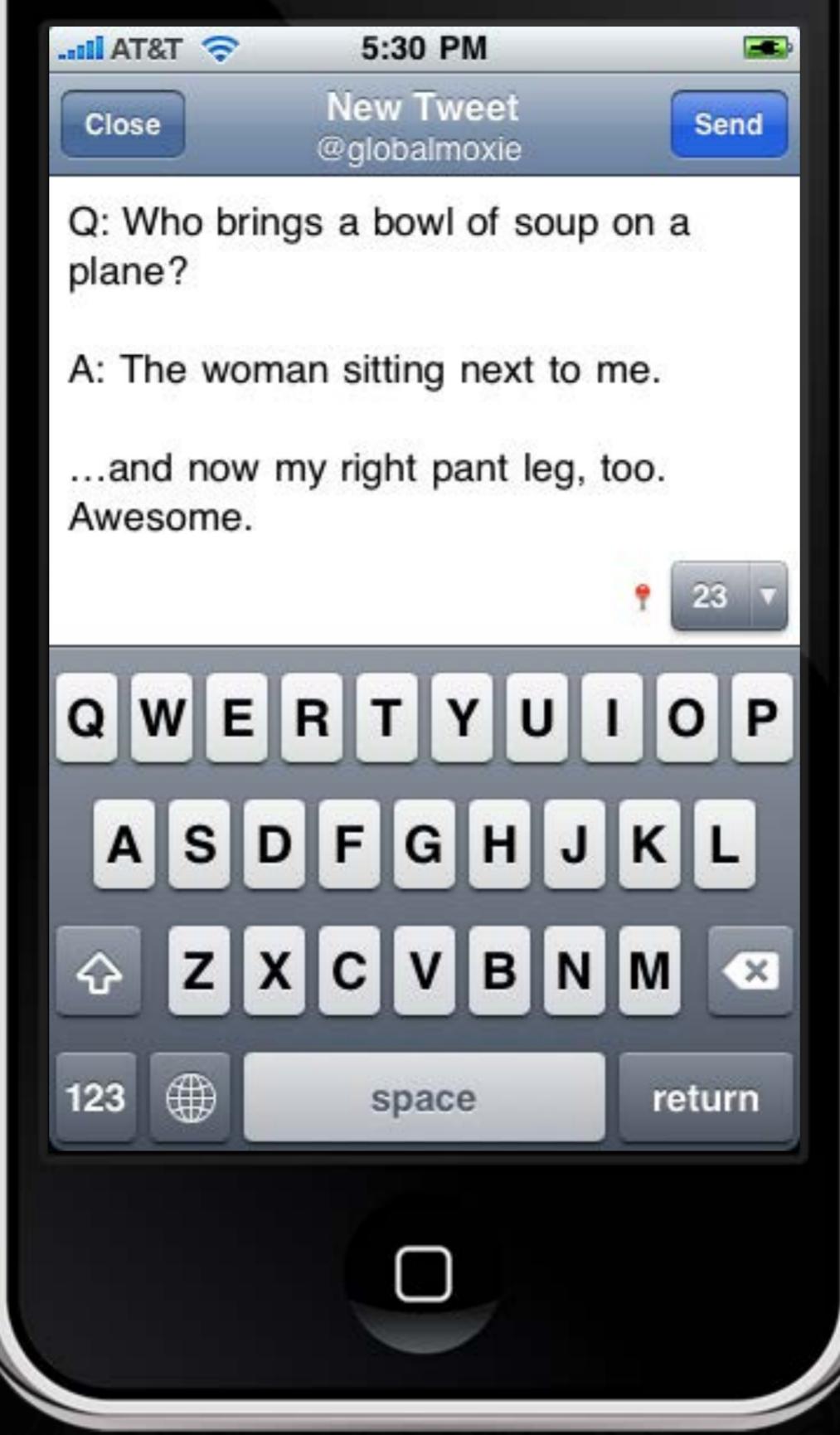
Fond of how earlier versions of the Twitter app solved this.  
Focused entirely on single task, dedicated to post.  
Secondary tools behind a secret panel.

