

Keynote Mobile News and Portal Index: Delivering Video on Mobile News Sites

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We all know more online users are now accessing news via their smartphones - and not just via the traditional news sites we monitor in our Mobile News and Portal Index, but also via social media.

As we've seen with recent news events, frequently there is also a video associated with the story - or even two, three or more.

With that in mind, let's take a look at how news and portal sites are serving video content to mobile users and some of the best practices worth noting.

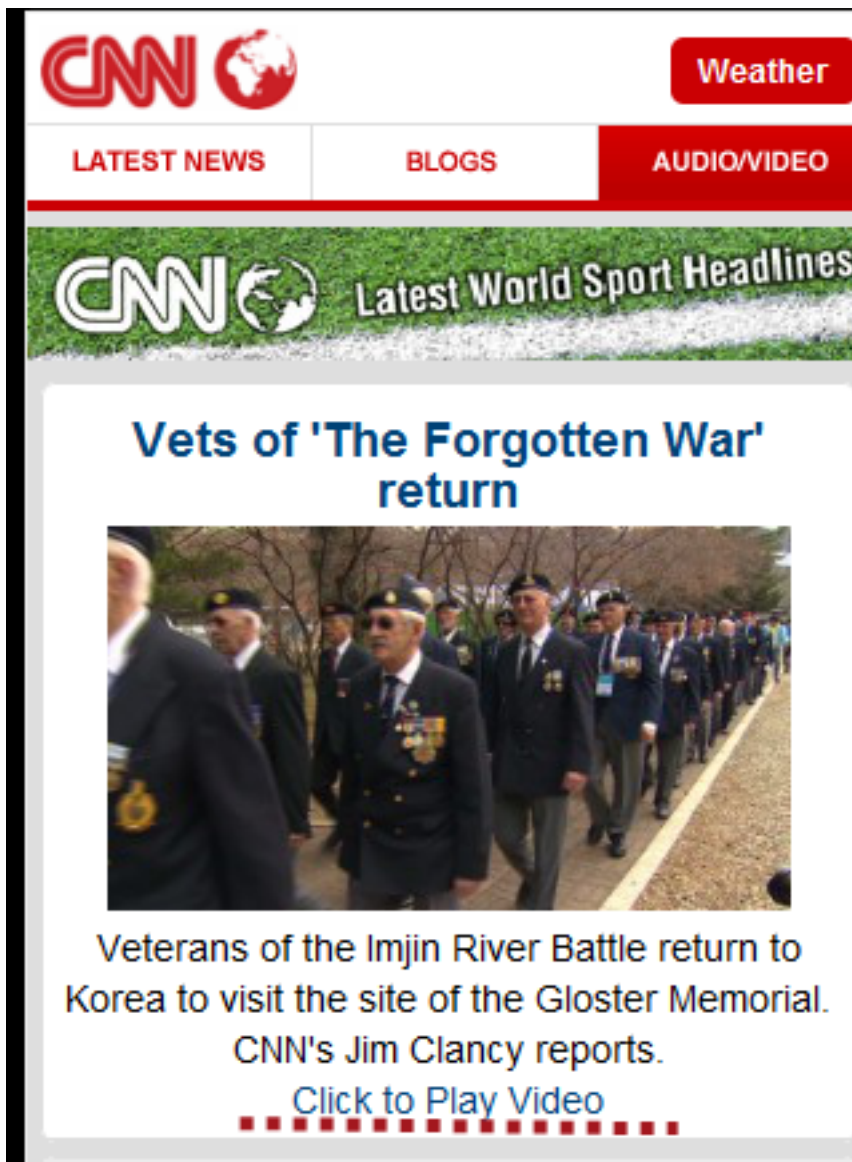
Third Party Hosting

Most brand name news sites have mastered how to serve video content effectively to their desktop sites. All are using a third-party video platform vendor to host and serve this content. But how are these third party video platforms when it comes to serving up to mobile devices?

We took a closer look at some big names - CNN, ABC News and USA Today (which for a print newspaper has morphed into a vibrant online news site) to see how they are handling the presentation of video content to smartphone and tablet screens.

CNN

CNN provides a separate tab for audio and video media in their smartphone site navigation. The media content is displayed as a list and once a user clicks on the media article it offers to play - "Click to Play Video". Is this really necessary if the user already came to the audio/video tab to watch the media? Presenting another screen may not be an optimum user experience. But, unlike other sites we surveyed, all of CNN's videos are compatible when played from each of the three screens.



CNN uses Turner Broadcasting to host and serve its videos.

ABC News

ABC News links to its video content on the homepage in a video slideshow but its management of the three screens is somewhat confusing. It has three versions of the site – mobile, tablet and desktop – served to the respective devices requesting the content. But how ABC News is handling tablets is curious. On the iPad, users are routed to a tablet-optimized site – www.abcnews.com/t/index [1] – but on the Galaxy or Nexus 7 tablet (or any other Android tablet) the desktop site is served up.

As a result, except for on iPads, the user experience on tablets is definitely impacted. For example, we see a considerable amount of content missing on the homepage because it is using Flash. It is widely accepted today that delivering Flash content to portable devices is a strict “no-no” due to compatibility issues. Some of the News Video content is also served as Flash on the non-iPad tablets. This actually renders the content useless as it cannot be played.