Trouble with secret panels is that they have to be discoverable.  
Latch hidden in plain sight.  
In recent releases, added animation hint.

Optimize each screen for the primary task.  
Secondary tools and controls  
behind hidden doors and secret panels.

Clarity trumps density.  
Tap quality trumps tap quantity.

SO JAKOB NIELSEN IS RIGHT IN PART...  
that there should be one big idea per screen,  
that mobile experiences should be sharp and focused and bit sized.  
But that doesn't mean you can't serve lots of bites.



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# Mobile ≠ Less



Again, the idea is not to arbitrarily strip out features and content.  
It's a matter of organizing and prioritizing them.

In fact, rather than thinking that mobile means less...

# Mobile = More



The real question is: how can I do more?  
These devices can DO MORE than a desktop.  
They have a camera, microphone, GPS, gyroscope, touch.  
What are the opportunities for subtle insights, new features?  
Gives your app or website superpowers.

Stop thinking about mobile CONTENT.  
Stop thinking about what people WON'T want on mobile.  
You'll be wrong.

Instead of mobile content:  
mobile devices, mobile capabilities.  
What can you DO with that content?

Start with a basic website,  
use feature sniffing to layer on mobile-only tools.  
Touch interactions, location information, the camera.  
Progressive enhancement for superpowered devices.

Progressive enhancement of a single webpage for all devices.  
That brings us to the fifth myth.

## MYTH #5

# Gotta have a mobile website



Look, you DO need your website to look great on all devices.  
Desktop, phones, tablets.  
And voice... how does your website SOUND?  
And soon: TVs... devices we haven't even imagined yet.

For all: presentation should be different,  
but not necessarily the content.

So yes, you do need great mobile EXPERIENCES.  
But not a separate website.

# There is no mobile web.



Serve same fundamental content/features to all devices,  
but enhanced to suit specific devices.

Means we can't think of different websites for different devices.  
The mobile web is not some independent thing.

Year ago, Stephen Hay wrote a wonderful article  
titled "there is no mobile web,"  
and I recommend it to all of you.

Don't think in terms of a mobile website.  
Instead: How is this single website EXPERIENCED on mobile devices?  
Web experiences, not individual web sites.

Back to Jakob Nielsen's idea of having separate stripped down site.  
Link to desktop if you need it.

# mobile.mysite.com



And no matter what, if I visit your website here...

...but I get bumped over here...

You're probably doing it wrong.

The same URL for the same content,  
or at least thematically similar content,  
across all devices.

With appropriate shifts in presentation and capabilities.

# One web



This is the one-web idea.

Not about the user's context in other words,  
(Will they want this on mobile?)

but the device context:

What can device DO

How can the device enhance the experience?

Build by thinking about progressive enhancement.

Build using techniques of adaptive or responsive web design.

Serve a single html page to all devices,  
use media queries to design for common formats.

JS feature sniffing to layer on new functionality:

GPS, touch, voice, eventually camera accessibility, you name it.

# One web?



Really, Josh, for everything?  
Well, don't be dogmatic.  
As always, it depends.

Makes tons of sense for a content site,  
like the awesome [bostonglobe.com](http://bostonglobe.com).

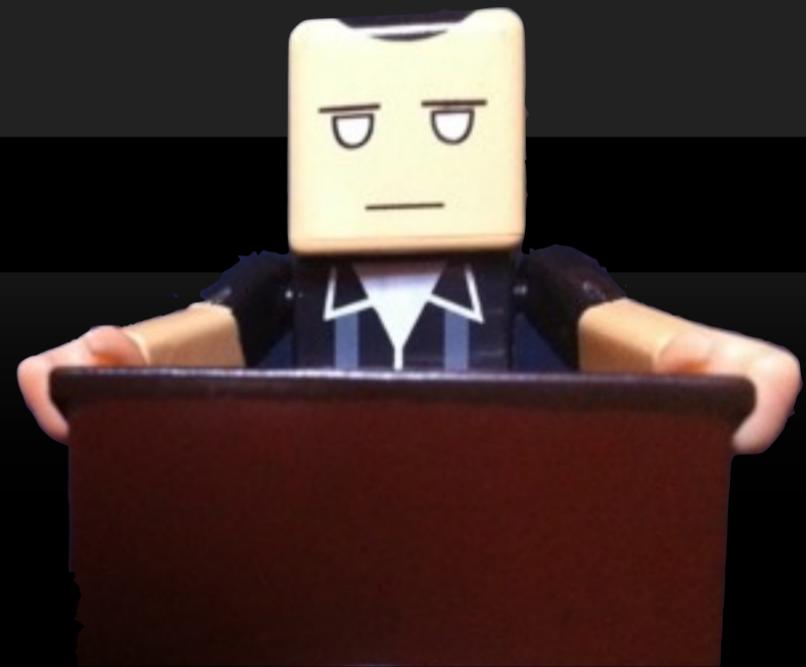
But may need to have separate html for more feature-driven sites,  
at least for certain broad classes of devices. Be flexible.

And there are some cases, but they're rare,  
when mobile content is really different from desktop content.

When you might build entirely separate app for mobile,  
tuned to mobile's special features of location, portability.

Few universal laws in design. Use good judgment.  
Responsive design or separate mobile website? It depends.  
<http://j.mp/hNA9UH>

# Edit, ~~edit~~, edit



So: thematically similar content and features  
across all devices.

But shouldn't just throw the kitchen sink in there,  
and put each and every thing in your mobile app.

First, it's hard.  
Hard to elegantly fit lots of features into small screen.  
Business of uncomplicating complexity isn't easy.

But more important, all those content and features  
may not be so important in the first place.

So wait? This sounds contradictory, right?  
Mobile should do everything, but it shouldn't do everything?

Here's what I mean:  
Your mobile site should probably have less stuff  
than your desktop site has now.  
Not because it's mobile,  
but because your desktop site is full of crap.

FOCUS AND WINNOW CONTENT ON ALL PLATFORMS,  
Be discerning.



# This is only the beginning.

Mobile, not mobile, one web or separate web sites.  
Platforms: iPhone, iPad, web, desktop apps, Android, SMS.  
But also: print, television, voice, all the traditional media.  
ALL THESE PLATFORMS AND CULTURES.

Thrilling but overwhelming time for all of us right now.  
Step back from that whirlwind for a moment,  
stop thinking so much about individual platforms,  
Stop focusing so much on APPS or WEBSITES.

To deliver rich, complex experiences to all these contexts,  
you have to start with your CONTENT.



Look across the entire range of devices and interfaces,  
and seek out the commonalities.  
What's range of service you want to offer.

Floating above all these cultures, tying them together,  
is you, your company, your goals, your service.  
And that's embodied digitally by your API.



# Content runs the show

THIS is the real winner.

Not web apps or native apps or 1 platform.

Big boy in the room is thinking about your interfaces  
as spectrum of apps that plug into single wellspring  
of service. Of content.

Build common back end that can serve all these interfaces,  
lets you turn and pivot to each culture,  
to each technology, to each device.

Not mobile first, not desktop first. Content and API first.

## MYTH #6

# Mobile is about apps



So this is the sixth myth, and it's a big one.  
Apps, apps, apps, apps, apps.

At any moment, we tend to focus on a single container:  
an app, a mobile website

That's what's got us running in panic now, right?  
Gotta have an app! Gotta get on tablets.  
Gotta have that mobile website!

An app is not a  
strategy.  
It's just an app.



In fact your product is NOT an app or a website.

# Your product is **not** a product at all



See, your product isn't really a product at all.  
Your product is something called content.  
It's a service.  
The rest are all just containers.

Stop focusing so much on APPS.  
Not sustainable. Won't keep up.  
Can't start from scratch and design every pixel  
for EVERY point content touches reader.

Pull back from obsession w/presentation.  
Have to start w/CONTENT.  
Have to accept that your content will take many forms.



I'll turn now to the famous content strategist and UX designer Bruce Lee.

“You put water into a cup,  
it becomes the cup.

You put water into a bottle,  
it becomes the bottle.

You put it in a teapot,  
it becomes the teapot.”

Content like water. Content's going to take many forms,  
flow into many different containers,  
many of which we haven't even imagined yet.