ABC News uses Unicorn Media to serve its video content.

When the tablet site to which iPad users are redirected is opened on Android tablets it functions well. But for some reason ABC News does not redirect Android tablet users to its iPad tablet-optimized site. We're unsure why this is, as the iPad tablet-optimized site looks to be a much better experience than the desktop version for Android tablet users.

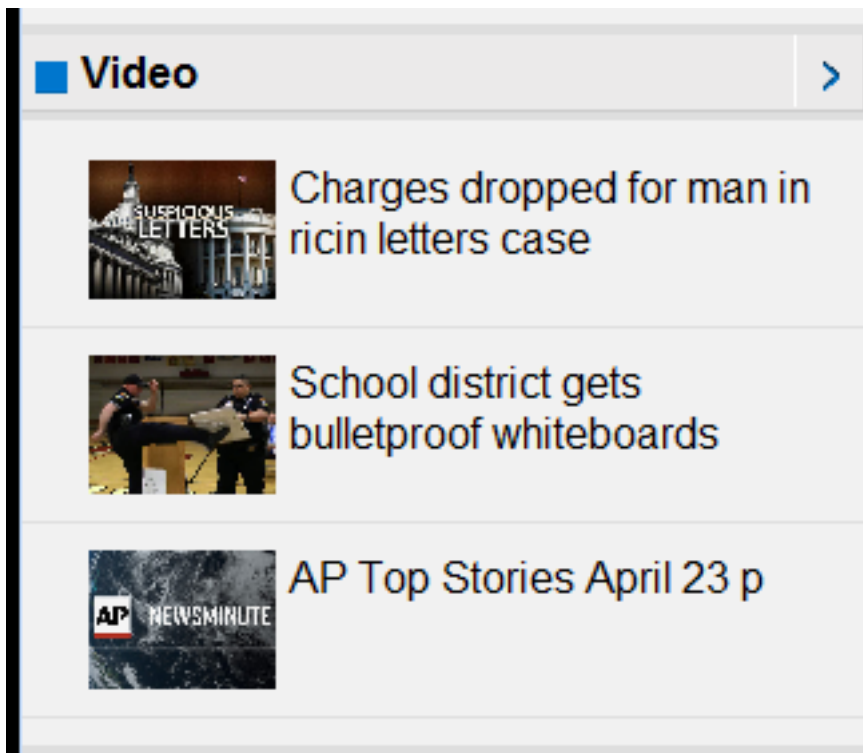
USA Today

USA Today also delivers its video content on its homepage, presenting it to the visitor in the traditional slideshow style.

USA Today categorizes its content on the homepage by news, sport, life, money (the same as its print edition). Each of these categories includes the news articles together with the video content. They are enriching the text news content with video content where applicable, as well as providing video news content.



They also have a video section as well as a listing of videos related to each news story. The experience is consistent and good across smartphones and tablets.



USA Today uses Brightcove Inc. to deliver its video content.

Video on Mobile Best Practices

To maximize the effect of video content in the mobile environment we'd set out three core principles:

1. Organize your video content into appropriate sections / pages. Make it augment related text content and provide a separate video-specific section. Just make it easy and logical to find.
2. Avoid Flash and Silverlight.
3. Consistently test your mobile site functionality across multiple devices, and use real ones to ensure you're getting the right result
4. Optimize content for mobile devices by reducing it to the proper resolution and proper video bit rate. Most mobile platforms can identify which type of connection an app is using, such as Edge, 3G, LTE or Wi-Fi. The speed of the connection provides a starting point for the optimal, initial bit rate. Choosing a rate that is too high can cause a longer load time and cause buffering pauses. Choosing a rate that is too low results in a poor user experience. For example, imagine trying to stream a five minute video in a 1080p or 720p on EDGE/3G connection. It'll stutter like crazy. Instead, detect the connection, then compress the video (that is what is the meaning of low bit rate) optimally to stream the content on the selected connection.
5. Keep your video delivery partner honest! Since you'll be working with a video

streaming provider, hold them accountable for providing a high-performing experience by monitoring stream performance. Use a service that tests and measures video content periodically, from the end user perspective, to get a consistent baseline.

A link to some additional thoughts around best practices for mobile:

1. <http://www.pb.com/smb/qr-codes/marketing/campaigns/mobile-web-page/optim...>
[2]

To view the full range of Keynote Mobile NEWS AND Portal Indices and others, please visit:

http://www.keynote.com/keynote_competitive_research/performance_indices/... [3]

Keynote tests the sites in the index hourly and around the clock from four locations over the three largest U.S. wireless networks, emulating the browsers of three different devices. Data is collected from San Francisco and New York and then aggregated to provide an overall monthly average in terms of both performance and availability.

Source URL (retrieved on 06/11/2013 - 4:43pm):

<http://www.wirelessweek.com/articles/2013/05/keynote-mobile-news-and-portal-index-delivering-video-mobile-news-sites>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.abcnews.com/t/index>
- [2] <http://www.pb.com/smb/qr-codes/marketing/campaigns/mobile-web-page/optimize-website>
- [3] http://www.keynote.com/keynote_competitive_research/performance_indices/mobile/news/index.html