Build from content out. Not container in.

Build common back end to serve ANY interface.  
Stop thinking app, start thinking flexible content, service.

CMS has to be agnostic about these platform machinations.  
Need clean content repositories to deliver  
more neutrally formatted content to be displayed on ANY device.

And man we have a lot of them.

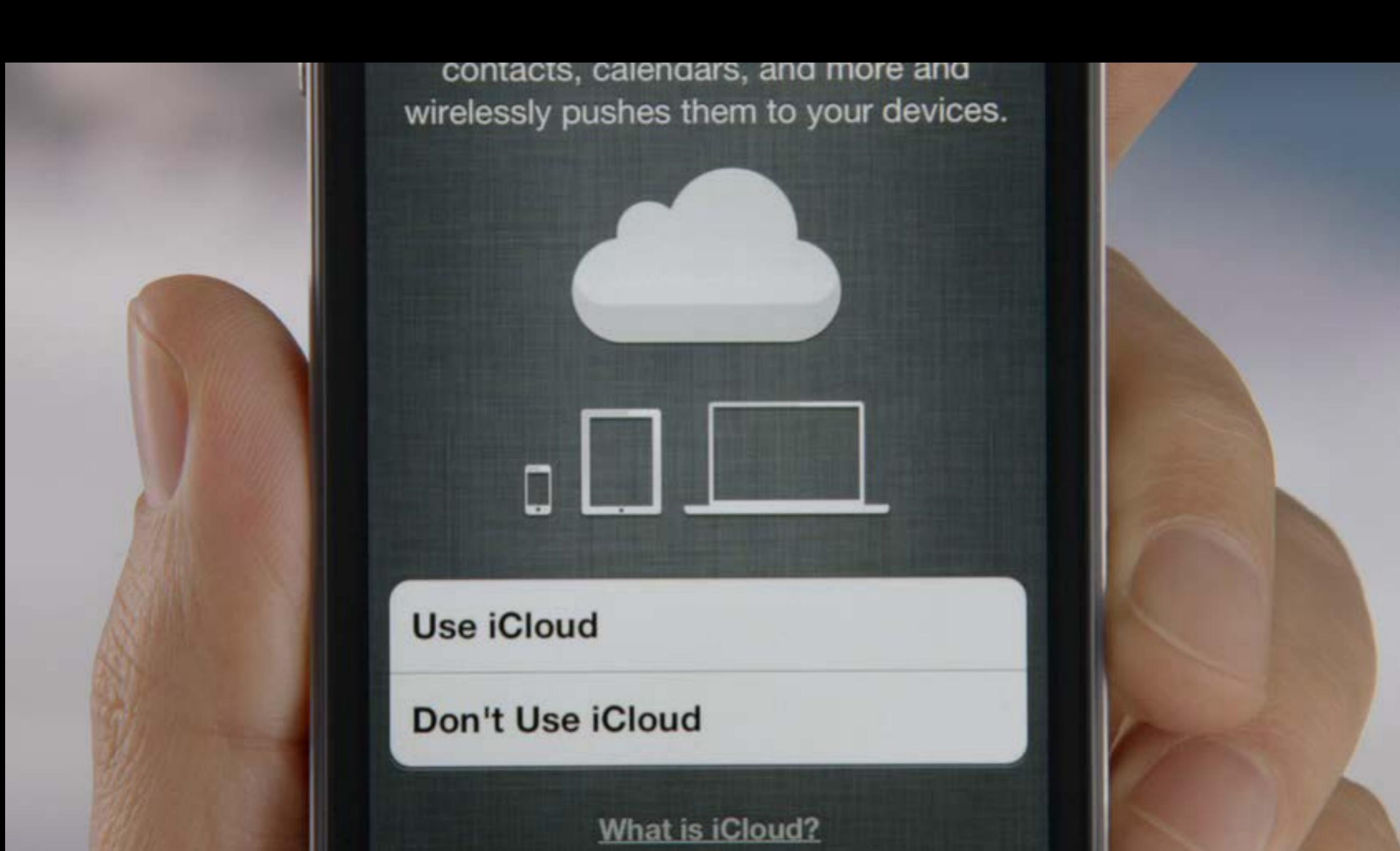


There's a growing mainstream expectation that you can simply get all your content from any device. We expect content to flow seamlessly, follow us throughout the day.

This ad for NFL.com, crisp illustration of that shift.  
<http://j.mp/nkrn7f>

We access the same content across multiple devices.  
Phones, PCs, tablets, X-boxes, tv boxes

Kindle and Netflix  
That expectation is going to spread to even the most modest apps.  
I want my stuff everywhere.



contacts, calendars, and more and  
wirelessly pushes them to your devices.



**Use iCloud**

**Don't Use iCloud**

[What is iCloud?](#)

And this expectation is only going to grow as it gets cooked into popular platforms. Like Apple's iCloud, for example.



# We're all cloud developers

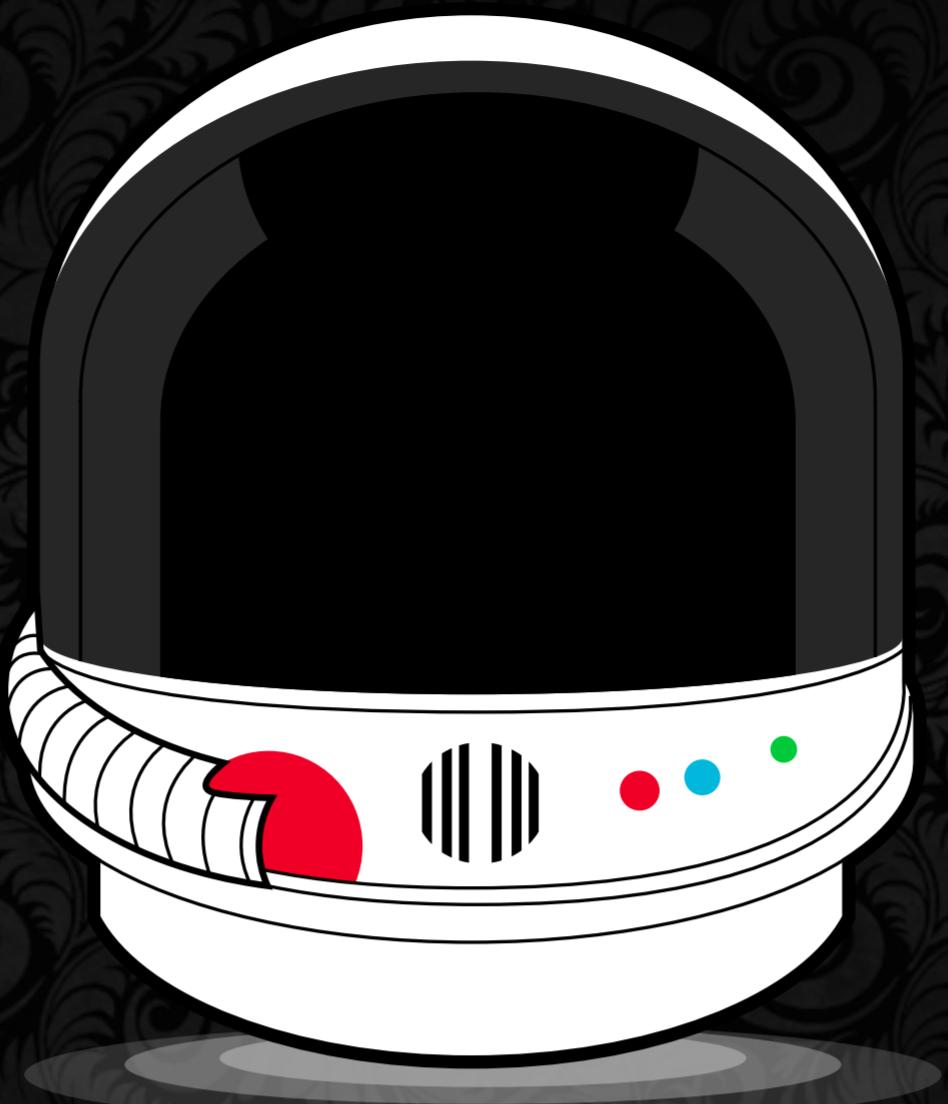
Even modest apps need to start talking to the cloud.

We're all cloud developers.

Again: API first.

Just about every app should be a web client.

Pew: "Apps and the Web are converging in the cloud." Native vs web becoming an implementation detail. <http://j.mp/GJ6all>



# <http://futurefriendly.ly>

Can't know the future, so can't be future-proof.  
But we CAN be future-friendly.

Future Friendly: resource for big-picture considerations  
for managing, escaping this app-centric thinking.

Biggest lesson there, strange for a designer to say:  
don't try to control form of your content in each and every context.  
You won't be able to keep up. You can't scale.  
Old lesson of web. Separation of content/prez.  
Same applies for other platforms. Apps, print, voice,

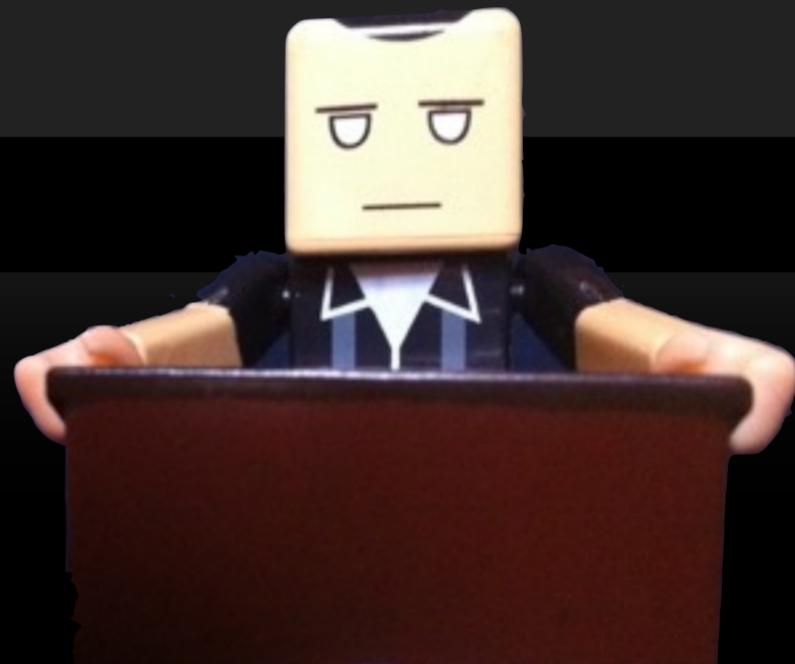
Build APIs that can send content to any platform/device

Designers say: But ugh, Josh. Seriously?  
API, Structured content, CMS? BORING.  
This is for the database nerds to figure out, right?

I'm glad you asked.  
Myth seven.

## MYTH #7

# CMS & API are for database nerds.



This stuff is not for database nerds.

Designers, managers, content producers,  
we all have to care about this, too.  
Not just care, but get involved.

It will make all of us better at our jobs if we start caring  
about content design, workflow, storage, transport.

Because what I'm talking about is:  
HOW TO MAINTAIN SOME CREATIVE CONTROL  
with mobile.

# "Metadata is the new art direction."

ETHAN RESNICK  
@STUDIP101



What he means: structure your content well, you'll get a foothold of creative control in this chaotic world of connected devices.

You'll have the hooks and flexibility you need to:

- put content where you want it,
- style it how you want it,
- in ways that are appropriate to the device.

Friends, THAT's creative control.  
Creatively craft your content to fit the current context, no matter what device someone is using.

That means we have to start driving our design down the stack, into the content itself.

Look, visual design is as important as ever. It is.

Can't do hand-crafted custom art direction for every platform.  
Can't design every iPad screen by hand, portrait/landscape.  
Doesn't scale, and there aren't enough of us.

So have to focus on designing/enhancing content w/metadata.

**Amy Winehouse**  
A first look at her last album

**Enough already?**  
How we fell out of love with stuff

G2 Cover story

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This section Page 7

12.30 Tuesday 01.11.11  
Published by London and Manchester guardian.co.uk

# the guardian newspaper of

## Greece throws euro bailout into new crisis

- EU stunned by referendum plan
- 'No' vote could result in default

Philip Inman  
Helena Smith

Greece's prime minister, George Papandreou, last night stunned European leaders after he proposed that his country should hold a referendum on the landmark bailout deal it had just last week.

A vote on whether to accept or reject weeks of negotiations over how to rescue the country's economy and prevent a debt default reached the Lehman brothers crash of three years ago.

Stock markets, which have rallied in recent weeks after a sustainable deal was reached, reacted sharply downwards.

The Dow Jones index of leading companies fell sharply as Papandreou's plan was rejected, while the euro fell to its lowest level since the start of the year.

The so-called "index of fear" – climbed 7%, its biggest one-day rise since mid-August.

Papandreou, who has been a vocal advocate of the proposed bailout, though the interior minister, Haris Kastanidis, said it would most likely be in January.

Opposition parties, including some global leaders fearful of Europe's mounting debt crisis, eurozone members agreed to cut Athens' debts by 50% and provide a rescue package of up to €110bn to rescue them from a bailout funded together with the IMF last year.

Greeks have already registered their support for remaining part of the euro, but are increasingly worried that their position at austerity measures. Cuts in the public sector, including reductions in pensions, new taxes and privatisations of airports, the Greek water supply and the postal service are part of the deal agreed by the troika.

Unveiling his referendum plan, he said: "Greeks are the source of our strength."

Continued on page 2 H

Another cleric gone

Dean of St Paul's quits but activists sit tight



Graham Knowles's departure provoked the first intervention in the crisis by Rowan Williams. Photograph: Ben Stansall/PA

Peter Walker

The dean of St Paul's Cathedral, the Right Rev Graham Knowles, resigned last night, saying former critics of the cathedral's opposition to the Occupy London protest group, "much more spacious" than a month ago, were like "a bunch of teenagers who have a fourth year of adolescence".

Opposition parties protested that the referendum posed huge risks.

"Mr Papandreou's EU membership is a cause in the act," said a spokesman for the main conservative opposition New Democracy party. "He cannot govern, and instead of doing that, he is trying to do something honourable."

Christopher Pissarides, the Greek Nobel prizewinner, who has called for Greece to leave the euro, said: "I can't see them staying within the European currency." 23

He added: "The only way forward is to negotiate to the inside and to try and reworking the rules and decisions, as they are on Sky News."

Continued on page 2 H

## Academic linked to Gaddafi's fugitive son leaves LSE

Exclusive

Jeevan Vasgar

Education editor

A British academic with close links to Muammar Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam has left the London School of Economics. His departure follows the row over Libya's relationship with Libya's links to Gaddafi's son.

David Held was an academic adviser to the top-down dictator's son when he studied the world at the London School of Economics funded by his charity.

Held, who is currently Graham Wilson professor of political science at the LSE, has announced that he is leaving

in January to take up a post at Durham University.

He is expected to face sharp criticism over the academic independence of the North Africa Research Programme, which was funded with a £1m donation from the Gaddafi family.

And Field Independence reported internally as the latest hit from the donation.

The LSE's links with Libya have already triggered the resignation of its director, Howard Davies.

Lord Hailsham, former lord-chief justice, now on the run after the violent collapse of his father's dictatorship, held was on the board of the Gaddafi foundation, the Field Independence.

He was appointed to the board of the charity on 26 June 2009, a few days after the gift was disclosed and accepted by the LSE council. He subsequently resigned from the charity on the LSE council's advice.

The donation – which at £1m was one of the largest ever given to a research centre – was given to a research centre, LSE Global Governance, of which Held was co-director.

Saif al-Islam was allowed to say only "objectives and expectations" for the

programme, according to leaked LSE documents.

Lord Hailsham, a former lord-chief justice, has completed an independent inquiry into the university's Libyan links. Its publication has been delayed pending further investigation of allegations of plagiarism in Saif al-Islam's PhD thesis.

Held is taking up a new position as senior fellow at the think tank Chatham House.

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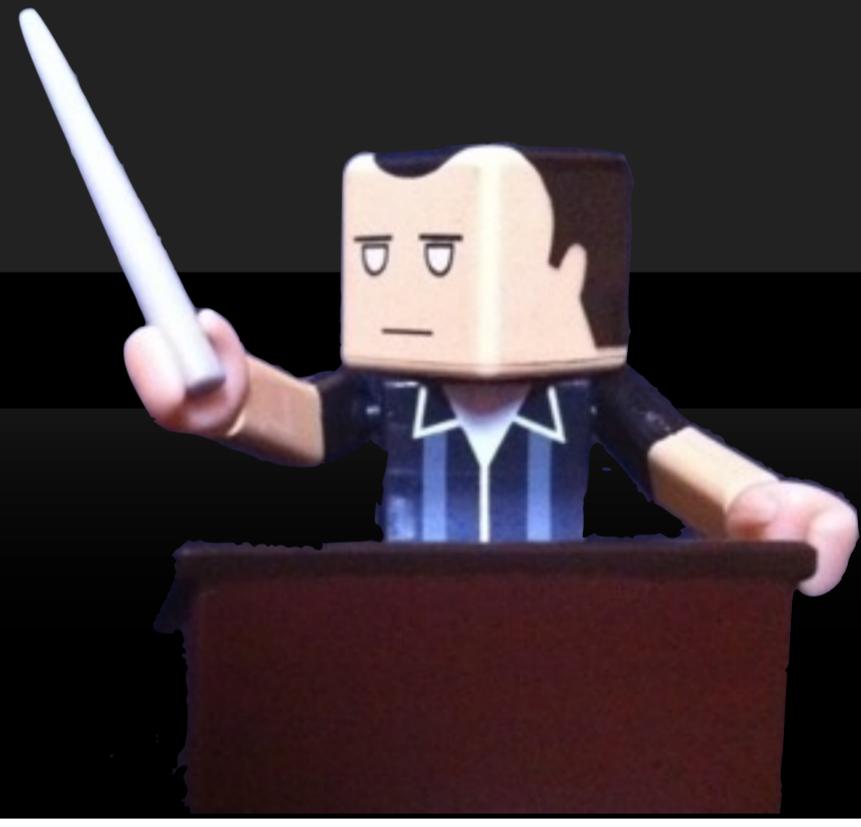
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# Repurpose ~~design~~ content



Here's the thing to remember:  
It's not the DESIGN that you want to repurpose.  
[next]  
It's the content. It's the editorial sensibility.  
Available anywhere your audience might want it.

The goal is not to translate literal visual design,  
It's to transfer content and meaning.  
That's what Guardian does,  
very smart multiplatform strategy.

Cooks editorial information into metadata of the content,  
but without shoehorning print's design conventions into iPad.  
WE DON'T DESIGN PIXELS, WE DESIGN CONTENT.

The real win... for business value,  
for creative control, for empowering readers,  
is to create content strategies and design strategies  
that are not tied to any single presentation.

Because it's not your app strategy,  
or your desktop strategy,

It's just plain strategy



- ✓ MOBILE ≠ RUSHED
- ✓ MOBILE ≠ LESS
- ✓ COMPLEX ≠ COMPLICATED
- ✓ TAP QUALITY > TAP QUANTITY
- ✓ NO SUCH THING AS MOBILE WEB
- ✓ FOCUS FOR ALL PLATFORMS
- ✓ DON'T THINK APP; THINK SERVICE
- ✓ METADATA IS THE NEW ART DIRECTION



# I love you guys.

JOSH CLARK  
@GLOBALMOXIE



I love you guys, I do. So let me wrap up by saying this, gently:

Our jobs are getting harder.  
We're designing for a jillion platforms.  
We are inundated by screens, a rain of little glowing rectangles.

That's not going to change, so we can't sweat it.  
This is simply the environment we work in now.  
So accept it, understand it,  
know that we have to give up some control.

Get rid of stubborn myths  
about how we consume content in era of connected devices.  
And then, man, with that knowledge in hand:  
let's go kick some ass.

Seriously: we have the coolest job in the world.  
At one of most exciting times in history of technology,  
and for that matter of culture, too.

Embrace the uncertainty we face, think big,  
and go make something amazing.